



To: Caring Sub-Committee

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Title of Briefing: North Tyneside Council's Support for Unpaid Carers

Local policy and governance

- **Equally Well Strategy 2021-2025**
 1. North Tyneside's Equally Well strategy is a high-level plan to tackle health inequalities in North Tyneside, featuring strategic aims of:
 - a. Equal life chances for all
 - b. Thriving places and communities
 - c. Maintaining independence
 2. Carers experience significant inequalities, being more likely to experience poverty, unemployment and poor mental and physical health, hence support for unpaid carers is an important part of achieving progress towards the ambitions of Equally Well.
- **Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025**
 3. Our North Tyneside Plan focuses on five key themes: creating a North Tyneside that is thriving, family-friendly, caring, secure and green.
 4. Priorities for social care are led by the commitments to create 'a caring North Tyneside', including:
 - We will provide great care to all who need it, with extra support available all the way through to the end of the pandemic
 - We will work with the care provision sector to improve the working conditions of care workers

- People will be cared for, protected and supported if they become vulnerable
 - We will support local community groups and the essential work they do
 - We will work to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination and ensure the social rights of the people of North Tyneside are key to council decision making.
5. Support for unpaid carers is relevant to achieving all of the above commitments, and is therefore of high strategic importance for Adult Social Care.

- **North Tyneside Carers' Partnership Board**

6. North Tyneside Carers' Partnership Board 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, and local VCSE organisations: North Tyneside Carers' Centre, the North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum, and Healthwatch North Tyneside.
7. The aims and priorities of the Carers Partnership Board are developed from feedback from carers and addressed by the implementation of a shared work plan, with input from all agencies and organisations who work with carers.
8. All of the improvement activities outlined in this report are aligned with the priorities and workstreams of the Carers Partnership Board, with oversight provided by the board.

Feedback from unpaid carers

- **Caring in North Tyneside in 2022**

9. Healthwatch North Tyneside and North Tyneside Carers' Centre undertook a survey of adult carers between December 2022 and February 2023. The survey was open to anybody caring for an adult or disabled child, whether or not they were known to North Tyneside Carers' Centre or the local authority.
10. 681 responses were received, approximately treble the number received in the previous survey in 2021.
11. The survey provided qualitative and quantitative data about carer wellbeing and satisfaction with health, education, social

care and VCSE support services. The following summary of key findings will focus on support provided by or commissioned by the local authority.

12. Themes were similar to the 2021 survey, with no improvement in carer wellbeing following the end of pandemic restrictions. However, some moderate progress was seen in satisfaction with support from services. Improvements were seen in:
 - A reduction in the proportion of carers reporting they received no support, or struggled to access anything they needed
 - An increase in the proportion of carers who reported receiving some or lots of support.
13. Feedback regarding support from social work teams improved slightly, but access to home care and respite remained a significant challenge. Carers reported difficulties getting home care packages in place – whether self-funding or arranged via the council.
14. Feedback about ease of access and availability of respite was mixed, with many carers reporting it difficult to access respite. Where carers could access this, it was often seen as vital to supporting their wellbeing, although reports about its quality was variable.

- **Young Carers Survey 2022**

19. The last North Tyneside Carers' Centre survey of young carers took place in May 2022, with responses from 103 young carers. Key findings included:
 - Almost 70% reported providing more care over the last 2 years
 - Over 70% reported a negative impact on their physical health, emotional/social wellbeing, and education
 - Over 80% reported struggling to cope some or all of the time.
20. The timing of the survey meant much of the qualitative data reflected on the impact of the pandemic lockdowns, however this

highlighted the impact on young carers when paid support for older and disabled people is not in place where it is needed.

21. Given this feedback, improving support for carers has remained a strategic priority throughout 2022 and 2023, with the actions undertaken outlined later in this report.

Headwinds and challenges

22. Adult Social Care and Children's Services are committed to improving the support offered to carers, however these efforts made have been in a highly challenging context, including:

- **Cost of living pressures**

High inflation, with particularly significant increases in the price of essentials such as utilities and food, has had the greatest impact on people with the lowest incomes – and carers are disproportionately likely to be living in poverty. Poverty leads to poor mental and physical health outcomes, which in turn increases demand on public services.

- **Recruitment and retention challenges**

Recruitment into frontline social care roles has been a challenge for some time, but this has been exacerbated by wage increases in the sector not keeping pace with the private sector. This increases vacancy rates and pressure on staff, in turn increasing both push and pull factors for staff to move into other employment sectors. Social care provider recruitment difficulties lead to challenges arranging services to meet needs, which is a particularly acute issue in the home care sector.

In social work, salary competition between local authorities has increased, leading to social workers seeking employment elsewhere due to higher pay, and difficulty recruiting to vacant posts. North Tyneside Council has recently increased its salaries for social workers in both adults and children's services in order to remain competitive with its neighbouring boroughs, which is now showing a positive effect in the number of applications for vacancies.

- **Demographic change**

An ageing population increases the number of residents requiring care and support in their daily life. This places increased pressure on unpaid carers, as well as public services.

23. The combination of increased demand alongside vacancies has placed pressure on Adult Social Care services. Between 2021/2 and 2022/3:

- Referrals to the 'front door' teams (for people not previously receiving a service from Adult Social Care) increased by 6.2%
- The number of people receiving input from the Community Wellbeing teams (people with longer-term needs without a severe mental health condition or a learning disability) increased by 7.4%
- The number of needs assessments completed by social care teams increased by 19.3%
- The number of safeguarding adults enquiries increased by 13.7%.

Local authority legal duties to carers

24. There are a number of legal duties placed on the local authority to assess the needs of carers of all ages, taking a 'whole family' approach to ensuring the wellbeing of the family around a person with care and support needs is supported.

- **Adult carers**

Statutory duties

25. An adult carer is defined as a person over 18 who provides unpaid support to another person over the age of 18.

26. Under the Care Act 2014 s.10, local authorities have a duty to offer a carer's assessment where an adult carer is providing, or intending to provide, care to another adult.

27. If an adult carer has eligible needs (as defined in the Care and Support (Eligibility) Regulations 2015), a support plan must be produced which demonstrates how eligible needs for support will

be met. This may be via replacement care, support from family, friends and VCSE organisations, or as a carer personal budget.

How North Tyneside Council fulfils this duty

28. A screening question in the initial needs assessment asks workers to identify if anyone unpaid is providing or intends to provide care and support, and prompts them to create their record and list them as a carer, and offer a carers assessment.

29. Carers assessments in North Tyneside are either undertaken by the allocated social care worker (if one is involved with the person with care needs), or by North Tyneside Carers' Centre's 2.0 FTE Carer Wellbeing Workers, funded by the local authority.

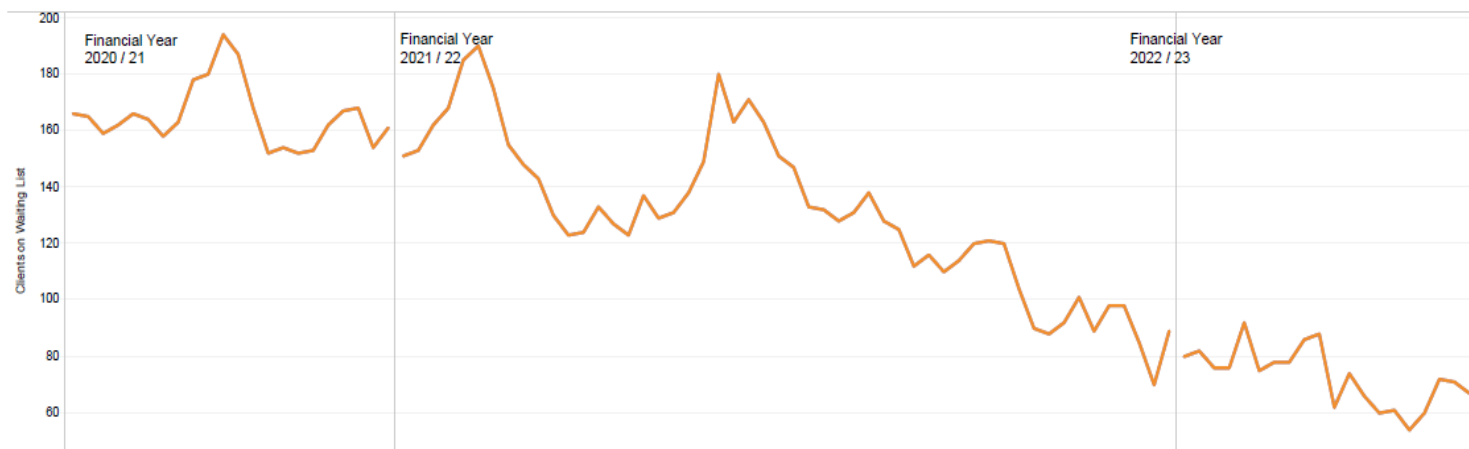
30. A strengths-based assessment model, known as Ways to Wellbeing for Carers, is used to undertake carers assessments. This is based on statutory guidance, evidence-based practice and was developed in partnership with North Tyneside Carers' Centre.

Performance and improvement

31. The Caring in North Tyneside Survey 2022 identified the importance of replacement care to supporting carer wellbeing. Significant work has been undertaken by Commissioning and Adult Social Care to address challenges brokering home care packages, including:

- Increased investment in brokerage staff to streamline referrals and work with providers to improve efficiency
- Commissioning working with providers to support recruitment and retention
- The establishment of the North Tyneside Care Academy to support recruitment, retention and training across the social care sector, with an advertising campaign undertaken. To further develop the Academy, a dedicated Coordinator has been recruited and will start in post by the end of September 2023.

32. These efforts have resulted in a substantial reduction in numbers of people awaiting care packages, with a reduction from a high of c.190 in May 2022 to c.80 at the time of writing this report:



33. An action plan was also created to drive a greater practitioner focus on carer wellbeing, to improve carer satisfaction with Adult Social Care practice. This activity has included:

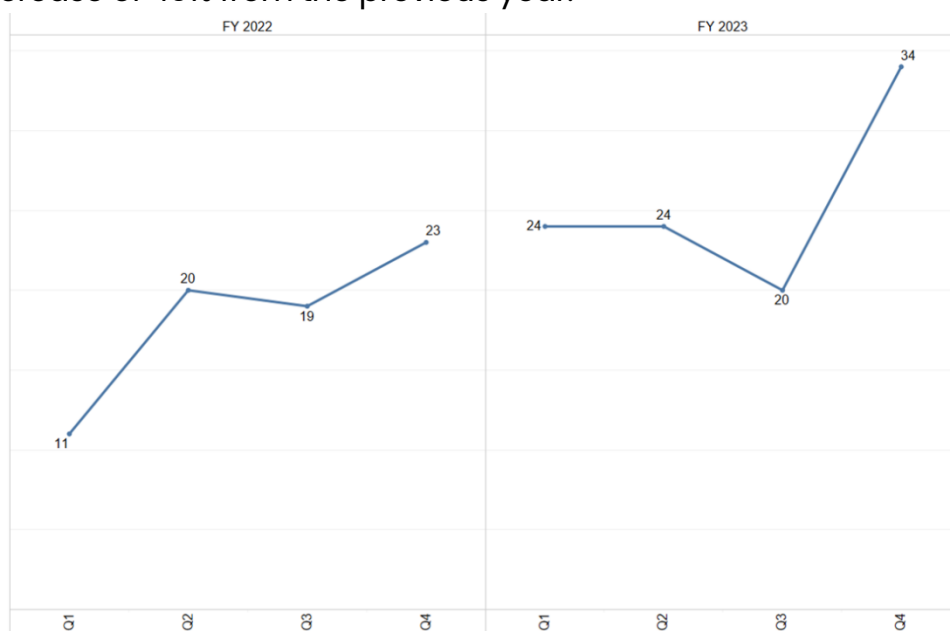
- A Practice Week conference in October 2022, focused on working with carers, co-delivered with North Tyneside Carers' Centre and attended by over 70 Adult Social Care professionals
- Creating a new carer assessment framework, adopting evidence-informed best practice, co-designed with North Tyneside Carers' Centre, launched in November 2022
- Mandatory Carers and their Assessments training for assessment and support planning teams, co-delivered with North Tyneside Carers' Centre - 84 colleagues have been trained in the last year
- Piloting three-day Systemic Practice training, an advanced practice model drawing from family therapy to simultaneously support the carer and cared for person's wellbeing, and recognise the interdependence of their needs. 25 managers were trained in pilot cohorts in June and July 2023. Further sessions took place with Claire Easton (Chief Executive, North Tyneside Carers' Centre) to link the learning with daily practice. Following positive evaluation, this training will be rolled out to the wider workforce in late 2023/2024
- Rewriting the information and advice offer about Adult Social Care services (including carer support) to improve clarity and

accessibility, with over 30 new information sheets published in August 2023. These were co-designed with people with lived experience of Adult Social Care, including carers.

- The Adult Social Care audit framework incorporates scrutiny of the quality of support offered to carers, in addition to people with care and support needs.

34. 515 adult carers received advice, information or assessment from Adult Social Care in 2022/2023. While 2021 Census data about carers is not yet available, this would constitute around 25% of the carers in the borough, applying the 2011 proportion of North Tyneside residents who identified as carers.

35. 102 statutory carers assessments were completed in 2022/3, an increase of 40% from the previous year:



36. On initial screening, approximately 75% of carers decline the offer of a statutory carers assessment. A common reason is that the carer wishes to focus on arranging support for the person with care and support needs as the primary means of supporting the carer's wellbeing.

37. However, regardless of whether carers accept a statutory assessment, they can still be supported via replacement care, information, advice and onward referral to North Tyneside Carers' Centre and PROPS (who work with people affected by someone

else's substance use). Both of these organisations receive funding from the local authority, and supported 1,201 and 130 adult carers in 2022/3 respectively.

38. The range of support services provided by North Tyneside Carers' Centre and funded by the local authority and the ICB will be outlined in a presentation to the Caring Sub-Committee by Claire Easton, so will not be repeated in this report.

39. A primary barrier to accessing respite for carers of older people is a lack of residential care homes prepared to take on advance bookings for respite stays, with bookings only accepted at short notice when vacancies are available. This prevents carers from planning respite to enable holidays or important personal commitments. Furthermore, we know that many people with care needs do not want to access residential care and therefore a wider range of options is required.

40. A proposal for piloting bookable respite care based in extra care flats is now under development in partnership with Age UK, looking towards a launch later this year. This would adopt a similar model to the successful step-down beds supporting hospital discharge in extra care settings. This pilot may also include block booking residential care beds to provide greater capacity and choice, enabling an advance respite booking option for the carers of people with greater support needs.

41. Respite Care will be reviewed at in its widest sense and the offer for residents of the Borough made clear so that they can make informed choices for what works best for them and the people they are caring for.

- **Young carers**

Statutory duties

42. The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 requires local authorities to proactively identify young carers, and the Children Act 1989 (amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) provides a duty to assess young carers' needs. The local authority must also provide Carers' Assessments for young carers who are transitioning into adulthood.

How North Tyneside Council fulfils this duty

43. North Tyneside's Young Carers' Pathway provides the local framework for young carer assessments. The assessment framework includes workbooks adapted to the needs of younger and older children, co-produced with young carers.
44. After identifying the young person's needs, the lead professional coordinates a plan to meet identified needs involving relevant partners from education, health, children's services, the VCSE and/or Adult Social Care. The lead professional supporting the young carers may be from education, Children's Services, or Adult Social Care, depending on who is best placed and who the young carer prefers to support them.
45. In addition, the following specialist posts are in place, funded by the local authority:
- A Young Carers Link Worker promoting awareness and supporting skills development of colleagues within and outside the council
 - A Young Carers Family Support Worker for young people who may not have a team of professionals around them, but may still require support.
46. Young Carers of people with a substance misuse issue are now also supported by PROPS North East. This is a new contract in 2023/24 and activity figures are not yet available.

Performance and improvement

47. North Tyneside Council has assessed the needs of 545 young carers, with 75 young carers supported by North Tyneside Carers' Centre in 2022/23.
48. Carers champions are now in place in schools and GP Practices across the borough to improve the identification and support for young carers. Improvements on this figure will be pursued via training in young carer needs for Adult Social Care and Children's Services professionals in 2024.

49. A young carer to adult carer pathway has been developed, with Early Help coordinating multi-agency checks to ensure every identified young carer approaching 18 has the opportunity to have an adult carers assessment from Adult Social Care or North Tyneside Carers' Centre.

- **Parent carers**

Statutory duties

50. The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to introduce a duty to assess the needs of parent carers of disabled children if it appears that the parent carer may have needs for support, or a request for assessment is received. Parent carers are also entitled to an adult carer assessment as part of supporting the whole family as the disabled young person transitions into adulthood.

How North Tyneside Council fulfils this duty

51. A new parent carer needs assessment framework was launched in mid-2023 following consultation and co-design with the North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum. As this is a new assessment framework, figures on performance are not yet available.

52. Currently the Parent Carer Needs Assessment process is supported by an Early Help Worker and a Social Work Lead. A procurement exercise is planned for this service to be delivered on the council's behalf, to be advertised during Autumn 2023 with a contract start date in early 2024. This will improve identification of parent carers and increase capacity to undertake assessments of their needs.

A new Carers' Strategy

53. The previous North Tyneside Commitment to Carers requires update and renewal, and the development of a new carers' strategy has commenced with involvement of Carers' Partnership Board members. The new strategy has a proposed completion date of late 2023/early 2024.

54. This work will build upon developments and improvements already undertaken, demonstrating a renewed strategic and operational commitment to supporting carers' wellbeing across the health, social care and voluntary sector in North Tyneside.
55. Underpinned by the principles set out in the North Tyneside Carers' Charter, this work will include co-design and production with people with lived experience of caring. It will set the objectives and pace for medium-long term improvement, supporting the achievement of Our North Tyneside Plan's aims, and the strategic objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Board.