

Scrutiny Inquiry Panel



Councillor Savage

Chair of the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – 2020/21

Panel Members (April 2021)

Councillor Prior (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Coombs
Councillor B Harris

Councillor McEwing
Councillor White
Councillor Windle

Prior to the pandemic, Carers UK estimated that 1 in 8 people provide unpaid care. Using this ratio, the number of carers living in Southampton, including over 2,000 young carers, is estimated to be about 32,000, providing everything from a few hours of support a week to intensive and complex round the clock care.

Given the contribution made by carers, and the recognition that there is a need to improve outcomes for carers in Southampton, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee recommended at the September 2020 meeting, that an inquiry focussing on improving support for carers in Southampton is undertaken by the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel.

Consultation


The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook the inquiry over 6 evidence gathering meetings. At the start of each meeting the Panel received feedback from carers ensuring that the views of adult carers, parent carers and young carers were represented.

In addition to hearing from carers, the Panel received information from a wide variety of organisations. This included Carers UK, NHS Providers in Southampton, Portsmouth City Council, Surrey Heartlands ICS, NHS England and Improvement, the Department for Work and Pensions, The Children’s Society, No Limits, Carers In Southampton as well as officers from Southampton City Council and NHS Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group.

Findings and conclusions

Information presented to the Inquiry Panel identified that:

- Carers are essential. They make an enormous contribution to the people they support and are an integral part of our health and social care system.
- Caring can have a considerable impact on the mental and physical health of carers, their employment prospects and many carers experience financial difficulties due to their caring role.
- Carers have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of support services has resulted in many carers not being able to



‘I had to reduce hours from full time to 4 days a week, so financial cost - huge emotional cost on me balancing work commitments and commitments to the person I care for - feeling I never do either as well as I want to.’

take a break from their caring role, increasing their isolation and the burden and pressure on them.

- Carers have their own needs too, and, throughout the inquiry, the Panel were made aware of the increasing commitment from health, care and voluntary organisations in the city to address the needs of carers and this has been matched with action designed to improve outcomes for Southampton's carers.
- Despite improvements being made, in Southampton there are currently:
 - Too many carers that have not been identified and are not known to carer organisations or health and care providers
 - Too few carers receiving timely assessments of their needs
 - Too few carers in receipt of help to support them in their caring role and to live a life outside their caring role
 - Too many carers that are having to leave work to care or are having their prospects damaged by the impact of their caring duties on their educational attainment.
- Improving outcomes and support for carers will not happen overnight. It takes time but it can be done. Evidence suggests that investment in carers' services to support them in their caring role is financially beneficial for social care services and sees a significant return on any investment made.
- No single organisation has all the solutions and the solutions cannot all come from statutory services. It is vital that we work with partners beyond health and care organisations to raise awareness of caring among the wider population to build a carer friendly community in Southampton.

Recommendations

The final report contains 24 recommendations in total which, if implemented, the Panel believe will improve outcomes for carers in Southampton over the longer term.

The recommendations reflect key issues presented during the inquiry relating to:

- The identification of carers
- Improving information, advice and guidance
- Improving the assessment process
- Providing additional support for carers
- Helping carers stay in, enter or return to work, education and training
- Co-production with carers
- Support for carers transitioning between services
- Improving co-ordination and the sharing of data.



Cabinet

The inquiry report was presented to Cabinet in April 2021. A formal response from the Executive to the recommendations is expected to be considered by Cabinet in the summer.

The final report of the Inquiry Panel can be accessed here:

http://www.southampton.gov.uk/images/carers-friendly-southampton_tcm63-442272.pdf

Getting Involved

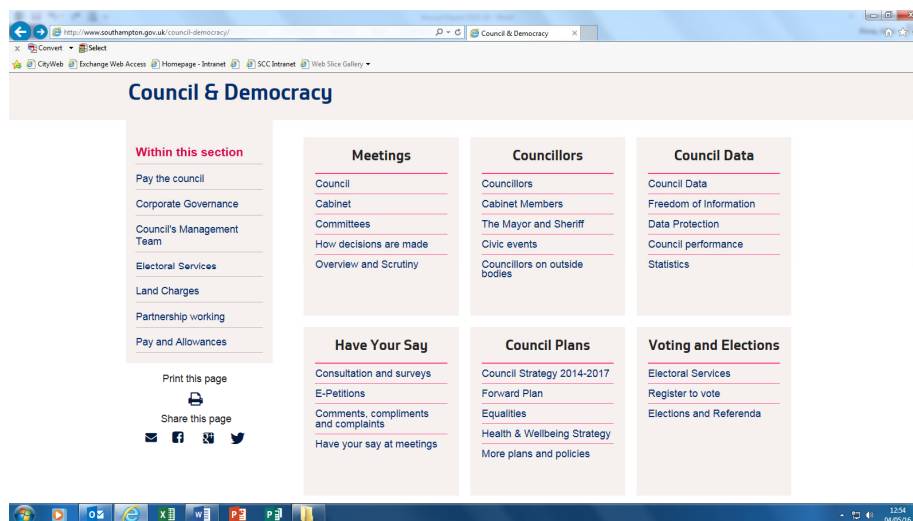
How can I get involved?

There are a number of ways in which the public and interested organisations can get involved.

- **Attend a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee or a Scrutiny Panel.** All scrutiny meetings are held in public and, subject to agreed Covid restrictions, anyone is welcome to attend to listen to proceedings. Meetings are currently usually held in the Civic Centre. Only on rare occasions, when certain types of confidential information is being discussed, are members of the public not allowed to attend.
- Raise issues with your Councillor and request Overview and Scrutiny to consider as part of **Councillor Call for Action.**
- Give your feedback to inquiry meetings as part of evidence gathering.

Details of forthcoming scrutiny meetings, agendas, reports and minutes can be obtained from the City Council's website at:

<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/meetings/scrutiny/default.aspx>



Providing written evidence

Scrutiny inquiries can consider written evidence and members of the public, community groups, or other key stakeholders can write in to bring evidence to the attention of Inquiry Panel members. Inevitably, scrutiny inquiries have only a limited amount of time, so they may not be able to hear oral testimony from all interested people.

Written evidence provides an alternative way to receive evidence from key stakeholders, policy makers, service providers, service users and community groups. Written evidence may put forward a particular perspective of the issue being considered, or may highlight evidence to help the investigation. It can also put forward questions for witnesses which may be taken up by members of the Panel during the discussion.

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