

Cabinet Member for Adult Services

4th December 2023

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Adult Services - Councillor L Bigham

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Adult Services and Housing

Wards Affected:

All

Title:

Coventry Carers Action Plan 2024-26

Is this a key decision?

No - although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards, the impact is not expected to be significant.

Executive summary:

The 2021 Census indicated that 27,391 Coventry residents identified themselves as unpaid carers (8% of all Coventry residents). This was a reduction from 31,900 (10% of residents) in 2011. However, the 2021 census was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived being a carer and how individuals accepted unpaid care. It is estimated that around 10% of the Coventry population are unpaid carers. The estimated value of unpaid care in Coventry is £680 million per annum (Valuing Carers 2015).

This report provides an update on carers' needs in Coventry, and the resulting action plan to improve our support to carers in the context of these needs. This understanding of needs has been derived from analysis of the biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021/22, a local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey undertaken in 2023 and using national information and data sets.

The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 focuses predominantly on adult carers, with some alignment with young carers where required. The plan is a working document, and we aim to continue to work with local carers and third sector organisations to shape the priorities and actions moving forward.

Delivery is expected to be achieved within existing resources across a partnership of the City Council, NHS and third sector partners, although any opportunities to lever in additional resources will be explored.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services is recommended to:

- 1) Note and endorse the action taken in relation to the Carers Action Plan 2024-26 including the next steps as outlined in this report.

List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Carers Action Plan 2024-26

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

None

Has it or will it be considered by scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other council committee, advisory panel, or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Carers Action Plan 2024-26

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1.** The 2021 Census indicated that 27,391 Coventry residents identified themselves as unpaid carers (8% of all Coventry residents). This was a reduction from 31,900 (10% of residents) in 2011. However, the 2021 census was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived being a carer and how individuals accepted unpaid care.
- 1.2.** The Council's previous Coventry Carers Strategy covered the period 2016-19 and was informed by the National Carers Strategy (2014-16). In 2019 the Council undertook engagement with carers and key stakeholders to feed into a refreshed strategy for 2020, however, with the emergence of COVID-19 and due to the ever-evolving situation and changing needs that presented during that time for carers, it was decided to postpone publication of the strategy.
- 1.3.** Due to the urgent attention needed to refresh the carers support offer as identified via the analysis of national data, the local survey, and engagement with third sector and carers groups, we have moved from a strategy to an action plan to ensure timely action against priorities and influence change.
- 1.4.** The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 will focus on the following three priorities:
 - Empower carers with flexible respite options, ensuring they can take breaks.
 - Deliver the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.
 - Maximise the reach of carers assessments to benefit more carers.
- 1.5.** The City Council will work with Warwickshire County Council and Integrated Care Board colleagues on areas of commonality or where working is aligned.

2. Improvements under the Carers 2016-2019 Strategy

- 2.1.** The previous Coventry Carers Strategy 2016-2019 outlined our ambitions for delivery against four priority areas in alignment with the National Carers Strategy 2014-2016.
- 2.2.** The four priorities were:
 - identification and recognition
 - realising and releasing potential
 - a life alongside caring
 - supporting carers to stay healthy
- 2.3.** The Council continued to work on the priorities beyond the strategy end date, evolving the carer offer and working with partners to meet emerging needs of carers including the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living pressures.
- 2.4.** These overarching priority areas remain relevant to the current needs of carers and continue to provide the foundation of our approach, alongside the themes identified from our local engagement, national data and results of the biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021/22 to inform the Carers Action Plan 2024-26.

- 2.5. The Government no longer produce a carer specific strategy but in June 2018 published a Carers Action Plan 2018-20. The plan outlined five actions that were expected to be undertaken by local authorities to improve the lives of carers. There has been progress in the delivery of these actions noted below under the Coventry Carers Strategy 2016-19:

Services and systems that work for carers.

- Admiral Nurses was launched in 2016 to support carers of people with dementia offering 1-2-1 advice, support, and practical solutions. This service continues to support carers.
- The Primary Care Support GP accreditation scheme was launched in June 2019. Twenty-six of the 60 GP surgeries in the city engaged with the process, nine surgeries of which signed up for the award and four surgeries achieved the bronze accreditation as a carer friendly GP. Whilst progress on this was paused during the pandemic, work has recommenced to re-establish a carer presence at four GP practices, with work continuing to develop relations with GP practices across the city.
- Carers were supported to register as a carer with their GP to ensure access to additional services including access to flu jabs, longer appointments, annual health checks and signposting to available community support. This activity supports the carer to maintain their health and wellbeing.
- The Triangle of Care, a six-part accreditation programme designed to empower carers when supporting individuals with a mental health condition by ensuring wards are carer aware, was implemented at wards at in the Caludon Centre. Unfortunately, the expansion and continued use of this suffered due to the emerging priorities of the Coronavirus pandemic. Work has now re-commenced to reintroduce this accreditation programme across hospital wards, including University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, to ensure all carers feel supported and involved in decisions regarding arrangements for their cared for.
- A new carers assessment form was launched for practitioners in 2019.

Employment and financial wellbeing

- The monthly Carers Bulletin was launched in 2017. Through this communication over 3000 subscribers are updated with the latest information on carers rights and developments, support groups, training, and services to improve carer awareness. Most recently this has included information on cost-of-living support and carers employment rights information.
- Carers Trust were commissioned to deliver Direct Payments on behalf of the Council to support the needs of carers identified as an outcome of having a statutory carers assessment. This ensures timely access and implementation of practical support, with examples of use including the purchase of a washing machine to support with additional laundry requirements, a bed so the carer can stay overnight when needed and driving lessons to transport the individual more quickly and easily than via public transport.

Supporting young carers

- A Young Carers assessment service has been commissioned via Carers Trust to ensure dedicated support in identifying and supporting young carers.

Recognising and supporting carers in the wider community and society

- The Carers Trust launched the Carers Conference and Carers Awards in 2019 to recognise the role and impact of carers within the city. This has been a key step in acknowledging and appreciating carers and businesses or organisations supporting carers. The most recent awards were in 2023.
- The Carers Response Emergency Support Service (CRESS) was expanded to cover planned medical appointments or significant family events of the carer alongside the

emergency support offer. This service offers carers peace of mind and reassurance that their own health, social or cultural activities can still be undertaken whilst ensuring replacement care is in place, vital to supporting carers own wellbeing.

- Carers online self-assessments were launched in 2018, streamlining the process to allow carers to complete and submit a carers assessment via the Coventry City Council website. This has allowed carers to complete an assessment of their own needs and wellbeing at a time most suitable for them.
- The Coventry Dementia Partnership Hub opened in 2023 and is an example of co-production with individuals and organisations. The Hub aims to support people living well with dementia and their carers. The Carers Trust is also a member of the Coventry Dementia Hub Steering Group, helping to shape the service and also provide regular support to carers who attend the Hub.

Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for carers.

- Internal Carers Assessments and Support Plan Guidance was launched May 2019 for adult social care practitioners. This guidance helps further support practitioners when completing carers assessments.
- The Adult Social Care Community Information Directory launched in 2017 as a one stop shop for people to identify and access support in their area on the Coventry website. The directory was refreshed in 2023 and is a key step in ensuring carers can self-serve and identify support relevant to their own specific circumstances. The Council are currently in the process of developing a carer leaflet outlining carer related support services for carers who prefer a paper copy. This was requested as an option during our recent engagement with carers.
- Carers Trust arrange support sessions and courses throughout the year to support carers, including sessions on Grief and Loss, Sleep, Changing the Experience of Pain, and Emotional Resilience. Wellbeing activities such as yoga and flower arranging also take place regularly during the month.

2.6. Summary of Impact - Coventry Carers Strategy 2016-2019

2.6.1. Actions achieved under the strategy have ensured carers have access to a dedicated and consistent support offer across the health and social care system. These actions remain relevant to the current needs of carers and the Council continues to embed and develop them further. This has included increasing the number of carers who receive the carers bulletin to over 3000, which provides information and support options available to carers, to support carers in their caring role and with their own health and wellbeing.

2.6.2. Coventry City Council continue to commission Carers Trust to provide dedicated support to carers in the city. This offer has been adapted since its original launch to reflect emerging need through COVID (for example, virtual day opportunities through resultant lockdowns) and the administration of carers direct payments. As part of their carers support offer, the Carers Trust also further developed their Carers Response Emergency Support Service (CRESS) offer, supporting carers to attend pre-planned medical appointments and significant family events. The Carers Trust also provide a support service for young carers and currently supports over 400 young carers on an annual basis. The Carers Trust and Admiral Nurses form part of the steering group for the Coventry Dementia Hub, which has further increased support options to people living well with dementia and their carers.

2.6.3. In 2022/23, Carers Trust reported the following outcomes based on direct feedback from carers in Coventry:

Carers Trust Carer Reported Outcomes 2022/23

At least one positive outcome	1317
Helped me to carry on caring	441
Helped me to deal with professionals	114
Helped me to improve my finances	165
Helped me to improve my health and wellbeing	948
Helped me to increase my educational attainment	29
Made me feel less alone	653

2.6.4. General feedback obtained from carers supported by the Carers Trust is testament of the positive impact of this support for carers. See below comments from some carers supported:

'Thank you for ongoing support, help and advice which always give me a sense of direction and peace of mind.'

'Thank you for supporting me and my grandma and helping us move forward. Your information and support have been so helpful to me in my caring role.'

'Thank you it feels good to talk.'

'Thank you so much for calling I really appreciate it. I continually worry about my husband falling so the sound advice you've given us today is really appreciated.'

2.6.5. Feedback from some carers specifically in respect of courses and training facilitated by Carers Trust has been highly positive, as demonstrated below:

'I personally feel the course has changed my approach to life in many ways. It has helped me to be more at peace and has increased my emotional wellbeing, I feel more resilient and confident in my ability to deal with challenges ahead.'

'We have benefitted from her calm, compassionate and non-judgemental approach. Liz has taught us skills and techniques to control our anxiety and deal with stressful situations.'

3. Priorities for Coventry Carers Action Plan 2024-26

3.1. Producing and publishing a Carers Action Plan sets out with clarity how the Council, working with carers and partners, aims to achieve and improve the support offer for carers. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 is based on analysis of the biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021/22, a local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey undertaken in 2023 and using national information and data sets.

3.2. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 will focus on the following three priorities:

- a. Empower carers with flexible respite options, ensuring they can take breaks.
- b. Deliver the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.
- c. Maximise the reach of carers assessments to benefit more carers.

- 3.3.** The following actions will be the main priorities for year one and year two of the Carers Action Plan, with the aim of supporting carers with their own health, wellbeing and reducing the risk of isolation. The actions are directly linked to the following ASCOF indicators 1C2B (proportion of carers receiving direct payments for support direct to carer) 1I2 (proportion of carers who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like) and 3D2 (proportion of carers who find it easy to find information about services). Whilst we will look to make progress against all indicators and areas of support, we recognise further improvements in these three outcomes can make a difference to improving carers daily life.

Year One Priorities (January – December 2024)

- Re-commissioning of carer support services, co-designed with carers and increasing awareness of informal networks and social contacts for carers, reducing the risk of isolation.
- Work with third sector organisations and community groups to explore the potential for 'community alternative' support models or community delivered carers breaks. One of the aims of this approach will be to 'buy back time for carers' to assist them in their daily life and allow carers to have short periods of time away from their caring role to support wellbeing.

Year Two Priorities (January – December 2025)

- Commission a range of respite and break provision, co-designed with carers, and continue to promote the uptake of 'community alternative' support models to empower carers with flexible respite options, ensuring they can take breaks, increase social contact and reduce the risk of isolation and carer breakdown.
- Review options for assistive technology to enable carers to have time away from their caring role and increase opportunities for socialising.

- 3.3.1. We will be undertaking a review of the results of the ASCOF 2022/23 results once released by central government and the outcome of latest biennial Survey of Adult Carers (due January 2024) to determine further specific priority areas.

3.4. Measuring Impact

- 3.4.1. Coventry City Council and its partners commitment to making a difference for carers requires continuous monitoring and evaluation. To ensure the Carers Action Plan's effectiveness, the Council will:

- Review demand for support from both Coventry City Council and commissioned providers, addressing disparities in access among various communities.
- Engage in regular dialogue with carers, including via the Adult Social Care Stakeholder Reference Group and Dementia Hub Steering Group, seeking feedback on the action plan's implementation and potential areas for improvement.
- We will monitor national surveys and data collections, providing valuable insights into the overall impact of our efforts.

4. Local and national data

- 4.1. A range of both quantitative and qualitative data is collected regularly to gain a holistic understanding of how carers are supported and their views. Key information in respect of this include the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) indicators, updated on a quarterly basis, the biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England, and locally collected feedback via the 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey.

4.2. There is room for improvement in most areas detailed in the 2021/22 Survey of Adult Carers and ASCOF indicators, some of which can be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of responses also highlighted the fact our carer support offer was not fully meeting the needs of carers. We recognise the need to be more flexible in our approach across health and social care, increase engagement and work more closely with carers and partners to develop support options for carers. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 outlines how the Council and partners will improve this position going forward.

4.3. Quantitative data – ASCOF indicators

4.3.1. The ASCOF indicators, a measure of a local authority's performance in the delivery of statutory social care services, are a combination of Short- and Long-Term data (SALT), Client Level Data Set (CLD) data and elements of qualitative data from the biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England. Local authorities update ASCOF indicators on a quarterly basis and submit data to central government annually.

4.3.2. The below outlines our current 2023/24 ASCOF position in respect of carers specifically for quarter two 2023/24. The yearly ASCOF benchmarking data for 2022/23 is not yet available to compare against other West Midlands authorities or nationally, however comparison data from 2021/22 is noted for reference.

- ASCOF indicator: 1C1B, proportion of carers receiving self-directed support.
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 100% (100% being the highest level of performance)
 - Comparators 2021/22: West Midlands 86.7%, England 89.3%
 - Planned action: The Council will continue to ensure via its practice and interactions with carers that we maintain this high percentage.

- ASCOF indicator: 1C2B, Proportion of carers receiving direct payments for support direct to carer.
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 62.4% (The higher the percentage the better the performance)
 - Comparators 2021/22: West Midlands 78.6%, England 77.6%
 - Planned action: This indicator has increased for the past three quarters in 2023/24 and is also not reflective of wider elements of support offered to carers which does not require a direct payment, including digital and online skills training and support groups. The number of direct payments received is directly linked to the number of carers assessments completed. A key aim in the action plan is to increase awareness of the benefits of carers assessments and increase uptake which will in turn naturally explore potential options for the use of direct payments to access support. We will be refreshing practitioner knowledge on how direct payments can support carers, highlighting what carers can expect from an assessment and tracking the outcome and quality of assessments to ensure they result in meaningful outcomes. Feedback within our local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey also highlighted a lack of awareness amongst carers of how direct payments can be used to offer flexible support. We will shortly be launching carers specific direct payment leaflets and information with the aim of increasing the numbers of carers receiving a direct payment.

- ASCOF indicator 1D: Carer-reported quality of life
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 7 (out of a possible maximum value of 12)
 - Comparators 2021/22: West Midlands 7.2, England 7.3. Across all Councils in England the minimum achieved was a score of 6.1, the highest value achieved being 8.4.
 - Planned action: Indicator 1D is a composite measure which combines individual responses from six questions of the biennial Survey of Adult Carers measuring

different outcomes related to quality of life. These outcomes are mapped against six domains; occupation; control; personal care; safety; social participation and encouragement and support. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 prioritises three overarching areas (flexible respite and breaks options, delivering support at the right time and right place, and maximising the reach of carers assessments) which in turn will aim to positively impact on all six domains of this indicator, thus improving the overall quality of life experienced by carers. The Council will work with Carers Trust and third sector organisations to update the Council website and to centralise information to support easy navigation of support available. The Council and Carers Trust will work with communities, specifically under-served communities and community leaders, to promote information advice and support available. This work will also be undertaken with GP practices to raise awareness of carers support and identify hidden carers.

- ASCOF indicator: 1I2, Proportion of carers who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like.
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 24.6% (The higher the percentage the better the performance)
 - Comparators 2021/22: West Midlands 29.4%, England 28%
 - Planned action: Apparent from our local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey was how isolating and all-consuming the caring role can become, and the guilt carers can experience in wanting time to themselves despite it being imperative to their overall wellbeing. We also recognise the link between accessing support groups or taking time to socialise with ensuring alternate care provision is in place to allow the carer time to do so. We will target this area in the action plan through ensuring access to respite and break provision is flexible, available, and accessible, including utilising support from charities, grants and promoting community-based alternative options. We will also aim to improve the range of support options available to enable opportunities for socialising with others, and ensuring support groups are meaningful and work to build friendship networks for carers.

- ASCOF indicator: 3B, Overall satisfaction of carers with social services
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 32% (The higher the percentage the better the performance)
 - Comparators 2021/22: West Midlands 34.6%, England 36.3%
 - Planned action: Further to both local feedback and national data, we recognise the need to refresh our carers support offer in its entirety to better reflect the current needs of carers in Coventry. This will include a total re-model of commissioned carers support and respite services, work with the third sector and community groups on alternative support models and a review of wider support services available, alongside how we present this information via Coventry City Council website to current and future carers in an accessible, user-friendly manner. Our Carers Action Plan 2024-26 centres on three key areas to improve this offer, specifically access to flexible respite and break provision, ensuring the right support is delivered at the right time and right place, and maximising the reach of carers assessments. By developing these areas in conjunction with carers themselves we can provide a robust offer, tailored to need, which will in turn make a positive difference in levels of carer satisfaction.

- ASCOF indicator: 3C, Proportion of carers who report that they have been included or consulted in discussion about the person they care for
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 66.5% (The higher the percentage the better the performance)
 - Comparator 2021/22: West Midlands 61%, England 64.7%

- Planned action: A key action within our Carers Action Plan 2024-26 is to work with the Integrated Care Board, health professionals, advocates, and Adult Social Care practitioners to ensure carers are involved in decisions and are kept informed through hospital admissions and discharge. It is imperative that carers are involved in such discussions to ensure their expertise and insight on the individuals support needs are considered, to ensure they themselves as carers are willing and able to deliver support, and whether there is any further support either individual requires.
- ASCOF indicator: 3D2, Proportion of carers who find it easy to find information about services.
 - Q2 2023/24: Coventry City Council 58.7% (The higher the percentage the better the performance)
 - Comparator 2021/22: West Midlands 54.8%, England 57.7%
 - Planned action: In undertaking local engagement we have received feedback carers would like information to be easily available, with specific requests for this to be available in paper formats. We will also consider the accessibility of information, including use of social media, ensuring this is available in areas frequented regularly by carers, for example supermarkets, GP practices, pharmacies, food hubs, and schools and colleges (for young carers) and that its contents resonate with individuals who may not identify as or realise they are a carer. We recognise taking on a caring role can often happen gradually over time, overnight, or even without realising; improving carer awareness and access to information prior to taking on the role will ensure people can better recognise themselves as a carer sooner and are therefore aware of where to access support to reduce delay. The Council will work with partners and engage with young and adult carers to promote training for carers and understand any gaps in training, for example condition specific training. The Council will work with Carers Trust to develop a carer mental health and resilience toolkit to support carers with their own mental health and wellbeing.
- SALT data 2021/22: No. of carers supported per 100,000.
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 457, West Midlands average 856 (The higher the number the better the performance)
 - Planned action: Coventry City Council and partners aim to improve and increase knowledge of carer support services, carers assessments, and access to respite and break provision as outlined in the Carers Action Plan 2024-26. Ensuring carers have access to appropriate support is essential to carers remaining safe, well, and able to complete their caring role as needed. This number does not however capture services and support accessed through third sector organisations, including Carers Trust, Alzheimer's Society and Age UK, who work to support a significant number of carers with information, advice and practical support. In 2022/23, Carers Trust supported 2327 individual carers (6830 contacts) in the city with information, advice, and support. There is also a significant number of carers who self-serve via assessing information and advice available online. Notably through our local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey and evident in national research, carers do not necessarily recognise themselves as carers or relate to carer-specific services or information, thus creating a barrier to accessing support. Through a refresh of our website and literature, reviewing the language used to ensure relatability and recognising the potential societal and cultural barriers to accessing support (for example in some cultures there is no translation for the term 'carer') we can tailor our offer to the diverse needs of carers in the City.

4.4. Qualitative data

- 4.4.1. NHS Digital conduct a biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care to provide qualitative data on how effective,

suitable and accessible carers view the support available in the city. The results of this survey feed into monitoring, and specific questions are used to populate measures in the NHS Transformation Directorate, formerly Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) as noted above.

4.4.2. The results from the biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021/22 provided useful context on the demographics and overall caring responsibilities of carers in Coventry, as follows:

- 71% of Carers live with the person they care for
- 41% of Carers spend over 100 hours a week caring.
- 34% of Carers have been performing caring duties for over 10 years.
- 43% of Carers are aged between 18-64
- 73% of people looked after by Carers are aged over 65.

4.4.3. The biennial Survey of Adult Carers 2021/22 results, along with the results of our local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey in 2023, have highlighted specific areas that necessitate improvement actions. This includes a focus on improving the isolation carers experience, carers not feeling safe and carers not having enough time for themselves.

4.4.4. Themes of self-neglect, increased isolation and community contact scored at a higher rate than the regional and national averages. The Coventry City Council Insight Team reported that 19% of Coventry neighbourhoods are amongst the 10% most deprived nationally in England (CCC Insight Team, Health and Wellbeing 2019-23 Strategy Data) which likely contributed to the reported levels of self-neglect and limited social contact due to affordability.

4.4.5. The 2023/24 biennial Survey of Adult Carers in England has been circulated to Coventry residents between October – November 2023. The results of this survey are expected to be available in January 2024 and will further inform the Carers Action Plan 2024-26.

4.4.6. Results of the national 2021/22 biennial Survey of Adult Carers are noted below against regional and national comparators, alongside how we will work to improve these areas via the Carers Action Plan 2024-26. The biennial Survey of Adult Carers 2021/22 was sent to 1027 carers who had received an assessment or review within the 12 months prior to the survey, with 314 responses (30.5%) received.

- **Percentage of carers who feel they have no control over their daily life.**
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 20.5%, West Midlands average 16.5%, National average 15.7% (The lower the percentage the better the performance)
 - Planned action: Whilst many factors outside of adult social care will affect how carers respond to this question, Coventry City Council and partners aim to address the issue of carers feeling they have no control over their daily life by ensuring access to a variety of tailored, flexible, and reliable break and respite options by commissioning and identifying more creative support options. A new community alternative model of support is currently being designed and will be launched shortly. We also aim to also increase the numbers of carers utilising assistive technology by improved communication and networking, to increase carers 'free' time.
- **Percentage of carers who feel they are neglecting themselves.**
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 24.5%, West Midlands average 20.3%, National average 19.5% (The lower the percentage the better the performance)

- Planned action: Coventry City Council and partners aim to increase access to alternative support options for carers to ensure they have time to themselves. The pressure of the cost-of-living crisis, especially within areas of high deprivation, can also contribute to carers neglecting their own needs to support their cared for. Carers who may be at financial risk can be identified using the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) where support can be targeted to at risk households to assist carers manage their finances and be supported to understand benefit entitlement. To date through pilot work, 17 carers have been supported to claim pension credit. We will continue to work closely with and promote support organisations who can offer financial advice or support to carers, and scope work on community alternatives support to ensure communities are equipped to identify individuals who are potentially neglecting themselves and offer support or seek this from services where appropriate.
- **Proportion of carers who are 'extremely worried' about their personal safety.**
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 3.6%, West Midlands average 2.1%, National average 2% (The lower the percentage the better the performance)
 - Planned action: Whilst many factors outside of adult social care will affect how carers respond to this question, further engagement is planned with Coventry carers to better understand the cause of this concern in respect their personal safety. We are keen to understand further whether this is due to external factors outside of social care, for example the area they live, environmental concerns or other factors. Following this we will include specific actions to address this in our Carers Action Plan 2024-26 moving forward and feed into wider work with partners on aspirations for the city.
- **Percentage of carers who have safety concerns.**
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 19.9%, West Midlands average 19.1%, National average 19.4% (The lower the percentage the better the performance)
 - Planned action: Whilst factors outside of adult social care will impact the levels of safety reported by carers, the Coventry Household Survey 2022 provides further context in relation to feelings of safety by residents in the city, with 77% feeling safe during the day in their local area, but only 45% feel safe after dark. Residents living in Longford, Henley, Lower Stoke and Upper Stoke reported as having a particularly low level of safety. Coventry City Council, Adult Social Care, and Housing teams will work with the Police, the Councils Community Safety Team and other partners to better understand this area including the support required and will target initial work towards those wards reporting a lower sense of safety.
- **Percentage of carers who feel they receive no encouragement or support in their caring role.**
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 25%, West Midlands average 26.4%, National average 22.8% (The lower the percentage the better the performance)
 - Planned action: Though Coventry City Council has a lower percentage than the West Midlands average, although higher than the national average, we still aim to work with partners to support carers and ensure they feel valued and encouraged to undertake their caring role. This includes working with local businesses (for example, leisure and hospitality businesses) to develop a carers offer and a Go CV+ discount to promote carers overall health and wellbeing. We will also work to proactively circulate and publicise information on our support offer to enable carers to self-support or access services, ensuring such information is readily available in a range of settings and formats. Through the new community alternative model, we aim to improve the support available to carers in their community to ensure they do not feel alone in their role and that they feel supported.

- **Percentage of carers who feel they never have enough time to carry out their carer responsibilities.**
 - Related statistics: Coventry City Council outturn 8.1%, West Midlands average 6.1%, National average 5.5% (The lower the percentage the better the performance)
 - Planned action: Coventry City Council will further investigate via engagement with carers and a review of best practice and offers of other local authorities how assistive technologies can support carers in their caring role and give carers a break. An important aim of our new community alternative model support offer will be to give time back to carers. The Council will develop a respite FAQs document to support understanding of available options, which include use of direct payments.

5. Local engagement

5.1. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 has been developed following a series of engagement exercises with both carers and local third sector organisations. This includes targeted work to gain an understanding of how we can better support carers.

5.2. To further understand and respond to carers' needs, the Adult Social Care Commissioning Team created and administrated a localised survey launched via the Let's Talk platform on 7 March 2023. This survey ran until 12 May 2023. There were responses from 163 individuals.

5.3. Results of the local 'Let's Talk' Coventry Carers Survey echoed similar themes to the 2021/22 Survey of Adult Carers in England. These themes are noted below. What is evident is the life changing impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had upon carers' lives and how many still feel that a return to pre-COVID 'normality' is out of reach. The local 'Let's Talk' survey highlighted the challenges many carers experience, including:

- Theme: Poorer experiences of social care and healthcare provision, particularly hospital discharge and access to Primary Care. This included confusion on roles and responsibilities of each organisation.
 - Planned action: The Council's local 'Let's Talk' survey indicated carers most commonly seek support from their GP in the first instance. GP's and primary care are therefore a key link to identifying hidden carers and a segway for the introduction of support or information to these individuals. To capitalise on these links, Carers Trust have linked with four primary care services in the city to hold drop-in clinics and carers assessments at GP practices, with a view to expanding this further. We will continue to work with the Integrated Care Board, health professionals and Adult Social Care practitioners to ensure carers are involved in decisions and kept informed through hospital admissions and discharge processes.
- Theme: The psychological impact of COVID lockdowns and feelings of abandonment during this time. Caring responsibilities increased or intensified; many carers reported caring until breaking point.
 - Planned action: Counselling, group or peer support and emotional support is available to carers (since a pause from lockdown) and we will continue to promote awareness and uptake of these services to improve this position via our website, communications, carers assessments, monthly carers bulletins and Adult Social Care open days taking place across the city.
- Theme: Lack of consistent or suitable breaks

- Planned action: As noted in the Carers Action Plan 2024-26, respite and breaks are a specific focus and we will work with carers to design an offer that is relevant and fit for purpose, reliable and flexible to individual requirements.
- Theme: Continued anxiety around infection risks from COVID.
 - Planned action: The Council will ensure carers are informed on available vaccinations (flu, COVID etc) and have access to training or information on infection control practices. Our monthly Carers Bulletin and website provide a wealth of information provided from Public Health and other health colleagues to provide an overview of the latest information to support carers.
- Theme: Economic challenges are a significant concern, with some carers depleting savings and struggling to afford essentials like food and heating.
 - Planned action: The Council will utilise our LIFT tracker to identify possible 'hidden carers' who may need some support and information. Carers Trust continue to provide support to carers through carers one-off direct payments on behalf of the Council; these are often used to support or relieve carers with financial pressures related to their caring role, for example, a new washing machine to support additional laundry requirements. A comprehensive cost of living training session was delivered by the Coventry Law Centre to Carers Trust staff to equip them with knowledge of and links to local support available to support individuals struggling with these financial pressures. Ongoing advice in respect of this will continue to be distributed via their general communications and when undertaking carers assessments where workers can support carers in identifying and applying for applicable benefits, grants, and financial support.
- 5.4. To further develop and finalise the Carers Action Plan, ongoing engagement and consultation has taken place with carers, third sector organisations and the Stakeholder Reference Group and Dementia Steering Group.
- 5.5. Views and experiences of carers have been used to form the priorities outlined in the Carers Action Plan 2024-26.

6. Community Alternatives Model of Carers Support

- 6.1. A community alternatives model of support is currently being designed by the Council's Carers Team and partners to identify community support options for carers. One of the aims of the project will be 'buy back time for carers', to assist them in their daily life and allow carers to have short periods of time away from their caring role.
- 6.2. The options being explored consist of free low-level support aiming to provide meaningful, practical aid to carers. This will include shopping and errand running, providing supervision or 'sit in' support to the cared for to allow carers to pop out, or support with household tasks such as cooking or gardening.
- 6.3. In addition, through this work we will grow awareness of unpaid carers in the community, enabling the community to better identify people or themselves as carers, and ensure support can be accessed in a timely manner. Through building relations and community support networks, we aim to increase individuals' sense of safety within their local area.

7. Carers' Rights

- 7.1.** The Carers Leave Act 2023 allows carers to take up to 5 days unpaid 'Carers' Leave' from work to care for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives or friends. In addition, the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 gives carers, from the first day of employment, the legal right to ask their employer for flexible working arrangements including changes to working hours, times, or location. Carers are also able to ask for a different flexible working arrangement more than once a year.
- 7.2.** Both Acts are expected to come into force in 2024 and will support working carers to remain in employment whilst juggling their caring responsibilities. Coventry City Council will ensure promotion of these rights with both unpaid carers and employers in the City, including adult social care providers, via our communications to carers, through carers assessments, via our literature and making links with employers.

8. Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

- 8.1.** A young carer is defined in The Care Act 2014 as a child or young person under 18 and a young adult carer is as aged between 18 and 25 who provide unpaid care for a friend or family member who is disabled, physically or mentally ill, has a long-term serious illness, or has a substance misuse problem. This is a role that many young people are happy and proud to do. However, inappropriate or excessive levels of caring by children and young people can put their education, training or health at risk, and may prevent them from enjoying their childhood.
- 8.2.** Some young carers may be susceptible to poor outcomes because they frequently miss out on normal childhood experiences and lack the social networks experienced by their friends without caring roles. Evidence shows that 30% of Young Carers experience problems at school with attendance, attainment, and social development, rising to 40% where they care within a family affected by substance misuse. In addition, there may be physical problems such as excessive tiredness or injury from lifting and assisting others, and emotional and mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, and a sense of isolation.
- 8.3.** Coventry City Council commissions specific young carers support through the Carers Trust "Young Carers Project" to assist the local authority in identifying and providing information and support to young carers, and complete statutory "Young Carers' Needs Assessments" on behalf of the council through a delegated responsibility under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. In 2021/22, The Carers Trust completed 157 young carers needs assessments and a further 91 complete in 2022/23. The service maintains contact with approximately 400 young carers on an annual basis.

9. Culturally Sensitive Support

- 9.1.** To ensure our Carers Action Plan 2024-26 best supports individuals from under-served communities, we will be working with a range of third sector organisations supporting such communities to better tailor our carer support offer and breakdown barriers in accessing support by working to provide culturally sensitive services, information and advice, and targeted promotion within underserved communities. This will include the use of translators and translated literature, ensuring staff delivering services or assessments are aware of potential cultural sensitivities, and working with existing contacts and community leaders to help build trust within these communities. We have progressed action in this area through meeting with leaders of the 'Multi-Faith Forum' to request support in our engagement with communities and have also linked with the Migration Team to better understand the needs of Hong-Kong and Cantonese carers to develop specific literature and support to ensure understanding by individuals of this culture.

10. Palliative and End of Life Care Support

- 10.1.** The demand on unpaid carers when providing palliative and end of life support to a loved one can often lead to some of the most physically, emotionally, and mentally challenging times they will experience. Alongside this they may be experiencing their own feelings of shock, worry and grief. It is therefore profoundly important that personalised, sensitive support is in place.
- 10.2.** Coventry City Council will continue to work alongside the Integrated Care Board to ensure carers are a priority in all elements of planning and delivery of the aims of the Palliative and End of Life Strategy. In addition to this via the Compassionate Coventry and Warwickshire: Experience of Care Project working group, we will use carers experiences to inform how services are delivered.

11. Co-dependencies

- 11.1.** The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 will not sit in isolation to other policy documents and will supplement and enhance the following strategies and implementations plans:
- Coventry and Warwickshire's Living Well with Dementia Strategy (2022-2027)
 - Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy (2021-2026)
 - Coventry and Warwickshire - Integrated Care Partnership – Strategy (2022)
 - Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy (2023-2028)
- 11.2.** To ensure efficiency and best use of resources the local authorities, Coventry and Warwickshire will work jointly where actions are aligned across the individual action plans, for example improving the carer offer of GP's and primary care.

12. Options considered and recommended proposal.

12.1. Option One – Endorse the Carers Action Plan 2024-26 (recommended option)

Producing and publishing a Carers Action Plan sets out with clarity how Coventry City Council, collaborating with partners, aims to achieve to improve the support offer for carers in Coventry. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 is based on carer engagement, local

requirements, and using national information and data sets, focusing on three priority areas to better support carers in the city.

12.2. Option 2 – Maintain existing carers support offer and not endorse the plan (not recommended)

The existing carers support offer is not reflective of current carer needs as reported in both national and local surveys. To continue with this offer could lead to a decline in carers reported satisfaction and possible increased carer breakdowns.

13. Timetable for implementing this decision

Should the Carers Action Plan 2024-26 be endorsed, implementation will commence with immediate effect.

14. Comments from Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and Chief Legal Officer

14.1. Financial Implications

14.1.1. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 has been developed jointly with local carer groups, Stakeholder Reference Group and Dementia Steering Group, NHS partners and the third sector. The aims of the Carers Action Plan will be met from within the existing financial resources available.

14.1.2. By ensuring carers are supported we aim to prevent carer breakdown and deterioration of the mental and physical health of both the individual and carer by ensuring carers are equipped to provide care for the individual. Without this support costly interventions can often be required and cause additional distress to both the carer and cared for.

15. Legal Implications

15.1. The Care Act (2014) is a pivotal piece of legislation which created parity of esteem for carers, meaning that carers have the same legislative rights to an assessment and are considered to have needs in their own right. This means that anyone who identifies as a carer can request a carer's assessment. The general duty of a local authority in exercising its functions under the Care Act 2014 in respect of an individual is *'to promote that individual's well-being'* and in the case of carers, this includes the *'importance of achieving a balance between the individual's well-being and that of any friends or relatives who are involved in caring for the individual'* and when completing a carer's assessment the Authority must specifically consider whether a carer is "willing" and "able" to provide care and to continue to do so. This is a crucial conversation with any carer receiving an assessment of their needs.

15.2. More broadly the Care Act 2014 places a responsibility on local authorities; to "prevent, reduce & delay" the needs of people from arising. Carers form a significant part of this responsibility and are key to prevention. This has meant that locally services have been developed to respond to carers needs at a much earlier point in their journey, even at the point of contemplating taking on caring responsibilities.

15.3. The Care Act 2014 has had an impact on the way services are delivered to carers. The Care Act 2014 is explicit that services such as replacement care and respite are considered services for the cared for person. This then has an impact on the way in which services are

charged for and means tested. However direct support for carers such as Carers Direct Payments are not charged for.

15.4. The Council has a legal obligation under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those who do not share it. These matters have formed an integral part of the decision-making processes in relation to the continuation of the Dementia strategy. The Council continues to engage with service users and representative groups, and use the information and views gathered in its consultation and equality impact in order to achieve accessible and inclusive service provision.

16. Other implications

16.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

16.1.1. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 will contribute to the One Coventry Plan in a number of ways including:

- Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within communities
- Continued financial sustainability of the Council.
- Council's role as a partner, enabler and leader

16.2. How is risk being managed?

16.2.1. Without a robust Carers Action Plan in place to improve support for carers, we risk the general health and wellbeing of carers and the individuals which they support.

16.2.2. There is also an increased financial risk where preventative action is not taken to support carers and reduce the risk of carer breakdown, resulting in increased care costs.

16.2.3. Any risks identified as part of delivery of the Carers Action Plan will be managed via Coventry City Council and Integrated Care Board governance mechanisms.

16.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

None

16.4. Equalities / EIA?

16.4.1. An EIA is attached as Appendix 2 to this report and indicates both carers and individuals will benefit positively from the proposed Carers Action Plan, including:

- Promoting services to and encouraging uptake of support from underserved communities. Specifically, we will be working with community leaders and faith groups to improve understanding of support available and how this can be accessed.
- Reduce barriers to accessing support (e.g., digital, financial) by ensuring this is available in a range of settings, communities and locations across the city and is not reliant on technology to deliver training, for example a mix of online and in person training or support.

17. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

None.

18. Implications for partner organisations?

18.1. The Carers Action Plan 2024-26 supports the Health and Care system vision that we will do everything in our power to enable people across Coventry to pursue happy, healthy lives and put people at the heart of everything we do. Partner organisations involved in the development of the Carers Action Plan will contribute to the delivery of the priorities outlined.

Report author(s):**Name: Neil Byrne****Title: Service Manager****Name: Chloe Elliott****Title: Carers and Engagement Lead****Service: Adult Services and Housing****Tel and email contact:****Neil Byrne****Tel: 02476972765****Email: Neil.Byrne@coventry.gov.uk****Chloe Elliott****Tel: 02476972429****Email: Chloe.Elliott@coventry.gov.uk****Enquiries should be directed to the above person(s)**

Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Thomas Robinson	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	08/11/23	08/11/2023
Jon Reading	Commissioning Service Manager	Adult Services	08/11/23	08/11/2023
Sally Caren	Head of Adult Social Care and Support	Adult Services	10/11/23	14/11/2023
Tracey Denny	Head of Service Localities and Social Care Operations	Adult Services	10/11/23	14/11/2023
Aideen Staunton	Acting Head of Service – Partnerships and Social Care Operations	Adult Services	10/11/23	14/11/2023
Finance: Ewan Dewar	Finance Manager	Finance	10/11/23	14/11/2023
Legal: Janice White	Solicitor – Team Leader People Team	Law and Governance	10/11/23	14/11/2023
Names of approvers: (officers and members)				
Director: Pete Fahy	Director of Adult Services and Housing		10/11/23	14/11/2023
Members: Councillor Linda Bigham	Cabinet Member for Adult Services		14/11/23	16/11/2023

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