

# Carers Inquiry Day 19.10.21 – summary and actions



Kathryn Benjamin, Strategy & Policy Development Officer, Adult Care



# Carers Inquiry Day, 19 October 2021

## Purpose: impact of Covid on adult carers and how to support now

- understanding adult carers' needs as they emerge from lockdown by hearing testimony from carers
- understanding how our public services, voluntary sector services, and communities are adapting to meet these needs as restrictions ease but some risks remain by hearing testimony from providers, and
- learning how these can better support carers as we enter a future with Covid still present in our lives
- Consider how can we use this information to inform development of North Somerset Carers Strategy
- Focus on adult carers due to remit of ASH Panel (suggestion to CYPS Panel they may want to consider similar event re: Young Carers and parent carers)



# Mindful of:

- **the need to avoid thinking about carers in isolation** – carers and the cared-for sit within wider complex and multi-faceted systems, some elements of which, (eg most health services, employment circumstances, and transport availability) have significant impacts on carers but over which the Council may have limited direct influence; and
- **the need for realism about current funding constraints** – funding constraints remain a harsh reality for Councils, significantly constraining options for direct interventions much beyond the basic statutory service provision.

# Recommendations from report would need to:

- a) concentrate on where the Council can realistically make a difference together with
- b) the recognition that solutions were likely to be found by working creatively in partnership with stakeholders and communities, maximising existing human and financial resource potential.

# Testimony heard from

- Four carers - from North Somerset Carers Support and Alzheimer's Society
- Healthwatch;
- Alzheimer's Society;
- North Somerset Carers Support (formerly Carers Support Alliance);
- Community Connect (commissioned by council from Curo providing information and advice to older residents);
- Single Point of Access (SPA) service (provided by council to provide a central telephone service for those in need of Adult Social Services and healthcare services in their homes);
- Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership
- University Hospitals Bristol & Weston NHS Foundation Trust



# Parish and Town Council session

Afternoon roundtable discussion with representatives from the following Parish and Town Council representatives:

- Clevedon,
- Nailsea,
- Long Ashton,
- Winscombe and Sandford,
- Tickenham
- Wraxall and Failand.



# Testimony showed:

- **Huge growth in Carers during Covid-19**
- **Need more systematic identification of carers, coordinated across all different services.**
- **Support for Carers in employment**
- **Assessment delays** - carers felt they often needed to take the initiative in pressing for assessments.
- **Care package delays** - delays getting cared-for out of hospital/care homes adding to uncertainty and distress due to visitor/access restrictions
- **Digital initiatives emerged but also the digital divide**
- **Feelings of Carer Loneliness & Isolation** – feelings of abandonment, particularly at start of Covid. Services and communications with carers were patchy going forward. Carers spoke of the loss of support groups, lack of counselling services or just a person to talk to.



# Testimony showed (cont):

- **Feeling undervalued** – carers often referred to the need for more recognition in their community and from health and social care professionals
- **Emphasis on supporting carers' physical and mental wellbeing, and safeguarding** – stakeholders spoke of the need for better access to physical and emotional/mental health support. Concerns about increased safeguarding referrals involving carers during Covid-19
- **Respite and day-care provision– lack of access/availability, and the financial and transport challenges** – carers reported they had to pay for cover to have a break themselves (couldn't leave cared-for unattended) and public transport often not available. References to how in the past the Crossroads carer support service had provided a chargeable sitting service and day care (before Crossroads ceased to trade)



# Testimony showed:

- **Advocacy, advice and Information** – health and social care needs can be complex. Services need to be more joined up and pro-active; need better signposting and easier access to advice. Council website needs to be more user-friendly/ informative.
- **Need to avoid thinking about Carers in isolation** – so many external factors impact (eg Employment, Transport, GP/Healthcare access, Housing conditions etc). Need to think more “holistically”, with huge potential role for communities to support some of the wider needs of carers at grass roots level.
- **Opportunities at local/community level around social prescribing** – can help identify local needs
- **The role of the Council in enabling and coordinating local support** - discussion around the need for a coordinating officer and a Councillor “Carers Champion” in seeking to ensure carer needs are taken into account across all Council and partner services

# Parish and Town Councils said:

- Some felt the Council should have provided more logistical support and funding to P&TCs - others praised the Council's focus on enabling and supporting the development of community networks
- Some community groups sprang up independently but most were enabled or established by P&TCs. The level of P&TC support and wider engagement and understandable varied significantly (due to varying sizes, resources, and demographics).
- Some felt the Council needed to focus on development of a more effective "infrastructure organisation" to better support community organisations. Considerable evidence of innovative initiatives at local level eg "community buddies".
- One said Council's planning for, and response to, emergency situations needed to evolve urgently. His conclusion was that *"Covid proved that the most effective crisis support services are those provided at local level due to their ability to grow and evolve quickly in fast-changing situations"*

# Parish and Town Councils (cont)

Other comments were:

- *“Each P&TC needs to understand local needs in terms of delivery....P&TCs need to work with social prescribers to help identify unique local needs.”*
- *“It was clear that there was no single one-size-fits-all model: What...we want from NS Council is more of an enabling role – working on the ground with diverse local groups to help ensure the right infrastructure for the community concerned.”*

# Officer feedback:

- Decade of austerity impacted Council funding for VCSE sector which meant low base when pandemic hit so establishment of North Somerset Together is significant achievement
- On reflection, Council could have done more to identify those not known to Adult Social Care – used Council Tax records to identify older people living alone
- The Council has invested Covid-19 funding to support VANs, as infrastructure organisation, to build VCSE capacity
- Much knowledge and expertise in our communities
- Work underway with Parish and Town Councils to develop place-based wellbeing partnerships under the Empowering Communities strategy – council's role as 'enabler'
- Discussion around devolving responsibilities to Parish and Town Councils - to enable communities to respond appropriately
- Significant opportunities here around identifying and supporting informal carers and the cared-for in the community

# Recommendations

1. **A “think carer” golden thread should run through all Council and health and community partnership strategies, policies, and activities** - the Council will need to dedicate sufficient officer time/resource to ensure that opportunities to enhance carers' support are promoted and realised as the Council and its partners move towards more place-based (community) models of delivering health and social care
2. **a Councillor ‘Carers Champion’** – functions to include promoting, and oversight over, the “think carer” approach, both across all Council activities and with our partner organisations and communities
3. **review Council’s website in regards to adult social care and specifically carers support** - to enhance carers' access to ongoing information and support.

# Recommendations (cont)

**4. better provision of respite** – need for more access to respite and day care; help with ancillary costs (including replacement care and transport); and better signposting of the services where these were available.

**5. addressing gaps in carer wellbeing** - emotional and physical impacts around feeling isolated, unrecognised, and inadequately supported. Although these issues predate Covid they were exacerbated during the pandemic. Other stakeholders spoke about safeguarding challenges around informal carers.

**6. community models of care** – in seeking to address these broader gaps in the wellbeing and safeguarding, the Panel recognises the importance of developing and promoting a model of care based in and engaging with local communities.



# Recommendations (cont)

**7.** focus needed to identify what additional services and means of communication are needed to attract the attention of carers, particularly amongst more difficult-to-reach groups and individuals.

To that end, the Panel proposes the composition of a community model “blueprint” or strategy to inform engagement with community partners and other stakeholders.

This would explore specific and practical ways in which communities might actively engage with Adult Social Care and health and social care providers to co-produce approaches to support for carers and the cared-for.





## Recommendation:

1. Think Carer thread
2. 'Carers Champion'
3. Review website
4. Respite and costs
5. Gaps in wellbeing
6. Community model of care
7. Strategy for community engagement

## Action required:

1. Need corporate and executive sign-up to embed carers into all relevant council strategies, policies, partnerships
2. Need to agree to proceed with role and identify member willing to fulfil this
3. Work to begin this summer by Strategy and Policy Officer and SPA Carers Service
4. Adult Care to investigate how to increase capacity.
5. Adult Care to consider within community model of care below
6. Adult Care to investigate with P&TCs, NS Together, and partners how this model can be developed to identify and support carers
7. Corporate and Adult Care to develop blueprint with community partners (P&TCs, NS Together and others)