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3 September 2020

**Cabinet Member for Adult Services**

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Adult Services – Councillor M. Mutton

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Adult Services

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title: Enhancing Support to Family Carers**

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**Is this a key decision?**

No, although this matter affects all wards in the City this is not considered a key decision

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**Executive Summary:**

Supporting family carers is a critical area of activity for Adult Social Care. Family carers provide support to their loved ones that is both person centred and compassionate, whilst also being extremely demanding in a range of circumstance. As such, carers need to be adequately supported to continue this critical role.

Should family carers not be effectively supported the risk of carer breakdown increases. Where this happens there is a much higher probability of more formal care and support services being required and in some cases admission to residential care or housing with care. Wherever possible this should be avoided due to impact on the individuals involved.

In Coventry our support to carers is led by Carers Trust Heart of England who are supported by a grant from the City Council. Examples of the support on offer includes information and advice, networking, emergency support services and planned replacement care. In addition the City Council also directly arranges respite care and carer breaks for carers eligible under the Care Act 2014.

The demands on carers as a result of Covid-19 have increased. The limitations on social contact and social distancing, combined with clinical vulnerabilities have put increasing pressure on carers within the home environment. A number of people with care and support needs struggle to understand the need to follow the regulations in place and as a result may exhibit more challenging

behaviour as their normal routines are disrupted. Even as lockdown has lifted and society begins to return to normality, many carers do not have the same opportunities for support as before. For example, day services that used to provide important breaks for carers are operating at a much reduced capacity. In addition, a number of carers have concerns regarding their own futures, for example, as a result of coping with a recent bereavement, a change in lifestyle, or concerns about employment and financial resilience. Young carers have also been impacted on by Covid-19 and additional support may be required in order to support with the emotional demands on this group.

In order to recognise these additional demands on carers, this report proposes the creation of an 'enhanced carers support offer' to be in place and delivered through Carers Trust Heart of England for a period of 12 months from September 2020. This enhanced support offer would include a range of interventions to improve carer resilience across areas including physical and mental health, digital and use of technology, coping with grief and loss, support in the workplace, hardship and poverty, and supporting the specific needs of black and minority ethnic carers. There is the ability to apply flexibility to this resource in order to provide some additional support to Young Carers should this be required.

This enhanced support offer would provide much needed support across a number of areas as we continue to live with Covid-19. Feedback and evidence of success of this enhanced offer would inform the types of support that need to be mainstreamed for carers in Coventry as part of our multi-agency carers strategy from 2021.

**Recommendations:**

Cabinet Member is requested to:

1. Approve the establishment of an Enhanced support offer to family carers for 12 months from September 2020.

**List of Appendices included:**

None

**Background papers:**

None

**Other useful documents**

None

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 Supporting family carers is a critical area of activity for Adult Social Care. Family carers provide support to their loved ones that is both person centred and compassionate whilst being extremely demanding in a number of circumstances. As such family carers need to be adequately supported to continue this critical role. Within Coventry there are approximately 17,000 adult carers and 1,700 young carers registered with Coventry Carers Heart of England Trust and data from the 2011 census indicates that 32,101 people in Coventry provide some form of unpaid care. Approximately one quarter report that they were caring for over 50 hours per week. More recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures indicate a substantial rise nationally in people providing unpaid care, from 11% of the UK population prior to pandemic to 48%, with 32% helping someone they had previously not.
- 1.2 Under the Care Act 2014 carers were given equal status in law as the cared for. The Act entitles carers to an assessment where they appear to have needs and to be supported in having those needs met provided they meet the national eligibility criteria. The Care Act 2014 also introduced wellbeing principles which require local authorities to consider the impact of caring on the carer's wellbeing.
- 1.3 Should family carers not be adequately supported the risk of carer breakdown increases. Where this happens there is a much higher probability of more formal care services being required and in some cases admission to residential care or housing with care. Wherever possible this should be avoided due to the impact on the individuals involved. There is also likely to be a greater financial cost linked to breakdown of family carers.
- 1.4 In Coventry our support to carers is led by Carers Trust Heart of England who are supported by a grant from the City Council. Examples of the support on offer includes information and advice, networking, emergency support services and planned replacement care. In addition the City Council also directly arranges respite care and carer breaks for carers eligible under the Care Act 2014.
- 1.5 The demands on carers as a result of Covid-19 have increased in a number of ways. The limitations on social contact and social distancing, combined with clinical vulnerabilities have put increasing pressure on carers within the home environment. A number of people with care and support needs struggle to understand the need to follow the regulations in place due to Covid-19 and as a result may exhibit more challenging behaviour as their normal routines are disrupted. In addition, information and advice requirements have increased as some carers need support with navigating benefits and implications for people who have been furloughed. Challenges in navigating technology and lack of access to technology can also mean that help is not accessed as support services move to digital platforms. Furthermore, carers may have experienced increased feelings of isolation and loneliness at this time and be more likely to neglect their own health and wellbeing, as their caring duty becomes a fulltime role.
- 1.6 Even as lockdown has lifted many carers do not have the same opportunities for support as before. For example, day services that used to provide important breaks for carers are operating at a much-reduced capacity and respite care is not as widely available. In addition, a number of carers have concerns regarding their own futures, either as a result of coping with a recent bereavement or concerns about employment stability as they often require more flexibility and concessions than employees without caring responsibilities.

- 1.7 Young Carers have also been impacted by Covid-19. For many the caring role has intensified and the normal respite of going to school has not been available. Over the Covid-19 period where face to face group sessions have not been possible Carers Trust Heart of England has established a range of alternative support which appears to be working well. It is however possible that the support required by Young Carers may increase as a result of a combination of factors including, returning to school, not being at home and caring, fear of the person they care for catching covid, the fear of bringing the virus back into the home, extra pressures of trying to catch up on school work and caring responsibilities etc. The resource identified in this report can be used with some flexibility to respond to this and if required secure extra resource to support this area.
- 1.8 Therefore, in order to recognise these additional demands on carers this report proposes the creation of an 'enhanced carers support offer' to be in place through Carers Trust Heart of England for a period of 12 months from September 2020. This enhanced support offer will provide much needed support across a number of areas as carers continue to live with the impacts of Covid-19. Feedback and evidence of the success of this enhanced offer will inform what support offer is taken forward longer term as part of our multi-agency carers strategy from 2021.
- 1.9 The proposed enhanced support offer will include a range of interventions to improve carer resilience across areas including physical and mental health, digital and use of technology, coping with grief and loss, supporting in the workplace, hardship and poverty, and supporting the specific needs of black and minority ethnic carers.
- 1.10 More specifically, the interventions to form the enhanced support offer are as follows:
- 1.11 Objective: Support Physical Health, Mental Wellbeing and Tackle Loneliness  
Two elements will be provided with the aim of creating different networks and opportunities for carer breaks alongside support for the cared for.
- 1.12 *Proposal: Virtual day support*  
The approach will provide support to the cared for person through practical help so that the carer can get a break from their caring role as regular day support remains at reduced capacity. Social Development Workers will support the cared for person to use technology to connect with other people. This support will take place in peoples' own homes with a worker on a 1-2-1 basis who will link them with others who are part of the virtual day centre.
- 1.13 *Proposal: Carer community connection*  
To support carers to access existing community network activities, and developing carer specific activities including group walks, walk and talk, pub lunches and craft activities to meet the carers identified needs, enabling carers to have a break and take up an activity to increase their health and wellbeing.
- 1.14 Objective: Support carers to bridge the digital gap.  
Digital skills are increasingly important for connecting with others and accessing both information and support. A digital divide exists giving rise to inequalities in access which can deny people opportunities to access the support, knowledge and services.
- 1.15 *Proposal: Digital inclusion for carers*  
Provision of a well-being course through the iHope on-line platform combined with a one-off payment for carers (Carers Direct Payments) to buy equipment, to ensure carers are not excluded from accessing online services and can maintain personal support structures on line. Mentoring and training will be provided to build confidence and knowledge in engaging digitally. A specific course will be tailored for male carers who often find it more challenging

to engage in carer activity. Courses will be delivered virtually and face to face once it is appropriate to do so. This will create long term sustainability of these activities both virtually and in the community.

1.16 Objective: support carers over grief and loss

Grief is not just the loss of a loved one. For carers, often they are living with the grief of the life they planned for themselves and the loved one they care for. COVID-19 is exacerbating grief for many by decreasing choice on how they conduct their lives and in restricting opportunities for contact with local communities and extended family.

1.17 *Proposal: Grief and Loss Support*

Establishing a specialised intervention focusing on grief and supporting a carer with self-care to support them to cope in the aftermath of a crisis. This will support carers to seek help for their grief to increase emotional wellbeing, build resilience, reduce feelings of guilt and shame often associated with loss and decreasing the misdiagnosis of anxiety and depression.

1.18 Objective: support carers in the workplace

An employer who supports a carer to combine their caring responsibilities and paid employment makes a huge difference to a carer's life. This maintains a carer's identity, social interactions, and career opportunities.

1.19 *Proposal: Supporting employers of working carers*

Provision of additional support to working carers, supporting them and acting as an advocate with employers in order to support carers to remain in the workforce. This support will enable carers to continue their career aspirations and minimize their need to access benefits. It will also support employers to understand carers' needs and engage with employers to create carer friendly workplaces.

1.20 Objective: reduce the prevalence of hardship and poverty in carers

A number of carers are living in or near to poverty. Carers often find it difficult to combine a working role and care which can lead to financial hardship and poverty.

1.21 *Proposal: Reducing Carer Hardship and Poverty*

Support to carers to navigate issues that can contribute to hardship and poverty through signposting to support via job coaches and financial advice and benefit support. Through working with local organisations including the Coventry England Law Centre and local solicitors, carers can be supported with more tailored support and information. Through one-off payments (Carers Direct Payments), practical difficulties such as a broken washing machine or other essential household items can be quickly addressed. This can make a significant difference to the caring role and leads to improved outcomes.

1.22 Objective: recognising the specific needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Carers

BAME carers face additional difficulties as they care such as struggling with language barriers, accessing culturally appropriate services and with stereotyping around caring.

1.23 *Proposal: Improving Support for BAME Carers*

To ensure communities have the information to access services and information as appropriate through establishing peer support and ensure carers within these can access appropriate assessments, support and wellbeing checks. Coventry Carers Trust Heart of England has recently increased its capacity through a recent restructure to improve the ability to reach out to BAME communities through engaging with stakeholders who support these communities as well as religious and community leaders.

## **2. Options considered and recommended proposals**

### **2.1 Option One – Recommended Option**

Due to the impact so far, and anticipated ongoing impact of Covid-19 on carers it is recommended that the proposals contained within this report are approved. This additional support for a period of twelve months is expected to increase the number of carers supported and provide essential support to improve carer resilience over this period. The resource identified can be used flexibly across the proposals to ensure the enhanced offer meets the needs of carers who require this additional support.

### **2.2 Option Two – Not Recommended**

It is possible to not make any changes to how carers are supported to deal with the ongoing challenges presented by Covid-19. This is not recommended as it is possible that to do so increases the risk of carer breakdown and the consequential impacts this has on carers, the cared for, and health and social care services.

## **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 The proposals contained within this report have not been specifically consulted on. They have been developed in conjunction with Coventry Carers Heart of England Trust in response to challenges presented by carers over the Covid-19 period.

## **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 Should Cabinet Member support the recommendations the enhanced carer support offer will be mobilised from September 2020.

## **5. Comments from Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance**

### **5.1 Financial implications**

The provision of the Enhanced support offer to carers for a twelve month period will cost £240k.

The resource will be allocated across the proposals described in the report with the Carers Trust having flexibility to move resources between the schemes to maximise carer benefit and respond to demand within a dynamic environment.

The funding will be provided via a variation to the existing Wellbeing Service grant paid to Coventry Carers Trust Heart of England which is valued at £488,000 per annum. This additional resource will be funded through existing resources from the carers element of the Better Care Fund.

### **5.2 Legal implications**

This approach is consistent with the Authority's responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 which specifically requires a local authority to promote individual wellbeing when performing its functions under the Act and in particular

'to have regard to ...

- the importance of preventing or delaying the development of needs for care and support or needs for support and the importance of reducing needs of either kind that already exist; (s1(3)(c)).

In particular s2 of the Act requires every local authority to provide a range of preventative services that will contribute to preventing, delaying or reducing the need for care and support in adults or needs for support in carers. Further the authority is required under s4 to ensure that information and advice relating to care and support is available for people in its area.

It is anticipated that the introduction of this enhanced service will support the Authority in complying with its statutory responsibilities.

## **6. Other implications**

### **6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan ([www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/))?**

This proposal would contribute to the Council's key objectives through a contribution to protecting our most vulnerable people and using resources effectively.

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There are no specific identified risks associated with the recommendation. The delivery of the proposals contained in this report will be overseen by the Multi-Agency Carers Steering Group.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

None

### **6.4 Equalities / EIA**

An equality impact assessment is not required as the proposals in this report do not represent significant policy change. The proposals are expected to have a positive impact on carers within the City. Through the proposals described we would expect to reach a minimum of 300 new carers.

### **6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None

### **6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

Improving support to carers generally has a positive impact on partner organisations due to reducing the risk of carer breakdown which can lead to potentially costly and avoidable health and care services being required. Feedback and evidence of the success of this enhanced offer will inform what is taken forward longer term as part of our multi-agency carers strategy from 2021.

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Ian Bowering	Head of Social Work (Prevention and Health)	Coventry City Council	10/08/20	11/08/20
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Legal: Janice White	Solicitor	Coventry City Council	10/08/20	11/08/20
Director: Gail Quinton	Deputy Chief Executive	Coventry City Council	14/08/20	20/08/20
Members: Councillor Mal Mutton	Cabinet Member Adult Services	Coventry City Council	12/08/20	13/08/20

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