
SCRUTINY INQUIRY PANEL - CARER FRIENDLY SOUTHAMPTON
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillors Savage (Chair), Prior (Vice-Chair), Coombs, B Harris, McEwing and Windle

Apologies: Councillor White

8. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

The apologies of Councillor White were noted.

9. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020, be approved and signed as a correct record.

10. **CARER FRIENDLY SOUTHAMPTON - CARERS ACCESS TO INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Legal and Business Operations requesting that the Panel consider the comments made by the invited guests and use the information provided as evidence in the review.

Summary of information provided:

A carers perspective – Ellie-May, Leah, Zunayrah and Jenny

- Three young carers, Leah, Ellie-May and Zunayrah, supported by Emma Jones from No Limits, informed the Panel about their experiences with regards to accessing information, advice and guidance as young carers.
- The lack of a Young Carers Discount Card, mirroring the discount card available to adult carers was raised. A card that enabled discounts on transport, days out, school meals would be appreciated.
- A young carers allowance or grant was suggested as a mechanism to help support young carers, akin to the Young Scot Young Carers Grant. This would not be funded nationally.
- No limits website provides advice to young carers but not all young carers follow this, and emails get lost. Potential for Instagram page / What's App group / Updated Facebook group or newsletter to provide information and advice to young carers.
- Linda Lawless, Service Manager at Carers in Southampton, interviewed Jenny, a carer whose husband has vascular dementia and COPD.
- Jenny outlined challenges in obtaining adaptations to her bathroom to help her husband access the facilities. A Council Occupational Therapist had undertaken an assessment and referred her in October 2020, but she had not heard back.

- Jenny explained challenges in receiving benefits she was entitled to. Form filling was a barrier and the system is complex. She has received support from SCC's Welfare Rights Service.
- Jenny was benefitting from support to access community services. The Alzheimer's Society Dementia Navigator has been brilliant in providing support to Jenny and her husband. She has also been referred to Communicare for a befriender by Adult Mental Health Service. The volunteer befriender took her to and from a medical appointment recently. Communicare will shortly be starting a new service called Hello Southampton to keep in touch with lonely residents.
- Unpaid carers will be 6th priority to receive a Covid vaccination (although it is thought that over a quarter of carers are in a higher priority group). Carers in Southampton have written to all unpaid carers that they are in contact with encouraging them to register as a carer with their GP/Practice Manager. This will ensure they receive a priority vaccination as well as reminders for annual flu vaccinations and health checks. The pandemic provides an opportunity to register carers and get information out to them.

DWP support for carers – Mark Knight, DWP Policy Lead nationally for Carers & Andy Sherman, DWP Employer & Partnership Manager

- A presentation was delivered by Mark and Andy outlining the support available for carers from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local initiatives.
- Carer's Allowance (CA) provides a measure of financial support and recognition for those who have had to give up or limit their employment because of their caring responsibilities.
- As of May 2020, there were 3,517 carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance in the City of Southampton and £12.1 million was spent on CA in Southampton in 2019/20 (£67.25 per week is Carers Allowance).
- Carers also have access to the full range of social security benefits according to their circumstances but the interaction between Carers Allowance and other benefits is complex.
- Carers Allowance is relatively straightforward to claim but there is a clear discrepancy between the number of carers receiving Carers Allowance and the number of unpaid carers in Southampton. Carers Allowance claimant numbers are heavily linked to disability benefit claims and are higher in some parts of the country, such as the north east of England, than in the south east.
- A priority of the DWP is supporting carers into employment (Fuller Working Lives, employment support from Jobcentres, CA earnings limit).
- Locally a Youth Hub has been established in Southampton as a result of a DWP and Southampton City Council initiative. The Youth Hub team will signpost to advice and support around housing, benefits, health and wellbeing to provide a holistic and person-centred service for young people, including young carers.

- DWP Complex Case Plans enables Jobcentre Work Coaches to signpost Young Carers to support available within the local community. Up to date and accurate local information is needed to give the best advice.
- In Southampton 'The Zone' distribution list of approximately 300 local partners enables information on initiatives and challenges to be shared quickly with key stakeholders across the city. This is recognised as best practice.

Good practice: Information, advice and guidance – Emily Holzhausen OBE, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at Carers UK

A presentation was delivered by Emily on best practice with regards to providing information, advice and guidance to unpaid carers.

- Recognition that it is not an easy task to get right, due to factors such as the constantly changing population (one third turnover annually); Different stages on caring journey – knowledge levels differ, new to caring to end of life; Language and approach matters; Capacity and ability of carers to take on board information; Range of channels where people find information; How people consume information; Workers – i.e. those juggling work and care; and, the diversity of population.
- A mixed portfolio of formats, video, face to face, telephone, online, paper is required.
- Social media and digital platforms have become essential formats for disseminating information, improving knowledge and skills. Digital poverty is an issue that needs to be addressed (potential for Personal Budgets / Direct Payments to address this).
- Good awareness of carers by all frontline staff is essential to getting it right
- Take the best from good strong local provision and what is appropriate nationally e.g. gov.uk, nhs.uk, carersuk.org, ageuk.org.uk, Mencap.org.uk, contact.org.uk
- Essential local mapping and good understanding of user journey: signposting, referrals, in-depth advice, advocacy.
- Carers Passport in Hertfordshire recognised as good practice. The creation of a discount card has enabled information, advice and guidance to be provided to 14,875 carers. Over 8,000 carers are now accessing support or advice from Carers in Hertfordshire, for the first time.
- Hertfordshire County Council has adopted unpaid caring as a protected characteristic.
- Carers UK has produced an 'Upfront' guide to Caring. A four-minute tool that gives a personalised "to do" list with information for carers who are new to the maze of benefits and entitlements.
- Strong links into GP practices e.g. Carers Prescription in Surrey.
- Your website is your window and a service.
- Use existing resources e.g. Online peer support forums – Time for Talk (Alzheimer's Society) Carers Forum (Carers UK) – Health Unlocked

- Advocacy and experts remain important as chasing information is exhausting! Often too many agencies involved, it can be overwhelming.

Southampton Information Directory and Website – James Marshall, Head of Customer and Communications, SCC

- Southampton Local Information Directory (SID), the City Council's online offer, is not performing the role it is designed to do at present. This has resulted in other platforms trying to fill the gap, resulting in a plethora of information sources.
- Carers information is currently incorporated into wider Adult Social Care information in the SID, but the SID is separate from information on the Council's website on Adult Social Care.
- SCC are developing the SID and website following the principles of no wrong door and many routes to information.
- The platform is to be built around customer journeys, following life events. Becoming a carer (wording subject to consultation) is to be one of the life events used.
- The platform will use cookies ('if you like this then you may be interested in this') and should also be a resource for Council employees to improve the consistency of advice given.
- Proposed that the best available advice and information from national and local sources will be on the SID and that it will be structured to avoid users getting lost. It is recognised that there needs to be an easy way to update the information.
- The SID is in the discovery and design phase now. Keen to engage with service users and providers. Great opportunity for carers to get involved in shaping how the Council offer information and advice.
- SCC is also developing a Digital Strategy. A priority will be to work with partners on skills, access and inclusion. Relevant as 600 carers known to Carers in Southampton are not online.

Housing Related Support – Lisa Haynes, Head of Supported Housing and Community Support, SCC

- A presentation was delivered by Lisa.
- Approximately 3,500 tenants living in the City's Supported Housing accommodation – those with an identified support need. Primarily for people over 60. Asset for city.
- The Council's Telecare service can provide peace of mind to carers and has the potential to help people in their caring role. This has been vital during the pandemic. It can also support greater independence for those with care needs.
- The Telecare service works in partnership with carers where possible. The service caters for a wide variety of needs.

- Southampton is fortunate as we have a local responding capability. In most other areas the telecare service just links to a remote call centre. We need to promote the service offer as it has great potential to help carers in their caring role.
- Recognition that disabled housing adaptations process is disjointed and can be improved. The Integrated Commissioning Unit have commissioned a review of disabled adaptations. The importance of involving carers in the assessment process will be incorporated into this review.
- Digital inclusion – Housing Related Support services provide training sessions to help support people to access the internet and improve digital confidence, enabling them to communicate with loved ones via digital platforms.

Advice services in Southampton – Liz Donegan, Chief Officer at Citizens Advice Southampton

- Advice in Southampton is a partnership of advice organisations that deliver a contract to provide information, advice and guidance in the city. It is delivered by a consortium of 6 organisations – Citizens Advice Southampton, Age UK Southampton, Rose Road Association, EU CLEAR, No Limits and The Environment Centre, close working exists with SARC as well.
- Services are quality assessed to ensure they meet the advice quality standard mark.
- The contract operates on the ‘no wrong door’ for advice principle. A service user will be referred, with consent, via Refernet to the most appropriate provider with all relevant details to reduce the need for the client to repeat the information.
- Refernet is being opened up to a greater number of providers in the city. The more agencies on board the better the client journey will be. Talks are ongoing with Carers in Southampton.
- Carers benefit from specialist welfare benefit advice from CAB and can access specialist advice from McMillan and MS Society.
- Barriers to support carers exist. Carer identification remains low. There is a need to recognise the impact that good quality information, advice and guidance can have on carers quality of life. Carers may have limited time to access services, may be confused as to which agency can help them, or be put off by cost of transport or parking.
- Advice in Southampton is working with Carers in Southampton to improve understanding of these barriers.
- Southampton has a number of excellent advice agencies. Seeking to draw on the best information from national and local sources to make it relevant to Southampton.
- Southampton’s advice providers partnership working is recognised as good practice.

Community Navigation – Nicky Judd, SO:Linked Programme Manager at Southampton Voluntary Services and Gary Walker, Alzheimer’s Society Service Manager

- A presentation was delivered by Nicky and Gary.
- To help people, including carers, navigate around the many activities across the city and to support the organisations and groups, Southampton City Council and Southampton Clinical Commissioning Group has funded SO:Linked.
- This service launched in 2019 and is being delivered by community navigators, including specialist dementia and mental health navigators, and community development workers through a partnership led by Southampton Voluntary Services and including Alzheimer’s Society, Solent Mind, Spectrum, TWICS and Social Enterprise Link.
- SO:Linked developed an information directory during Covid pandemic to help navigators and social prescribers across the city. SO:Linked are meeting with James Marshall and will link in with the development of the SID.
- SO:Linked is part of a network supporting digital inclusion in the city.
- SO:Linked are working closely with Primary Care Social Prescribers, including running joint training sessions. Recognition that there needs to be a joined-up approach, a single point of access with services tailored to the individual.
- Southampton Dementia Navigators currently deal with between 30 to 35 new referrals each month (a team of 2).
- Recognition that for many if the person you care for has a diagnosis you are fortunate as you may be referred to an organisation who is able to navigate the changing support landscape for carers and help.
- If you are a carer of a person who doesn’t have a diagnosed condition how do you know what support is available in Southampton?
- Feedback provided identified a number of things missing for carers in Southampton – these include Respite Care; Continuity of care; Tailored care; ‘Rapid Response’; Priority access to services; Opportunities to talk to other carers; Advertising of existing support; Sitting service for medical appointments and transport.
- There is an opportunity to grasp the Covid community spirit and tap into the increase in volunteering.