

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. 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. To the people they help, they are the indispensable family members, friends, and neighbours that make each day possible. In Southampton they are vital partners, bridging the gap between local health and care services.
2. 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.
3. 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 take a break from their caring role, increasing their isolation and the burden and pressure on them.
4. Carers have their own needs too, and, throughout the inquiry, the Panel have been 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.
5. However, 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.
6. The Panel have been informed about developments planned, or in the process of being implemented that will improve outcomes for carers. In particular, personalised care, if applied consistently and equitably across the health and care system, offers an opportunity to put the individual and their families, including carers, at the centre of the process, shifting relationships between health and care professionals and people.
7. It is clear that a number of other areas are more advanced in their approach to supporting carers than we are in Southampton. In particular the Panel were impressed by the example shown by Surrey which demonstrates what can be achieved by leadership, integration across health and care services, dedication, resources and perseverance.
8. Improving outcomes and support for carers will not happen overnight. It takes time but it can be done. In improving outcomes we must be cognisant of the importance of genuine partnership working, early intervention and prevention, and involving carers at every stage of the journey.

9. The challenge is difficult, and if we are successful in identifying more carers, solutions will need to be found to bolstering our carers services and statutory services to meet the demand for assessments, care planning and support services. Evidence suggests that investment in carers' services to support them in their caring role is financially beneficial for social care and sees a significant return on any investment made.¹
10. No single organisation has all the solutions and the solutions cannot all come from statutory services. We should endeavour to identify and engage with all carers. However, many carers have little contact with services for carers and are not receiving formal support in their caring role, for these carers 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

11. Reflecting the key findings and conclusions the following actions are recommended to help improve support for carers in Southampton:

To identify more carers:

1. Encourage and support primary care providers in Southampton to become more carer aware by adopting the GP Carer Quality Marker.
2. Akin to the Surrey Carers Workforce Task Group, to lead by example, promote the identification and support for carers employed within Southampton City Council and NHS providers operating in the city.
3. Promote the Young Carers in Schools Programme within Southampton's schools and empower schools to identify and support young carers.
4. In conjunction with young carers, establish a Southampton Young Carers Identification Card and seek the support of appropriate organisations to offer discounts to our young carers.
5. Support the identification of a community hub/venue which makes it easier for carers to access support when needed.

To improve information, advice and guidance:

6. Develop formal processes to encourage regular communication between the providers of carers information, advice and guidance in Southampton. Thereby duplication is minimised, advice is consistent, the no wrong door approach is applied and carers, or advocates, can navigate the system easily.

To improve assessments:

7. Review the process for undertaking parent-carer assessments to ensure that all parent-carers who have an appearance of need, or request one, have access to the statutory assessment, and, that they are actively involved in the assessment.
8. Incorporate the principles being applied in Portsmouth to the assessments being undertaken by carer organisations in Southampton.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/economic-case-investment--7a4.pdf>

To improve support for carers in Southampton:

9. Embed the strengths based approach to assessment and care planning into practice in Adult Social Care.
10. Learning from the examples of Surrey and Portsmouth, utilising community assets, work with carers to develop a broader offer of breaks and activities that can provide support to carers in their caring role and to have a life outside of their caring role. Support should be accessible to an increased number of carers recognising the health and wellbeing benefits to carers of early intervention and support.
11. With carers, review the provision of training for carers, including training on carers rights, to ensure that it meets their needs.
12. Consider how carers can be involved in the City of Culture Bid planning and celebrations.

To help carers stay in, enter or return to work, education and training:

13. Sign up to the Employment for Carers umbrella membership scheme and work with Carers UK to promote the available resources to businesses in Southampton.
14. To enhance the City Council's reputation as a carer friendly employer, seek accreditation to the Carer Confident Scheme.
15. As part of the movement to embed social value into the procurement process, encourage suppliers to the Council to become accredited to the Carer Confident Scheme.
16. Pilot the MYTIME Young Carers employability programme in Southampton and explore opportunities to embed this within the work of the recently established Youth Hub developed in partnership with the DWP, and the work being delivered by No Limits. Collectively this could help to reduce NEET levels for young carers and could help support young carers transitioning into adulthood.

To improve the involvement of carers:

17. Embed the practice of working in co-production with carers and people with lived experience, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure they are involved in the development, design and provision of services to meet their real needs.

To improve co-ordination of support for carers, and with carers:

18. Develop a Carers Charter that all organisations that work with carers can adopt and promote its principles. Hampshire Carers Charter, developed with carers, is based on the four key principles for supporting carers that has subsequently been adopted by Southern Health Foundation Trust.
19. Establish a carer led Southampton Carers Partnership to ensure that the views of carers are listened to and to improve the effectiveness of multi-agency working in achieving outcomes for carers based on priorities they have said make a real difference to them.

To improve the sharing of data and intelligence to support carers:

20. Explore how the Care and Health Information Exchange (CHIE) can be improved in design or usage, to enable carers to only tell it once and for relevant services to have timely access to carers emergency plans.
21. Purchase access to Carers UK 'Digital Resource for Carers'. This would give all carers in Southampton free access to training, the Jointly app designed by Carers UK to help store and to share information and manage care and other digital support.

To measure progress in delivering improved outcomes for carers and to recognise the contribution carers play in our health and care system:

22. Southampton City Council adopts carers as a protected group requiring the Council to make sure decisions, policies or procedures do not have unintended consequences for carers.
23. Develop a dashboard of appropriate metrics to measure and monitor the outcomes for carers in Southampton. Progress should be considered regularly by the Better Care Board.