

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 21 June 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Carers Strategy 2021-2026 Progress Report

Lead officer: Phil Howell, Interim Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, Community & Housing

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

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

Recommendations:

Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are asked:

- A. To acknowledge the progress of Merton's Carers Strategy 2021-2026.
 - B. To review the priority outcomes and determine whether there are other priorities to be included for year 2.
 - C. To commit the necessary resources to supporting the work to deliver the priority outcomes for carers.
 - D. To seek the views of more carers including young carers and parent carers to help shape the changes.
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary for the HWBB of the progress made in year one of the [Merton Carers Strategy 2021-2026](#), which was approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2020.
- 1.2. The Strategy was officially launched at a virtual event on the 9 June 2021, as part of National Carers Week. This year, a range of face to face and online activities were organised as part of Carers Week 6-12 June 2022 to 'Make caring visible, valued and supported' and celebrate the first year of the Carers Strategy in Merton.
- 1.3. The vision for the Merton Carers Strategy 2021-2026 is for carers in Merton to feel recognised, listened to and supported (socially, medically, emotionally and financially) in this vital role so they can live their life to the full alongside caring.

- 1.4. The agreed aims of this strategy are to improve the services and support on 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
- 1.5. The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) published a 'Merton Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy' in February 2019. The joint CSF and C&H DMT confirmed in January 2022 that the Young Carers strategic actions are incorporated into the Merton Carers Strategy Implementation Plan. CSF have since commissioned Carers Support Merton (CSM) to progress some of the priority outcomes that relate to young carers and parent carers. This includes:
- a) Mapping activity of the current support/services available to Young Carers under 18 and to identify unmet need/unidentified need,
 - b) Mapping activity of the current support/services available to Parent/Carers of children under 18 and to identify unmet need/unidentified need
 - c) Review and develop the content on CSM website and this will be aligned to the Family Services Directory and Merton Local Offer.
- 1.6. The four subgroups (linking to the four key themes in the Strategy) are well attended by a range of organisations and continue to engage with carers and supporting organisations to deliver the priority outcomes and progress updates are provided to the Implementation Board every 2 months.
- 1.7. The implementation 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), Southwest London and St George's Mental Health Trust Strategy (2018-2023), Merton Autism Strategy (2018-2023) and the Covid-19 Outbreak Management Plan for the London Borough of Merton.
- 1.8. The Implementation Plan included the 11 key priority outcomes identified and agreed for the first year of the Strategy. Over the past year there has been significant progress in some of the priority outcome areas, which are highlighted below:
- (i) Identify Carers**
- Working with GP practices to amend carers information and advice once carer identified, registered and flagged on system.
 - Revising Premium Specification with GP practices in Merton and establishing quarterly monitoring for carers information to be sent to CCG and Carers Strategy subgroup 1. This approach will incentivise identification and support given to carers.

- Developing a short video to present on screens at GP practices to encourage people to self-identify as a carer.
- Revising content of awareness training (facilitated by Carers Support Merton) and expanding a tiered level offer across health and social care services and other partners. To be incorporated into staff induction programmes.
- Working with schools and trailblazer programmes to identify young carers and develop support available.

(ii) Carers Assessment

- Workshops held to map current statutory duties and carer pathways.
- Drafting best practice guidelines for staff who support carers of adults. This includes Adult Social Care, MH Health Trust and the Carers Hub (Carers Support Merton and Merton Mencap).

(iii) Information and advice

- Revising carers information across all key local Websites (including GP practices, Council, Health services, MH Trust and other partner websites).

(iv) Carers Emergency Plans

- Completed comprehensive benchmarking report and developing project plan for Carers Cards and working to implement in partnership with Carers Support Merton. Carers Cards will include three key elements, and will be implemented in a phased approach:

Phase 1: Recognition: confirming status as a carer who is providing support

Phase 2: Discounts: for the carer from local businesses and services

Phase 3: Contingency: who to contact for support in the event of an emergency, which will include where to access a plan to support the cared for.

- CSM and Merton Mencap continuing to promote Carers emergency/contingency plans and providing a workshop in Carers Week.
- Merton received funding from NHS England and are one of six pilots to improve the integration of carers contingency plans, how they are recorded (which will include using the new SNOMED code for Carers Contingencies) and how they are shared with health, care and voluntary sector partners. This short term piece of work was completed in March 2022 and recommendations will feed into the NHS Long Term Plan and links to this priority outcome in the Carers Strategy.

(v) Council processes and carers

- Confirmed new arrangements for carers parking permits as parking processes were identified as having an impact on carers wellbeing.
- Working to improve Direct Payment processes in partnership with carers as carers identified as having an impact on their wellbeing.

(vi) Health and wellbeing activities for carers

- Piloting a specifically designed health questionnaire for carers at Wideway Medical Practice. Will present the learning and outcomes to the GP practice carers leads.
- Exploring new 1-1 wellbeing short term support service for carers with Wimbledon Guild and Carers Support Merton.
- General Health and Wellbeing services now including specific information on carers (e.g. [One You Merton-self care for carers](#)).
- Working to ensure that wellbeing services for children and young people identify and support young carers (such as trailblazer programme).
- As part of the new Health on the High Street Programme, mapping the current health and wellbeing activities for carers in Merton and inputting into the Health and Wellbeing section of the [Adult Support Services Directory](#).

(vii) Digital skills for carers

- Carers are now well supported in Merton to develop their digital skills.
- Good understanding between partners of the current offer and pathways, which includes connectivity, motivations, skills and equipment.
- Linking carers digital skills projects with the wider digital strategy in Merton.
- Merton Mencap have created a video for carers that explains how technology supports day-to-day life: [Promoting Digital Confidence - YouTube](#).

(viii) Learning and development for carers

- Mapping all local offer for carers to support with their caring role and to access work and learning opportunities, including adult education, recovery college and other partners with a view to updating information into local websites.

(ix) Carer Friendly Work Environment

- Forum held in CCG with Carers who are employees and developed action plan.
- Two carers forums were held in December 2021 with LBM staff; most said their managers and teams were very supportive, however Merton itself was not yet a carer friendly workplace. A number of actions have been identified to be taken forward in partnership with HR including a dedicated Carers page on the Merton Hub, developing an ongoing forum and reviewing recruitment processes to foster a more carer friendly environment. This will link to Healthy Workplaces initiative. 2 further forums are planned for Carers Week.

(x) A quality service for both cared for and carer

- Using Ladder of Co-Production¹, ASC are involving carers with three significant upcoming commissioning projects; Supported Living Framework, LD Community Opportunities Framework and Domiciliary Care Framework.

¹ https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/_assets/COPRODUCTION/Ladder-of-coproduction.pdf

- The Big Conversation work² has been shaped by the valued input of many carers in both answering the engagement but also as key stakeholders in the ongoing reference group.
- Developed and circulated a key messages poster wider to all providers who support vulnerable people in Merton to encourage people to gain trust in using services again.

(xi) A break from caring

- Mapping short breaks offer in Merton to give carers respite across the service, and ensuring all new information is added onto the website.
- Reviewing how volunteers can support carers through volunteering schemes such as befriending and side by side project
- Reviewing and promoting the use of Carers Discretionary Grants for carers of adults (£200pa, or more in cases of financial hardship) linked as an outcome of a carers assessment.

2 CHALLENGES/RESOURCES

- 2.1. The Carers Strategy implementation has started really well in the first year and has progressed despite a challenging environment. There is a real positive energy within the co-production subgroups, which have been meeting throughout the year. However, there have been some challenges and resource issues, which are detailed in this section.
- 2.2. In 2021, we saw a significant rise in referrals (approx. 35% increase) to Carers Support Merton for assessments and support which led to a 12-week waiting list (for all carers including young carers). This has been attributed to:
- (i) Carers being included in priority group 6 for the vaccine rollout,
 - (ii) Raising the profile of carers through the Merton Carers Strategy
 - (iii) The doubling of the value of the Carers Discretionary Grants from £100pa to £200pa as announced during Carers Week 2021, and
 - (iv) The significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on informal carers.
- 2.3. In response to this, C&H DMT agreed in February and July 2021 and Jan 2022 additional funding to provide additional support to carers. In addition, funding of £30,000 was agreed via the CEV grant to cover the doubling of the value of the Carers Discretionary Grants from £100pa to £200pa. It must be noted this this funding will come to an end March 2023 and a transitional plan will need to be developed.
- 2.4. Throughout the previous year there have been a number of staffing changes within CSF, which has led to a lack of attendance at subgroup meetings and lack of progress on the specific priority outcomes relating to young carers and parent carers of people under the age of 18. However, there is now commitment across all the subgroups from CSF reps, combined with the

² <https://www.merton.gov.uk/social-care/adult-social-care/disabled-adults/learning-disabilities/have-your-say>

mapping work being completed by CSM which will help start to deliver better outcomes for parent carers and young carers.

- 2.5. Due to the pandemic, it has been difficult for Health staff (including CCG, CLCH and Primary Care) to fully engage with actioning the priority outcomes. However, more recently, there has been a renewed commitment to developing services to better support carers with their health and wellbeing. Going forward this report recommends that key partners commit more resources to help deliver the outcomes relevant to their service area.
- 2.6. Each subgroup has carer representatives to help co-produce the priority outcomes. However, it must be noted that carers can live very busy lives, which means that sometimes they are not able to commit to attending lots of meetings. Therefore, representatives are taking key issues or development areas to local carers groups and feeding in issues or queries to the subgroups, so we ensure that all plans and developments linked to the Strategy are truly co-produced.

3 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1. Progress has been made towards delivering some of the priority outcomes for the first year of the Strategy, however there is still much work to do and additional resources are being sourced to further progress the year one outcomes.
- 3.2. Once key actions have been completed, work will be carried out to assess the impact of the Strategy work.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

N/A

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. The Council undertook extensive engagement in the development of the Merton Carers Strategy and the Carers Strategy Implementation Board and the four subgroups are all Multiagency groups, with carer representatives taking a key role in co-producing the priority outcomes. The priority outcomes are also regularly discussed at carer peer support groups throughout the Borough.
- 5.2. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of impact reports have been produced following engagement with local residents. In particular, the Young People Report, people with Dementia and their carers, people with a learning disability and their carers and people from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities. These reports will further inform the direction going forward.
- 5.3. The outcomes of the Big Conversation, an engagement programme with people who have learning disabilities, their families, carers and the professionals who support them was published in September 2021 and along with the Big Explore is helping to define the LD offer going forward, which will include carers support.
- 5.4. For year two, it is the ambition of the Board to include young carers and parent carers of children under the age of 19 to be part of the implementation.

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. The Carers Strategy Implementation Board meets once every 2 months, and each subgroup meets every 6-8 weeks.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. 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.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. This strategy is being implemented in response to the needs of carers in Merton and the statutory requirements.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. As part of the Carers Strategy work, the Equalities Analysis will be reviewed to determine the potential positive and negative impact of the Merton's Carers Strategy on the protected characteristics.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. N/A

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. N/A

APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT N/A

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