

## **Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Date: Tuesday 24 November 2020**

Agenda item: **XX**

Wards: All

## **Subject: Merton Carers Strategy 2021-2026**

Lead officer: John Morgan, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, Community & Housing

Lead member: Cllr Stephen Alambritis, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Contact officer: Heather Begg, Commissioning Officer, Adult Social Care

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### **Recommendation:**

- A. For the Health and Wellbeing Board to approve the Carers Strategy 2021-2026.
  - B. For all partners to determine how best their organisations can contribute to the delivery of the priority outcomes of the Carers Strategy and commit to do so.
  - C. For all partners to support the work of the Carers Strategy Multiagency Implementation Board, and identify members for the group which will begin in January 2021.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with a final draft of the Merton Carers Strategy and year one Multi-agency Implementation Plan (2021), for comment and sign off.
- 1.2. To highlight changes that have been made to the Carers Strategy to reflect the changed landscape for carers as a result of COVID-19, and work that has been undertaken over this period.

## **2 DETAILS**

### **2.1. Background**

- 2.1.1 On the 17th March 2020, the draft Carers Strategy 2020-2025 was approved by the Council's CMT. The strategy was then due to be taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board on the 24th March 2020. Due to the simultaneous developments with COVID-19, the Carers Strategy agenda item was indefinitely postponed.
- 2.1.2 Despite the necessary reprioritisation of work for a number of partners contributing to the Carers Strategy development, services have adapted their offer and continued to provide carers in the borough with robust support. For example, online activities to promote health and wellbeing, welfare support, practical support to families shielding and case work to support those in crisis.

- 2.1.3 The Carers Week Report from June 2020 outlined the current national picture for carers. This report stated that 4.5 million people in the UK have become informal carers since March. This suggests that there could be around 18,000 new carers in Merton.
- 2.1.4 It was agreed to re-convene the multi-agency Carers Strategy Task Group in July 2020 to review the draft strategy and priorities. The group has worked collaboratively to refresh the strategy, and refocus the proposed year one implementation plan, in order to ensure it is aligned with updated priorities and an altered landscape for carers as a result of COVID-19.
- 2.1.5 The agreed aims of this strategy are to improve the services and support offer to carers and raise the profile of carers across the borough. Within this, there are four priority areas. These priorities are aligned with those of the National Carers Strategy 2008-2018:
- Identification, Recognition, and Contribution;
  - Health and Wellbeing of Carers;
  - Realise and Release Potential; and
  - A Life alongside Caring
- 2.1.6 Over 200 Merton carers and 50 professionals from a range of organisations have been part of a significant engagement programme which has shaped the strategy's priorities. This comprised of a survey for carers, a number of focus groups with carers, and engagement with professionals who work with carers.
- 2.1.7 The Carers Strategy Task Group has engaged with Carers and supporting organisations to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on carers locally, which will inform the priority actions within the implementation plan for the forthcoming year.
- 2.1.8 The development of the strategy has considered a number of other local strategies and plans, including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019 - 2024), the SEND Strategy (2019 -2023), South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust Strategy (2018-2023), Merton Autism Strategy (2018-2023) and the Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan for the London Borough of Merton.
- 2.1.9 The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) published a 'Merton Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy' in February 2019. Therefore, Young Carers are not specifically included in the Carers Strategy, but it has been developed with the Young Carers Strategy in mind and the implementation of both Strategies will be aligned. The aim is to implement both strategies together to ensure collaboration on shared priorities.

## 2.2. **Priority Outcomes**

- 2.2.1 The Task Group have reviewed and proposed 11 key priority outcomes, which incorporate the 4 strategic priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the priorities of Start Well, Live Well and Age Well within the Health and Care Plan, for the multiagency implementation plan in the first year of the Strategy:

1. Identify Carers
2. Carers assessment
3. Information and advice
4. Carers emergency plans
5. Council processes and carers
6. Health and wellbeing activities for carers
7. Digital skills for carers
8. Learning and development for carers
9. Carer Friendly Work Environment
10. A quality service for both cared for and carer
11. A break from caring

2.2.2 Alongside developing the strategy itself, much work has gone into improving the current offer for carers in Merton. This has included:

- Developing induction training for professionals, delivered by Carers Support Merton.
- Refreshing the web pages for carers on the Merton Council website, ensuring the information as up to date and relevant.
- Increasing the awareness of, accessibility to, amount and subsequently uptake, of Carers Discretionary Grants, administered by Carers Support Merton.
- Developing the online offer to support carers whilst other face to face services have been closed.
- As part of the Warm and Well campaign (a partnership arrangement with Wimbledon Guild, AgeUK Merton and Thinking Works funded via ASC) inclusion of carers in the scope of the new 'Handy Person Service' offer.
- Implementation of a befriending programme for carers in the borough in partnership with AgeUK Merton and Carers Support Merton, funded via Public Health.
- Piloting the use of Co-ordinate My Care, a shared electronic urgent care record, with people who have dementia and their carers to develop emergency plans.

### 2.3. **Alignment with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

2.3.1 The Carers Strategy and wider work with carers is aligned with a number of the principles and ways of working in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. We would like the Health and Wellbeing Board to support our approach of adapting services to prioritise the needs of carers, especially during the

Covid-19 pandemic. Some of these examples below have already started and some are new actions that will be addressed in year one of the Strategy.

2.3.2 Examples include:

**(i) Tackling health inequalities**

- As identified in the NHS Long Term Plan Carers are twice as likely to suffer ill health as a result of caring. A key aim of the Carers Strategy is to tackle health inequalities between carers and the wider population. Work is underway with GPs to develop and improve uptake of Carers Health Checks in Merton.
- The Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, Mental Health Trust, DWP, Voluntary sector partners and carers will work together to make sure that carers are supported to access the universal services they need, in a way that is accessible to them.

**(ii) Prevention and early intervention**

- Through the Carers Strategy, we will aim to identify carers at the earliest possible stage in their caring journey; this means working with partners, to identify and support carers at the earliest possible opportunity. Partners in primary care will be instrumental in the delivery of this priority.
- We are engaging with clinical leads to ensure GPs and other primary care services are able to identify, record and support carers at an earlier stage to prevent reduce and delay the need for support at point of crisis.
- We aim to review Carer Assessment Processes to ensure that carers can access the right help, including preventative support in the Voluntary and Community sector to continue in their caring role.

**(iii) Community engagement and empowerment**

- There has been comprehensive engagement for the Carers Strategy, with carers and professionals. The Strategy has been co-produced by a multi-agency group, including carers. We will continue to engage with the carers support groups, including young carers, throughout the implementation of the strategy.
- There are a number of groups and Forums that ensure the voice of carers are heard including the Dementia Action Alliance, Learning Disability Forum, MH Forum, Adults First and Kids First.
- As part of the implementation of the strategy and wider community engagement, we will engage with all carers, with a focus on BAME communities, and people who do not recognise themselves as carers.

#### **(iv) Think Family**

- A key tenet of the Carers Strategy is the appropriate support being offered and signposted for Parent Carers, and carer needs being considered in professional interactions with both child and parent.
- 81.6% of carers live with the person they care for. It is important to consider the whole family and household, even if the cared for person is over the age of 25. We aim to ensure adult and children's services work together and take a 'whole family approach' in identifying and supporting all carers, including young carers.

#### **2.4. Next Steps**

- 2.4.1 Once the Strategy has been approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board, an external design team (who published the Health and Wellbeing Strategy) will format it, to ensure that it is presented in an accessible and attractive format.
- 2.4.2 The Carers Strategy Task Group will transition into the Carers Strategy Multiagency Implementation Board chaired by John Morgan, Assistant Director of Adult Social Care. Its membership will include strategic leads with sufficient delegated authority to ensure delivery of the Implementation Plan. It is proposed that this Board is established from January 2021 to oversee and monitor delivery of the priorities and outcomes within the implementation plan and provide updates where required to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 2.4.3 The Young Carers Task Group will sit under the Implementation Board and lead on actions/activity relating to Young Carers. The Young Carers Task Group will be accountable to Merton's Children Trust Board and MSCP Domestic Abuse and Think Family Sub-Group, and provide regular updates.
- 2.4.4 The strategy will be launched at an online Carers Celebration Event for Merton Carers in January 2021. This will be in a similar format to the recent ADASS London Carers Festival which was a great success and very interactive.
- 2.4.5 The Carers Strategy Multiagency Implementation Board will provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board in 12 months.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. N/A

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. Substantive consultation was carried out with carers to inform our understanding of the issues facing carers, including a survey and focus groups. No further consultation is proposed.

## **5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. The Carers Strategy has been presented to the following Boards and was positively received:

- Merton Health and Care Together Board 3 November 2020
- Corporate Management Team 10 November 2020
- Mental Health Programme Board 12 November 2020

5.1 Further timetabled events:

- Health and Wellbeing Board 24 November 2020
- Carers Virtual Celebration Event and Launch Jan 2021

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. To achieve the vision of the Carers Strategy, in the context of sustained financial challenges, our collective aim is to reengineer the investment and resources in services that support carers. We aim to put carers at the centre of this work and to place greater emphasis on working with all our partners to maximise resources as well as seek additional funding opportunities that widen the local offer to carers.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. The Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014, the National Carers Strategy 2008-2018, the Carers Action Plan 2018-2020 and the NHS Long Term Plan 2019 all make a significant shift in the approach to how carers are supported, acknowledging the important contribution they make and placing them on the same footing as the person they care for when it comes to accessing services they may need.

7.2. This strategy has been developed in response to the needs of carers in Merton and the statutory requirements.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. As part of the Carers Strategy work, an Equalities Analysis is being completed to determine the potential positive and negative impact of the Merton's Carers Strategy on the protected characteristics.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. N/A

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. N/A

**11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

11.1. APPENDIX 1: DRAFT Carers Strategy 2021-2026

11.2. APPENDIX 2: DRAFT Multi-agency Implementation Plan 2021

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