

Caring Sub-committee

Thursday, 28 September 2023

Present: Councillor J Shaw (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, J Cruddas, A Holdsworth,
J Kirwin, L Marshall, P McIntyre, M Murphy and
T Neira

In attendance:
Councillors K Clark and Janet Hunter

Apologies: Councillors M Fox, L Arkley and T Hallway

C11/23 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

C12/23 Declarations of Interest or Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

C13/23 Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

C14/23 Council Support for Unpaid Carers

The Sub-committee received a presentation from Adam Graham, Principal Social Worker (Adults), which set out the support the Council provides for unpaid carers.

It was noted that the Council has an Equally Well Strategy that is a high-level plan to tackle health inequalities in North Tyneside. Given that carers experience significant inequalities, being more likely to experience poverty, unemployment

and poor mental and physical health, support for unpaid carers in an important part of achieving progress towards the ambitions of Equally Well.

The Sub-committee noted the work of the North Tyneside Carers' Partnership Board which is responsible for raising awareness and improving health and social care services for carers in North Tyneside. The Board's membership includes decision makers from NHS providers, North Tyneside Council, Local voluntary sector organisations, North Tyneside Carers' Centre, the North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum and Healthwatch North Tyneside.

The presentation set out the Authority's legal duties to assess the needs of carers of all ages, taking a 'whole family' approach to ensure the wellbeing of the family around a person with care and support needs is supported. This includes support for young carers.

The report and presentation also set out how North Tyneside Council fulfils its legal duties, including via screening through the initial assessment process. Carers are assessed using the Ways to Wellbeing for Carers assessment model which is based on statutory guidance and evidence based practice and was developed in partnership with North Tyneside Carers' Centre.

The presentation outlined some of the challenges facing the Council in this area, and the action the Council is taking to improve carer wellbeing, to drive greater practitioner focus on carer wellbeing and to improve the availability of respite care resources.

It was noted that the development of a new carers' strategy is underway with the involvement of Carers' Partnership Board members. The new strategy is due to be completed by late 2023/early 2024.

Members noted the information provided in the report and presentation and raised some questions.

Members asked whether the Council currently mapped carers by location or ward as it was felt this information may be useful for ward councillors to understand how many carers were in their ward. This information could also help the Council to understand whether carers are close to the services they may need or whether they may be isolated, and would help to ensure resources are

targeted at the right place and that services are accessible. It was felt it was also important to identify any link between carers and areas of higher deprivation and poverty.

It was noted that the location of carers is not currently mapped. However, the Carers' Centre does aim to spread support across the borough as it is known that carers can often face difficulties in travelling to services.

It was highlighted that the Council had adapted the framework to improve how carers are identified and to offer carer assessments. There had been an increase in the number of carers identified but it is not clear whether this is due to there being an increase in the number of carers in the borough or a result of more carers being identified through the system.

Members asked about how the Council identifies young carers in order to offer assessments. It was noted that actions had been taken to raise awareness of young carers, particularly through carers champions in schools and GP practices, and also to raise awareness among young carers themselves who may not recognise themselves as carers.

It was noted that 21 out of 24 GP practices in the Borough had signed up to the GP young carers scheme and this had led to 180 referrals to the Carers' Centre, up from 12 the previous year.

It was highlighted that the Council holds a range of data, including data on poverty and deprivation and also Council Tax information. There were questions about whether Council data could be used more effectively to identify carers at an earlier stage.

There was some discussion about the need to identify if carers may need support when this may not appear obvious and where carers are not asking to be assessed. It was highlighted that professionals are aware of this issue and training is in place for social workers.

There was some discussion about the wider support for carers that the Council could offer in relation to housing, travel and also possibly a leisure and cultural offer. It was noted that there had been some discussion between the Carers Centre and the ICS around a Carer's passport to identify carers to health

services. There may also be scope to extend this to offer access or discounts to other services. This is something that is being explored.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

C15/23 North Tyneside Carers' Centre

Claire Easton, Chief Executive of the North Tyneside Carers' Centre, and Paul Jones of Healthwatch North Tyneside, attended the meeting and provided a presentation setting out the role of the Carers' Centre.

The Sub-committee was informed that the North Tyneside Carers' Centre provides practical and emotional support to young and adult carers, from the age of 5 – 97 years. The Centre has 6263 adult carers and 638 young carers registered with it and carers are represented at every level of the organisation. The services developed by the centre over the years have been informed by the needs of carers and strategically the Centre has built strong relationships across health and social care and are a key partner in the development and delivery of North Tyneside's Commitment to Carers. The centre ensures that the views of carers shape local delivery plans and support partners to identify and support carers.

Claire Easton outlined the many areas that the Centre contributes to policy and developments in relation to carers including: training for professional in health, social care, education and the community and voluntary sector; working with the Council to codesign the Carers Ways to Wellbeing Assessment process; working with the Integrated Care Board to develop and implement a 'Carer Friendly GP Award' scheme to improve identification and support within primary care; and working with schools across the borough to help identify and support young carers and developing a Young Carers in School Programme to provide schools with resources and guidance.

The presentation highlighted the findings of the survey undertaken by Healthwatch North Tyneside and the North Tyneside Carers' Centre on behalf of the North Tyneside Carers Partnership Board earlier in 2023. The survey was aimed at adult carers only and 681 responses had been received. This was a follow up to an earlier survey carried out in 2021 during the pandemic. Some of

the key messages from the survey were:

- The predicted improvement in carers experiences since 2021, following the easing of pandemic restrictions, was not seen in the survey results, with responses similar or worse across all themes to those received in 2021;
- Carers are often struggling to cope;
- Isolation continues to be a major issue for carers with 41% of carers saying they felt more isolated than the previous year (which was during the pandemic);
- Carers are providing more care than before – this appears to be due to the needs of people they care for increasing and is exacerbated by delays in NHS treatment and challenges in organising care packages;
- Cost of living challenges – heating, transport, special diets;
- Significantly worse emotional, financial and physical wellbeing;
- Support from services has improved compared to the 2021 pandemic survey, with some good examples of professionals working hard to provide support in very difficult situations;
- Carers don't feel valued;
- Challenges in knowing where to get help when they need it, getting timely support, the impact of caring on wellbeing and joined up support for the carer as well as the person they care for;
- Mixed picture on support from employers for those with caring roles;
- Not enough support available for carers in the borough.

It was noted that the Carers Partnership Board have agreed to produce an action plan to respond to the key issues from the survey.

Members highlighted the outstanding work of the Carers' Centre in providing support for carers and stated that the report had been very valuable in providing information to the Sub-committee.

Members noted the issues raised about employers and that some employers were more supportive than others, and questioned whether there was any information about particular sectors of employment that were more supportive than others. It was suggested that more detailed questions about this could be included in future surveys. It was also noted that the North of Tyne Combined Authority was undertaking work with employers through the good work pledge to help address support for carers.

Cllr Kirwin highlighted the issues raised about isolation and stated that he thought this could be a particular issue in relation to those caring for those with dementia. He asked whether there were any actions aimed at societal change along the lines of the dementia friendly communities initiative to help raise awareness, support and acceptance through the community. It was noted that this area of work had not been specifically included in the carers action plan but it was something that was being taken forward via other specialisms, for example via the Autism Strategy.

Members raised a concern about the three GP practices in the Borough that had opted not to take part in the GP carer support scheme and it was hoped that they could be encouraged to engage with the scheme going forward.

The Chair thanked Julie Easton and Paul Jones for attending the meeting and for the informative presentation.

C16/23 Adult Social Care Dashboard

The Sub-committee received a presentation which set out a dashboard of information in relation to Home Care in North Tyneside.

The Sub-committee noted that the number of clients on the brokerage waiting list is now down to 82, and there has been a continual reduction in people waiting on the brokerage list.

There had been a slight increase in the average number of home care hours provided per client per week.

It was noted that providers were reporting some improvements in recruitment and retention but there was still a way to go to get to a pre-COVID position.

Members welcomed the improved position set out in the presentation, particularly in relation to the improvements reported in recruitment and retention

of care staff. However, it was also highlighted that the situation was not back to pre-COVID levels and recruitment and retention of care staff had been a significant concern prior to COVID.

Officers highlighted some of the action that was being taken in support of recruitment and retention, including continued development of the Care Academy, employment roadshows and also working with providers to support recruitment and retention.

Members thanked officers for the report.

C17/23 Work Programme

The Sub-committee noted that the main topic for the work programme at the current time had been support for Carers.

The Sub-committee had reviewed a list of questions identified at the start of this work and noted that many of the questions had been covered by the information provided at this meeting.

It was noted that the Sub-committee was due to receive a report on direct payments to carers at the next meeting.

Members highlighted that a National Suicide Prevention Plan has recently been published and it was suggested that the Sub-committee should consider receiving a report on this with a view to considering how scrutiny could contribute to the local suicide prevention plan.