

	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 23 July 2024
	Report from the Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing
	Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing - Councillor Neil Nerva
Brent Carer's Strategy 2024-2027	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Brent Carers' Strategy 2024-2027 Appendix 2 – Supporting Informal Carers
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The report sets out the council's responsibilities to carers, provides demographic information on carers in the borough, and carers supported by Adult Social Care. The report also includes information on the engagement work that has taken place to inform and develop the Carer's strategy for unpaid carers and an overview of the draft implementation plan.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Health and Wellbeing Board Members are asked to review and comment on the proposed work to improve support for Carers in the Borough and:

- Support the development and implementation of the Carers Strategy 2024 – 2027
- Sign-off a final version of the Brent Carers Strategy 2024 – 2027
- Review and comment on the proposed implementation plan of the Brent Carers Strategy

3.1 Detail

3.1.1 Unpaid carers play an essential role in keeping vulnerable residents independent in our communities, often providing support that delays, or prevents admissions to hospitals, or more expensive and restrictive forms of care. As such, supporting people in their caring roles is a high priority not just for Adult and Children's Social Care, but for all the partners within the Integrated Care Partnership.

3.2 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.2.1 Amongst other stakeholders, carers were consulted as part of the development process of the Borough Plan (2023-2027). This report relates to Priority 5 of the borough plan - A Healthier Brent (Desired Outcome 1: Tackling Health Inequalities) Informal carers are twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to the general population. Carers who provide more hours of care a week have poorer health.

3.2.2 The Brent Carers Strategy aims:

- To set out a local offer for carers in Brent that includes all the different forms of support across health and social care available to carers in one place, as well as details of how each one can be accessed.
- Continually listen to the challenges that carers tell us they are facing and aim to develop services and resources that will make real, long-lasting differences in their lives.
- Clarify the various elements of our respite offer. This will also include reviewing the respite and short break requests, ensuring that this service responds to carers in a timely manner while supporting their needs.

3.3 Background

3.3.1 The 2021 census estimates that in England and Wales, 5 million people aged five and over provide unpaid care to family members, friends, neighbours, or others in need. Unpaid care is often an expression of unconditional love and respect for the person supported, and as such, it is priceless and difficult to quantify. To raise awareness of the importance of unpaid carers in society, it is essential to assign a monetary value to the care that unpaid carers provide. Carers UK estimates that unpaid care is a cost avoidance to the health and social care system, equivalent to £162 billion year.

3.3.2 The work of unpaid carers is vital in ensuring the sustainability of the Health and Social Care system. For unpaid carers to be adequately supported, the totality of the Health and Social Care system and the wider community and voluntary sector must come together behind this purpose. As such, the new Brent Carers Strategy 2023-27 for unpaid carers is not solely the Adult Social Care commitment but a true partnership approach in recognition of the need for this to be delivered as a system and community-wide approach to supporting those who provide unpaid care.

3.4 Who is Caring in Brent?

3.4.1 The 2021 census confirmed that there are 22,845 unpaid carers in Brent. Between the 2011 and 2021 census, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of unpaid carers in the population, but a higher proportion of those who provide care are providing a greater level of care. This may reflect a change to the wording of the question in the 2021 Census but may also reflect an impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people's circumstances or behaviours, such as household mixing rules.

3.4.2 Our carer population is ageing, particularly those providing 50+ hours of care each week. Unpaid carers have an older age profile than the general population and are

older than in the 2011 census population. 45% of carers 65+ provide 50 or more hours of care a week.

3.4.3 Full details of the Census data can be found in the draft carer's strategy, in Appendix 1.

3.4.4 The above captures only identified carers. There are significant numbers of hidden carers in the borough who are not accessing support services. A key priority within the strategy is to support increased identification of carers by universal services and targeted services. For example, one outcome of successful implementation of the strategy will be increased identification of young carers by health providers and schools.

3.5 Development of the Carers Strategy

3.5.1 The Brent Carers Strategy has been informed by and takes into consideration legislative and policy framework. Policies which outline Brent Council's legal requirements and vision to see all carers recognised include:

- a) The Care Act 2014, under which local authorities have a duty to provide preventative support services to carers, with a focus on well-being and an emphasis on the needs of Carers through carers' assessments.
- b) The Care Act and the Children and Families Act - should work together to assess and meet the holistic needs of the family to prevent or reduce inappropriate or excessive care for young carers.
- c) The Equality Act 2010 - states that no individuals should be discriminated against in service provision, employment, or education because of any of the protected characteristics under the Act. Carers cannot face discrimination based on their association with or support of a disabled person.
- d) The NHS Long Term Plan 2019 – recognises that many carers are older people living with complex and multiple long-term conditions. It outlines how the NHS will work with Carers to improve recognition and strengthen support services to address the individual health needs of carers.
- e) Carers Act 1995 – states that the right to a carers assessment also applies to carers of disabled children.
- f) Health and Care Act 2022 – provides details of the requirements to consult carers and involve carers in hospital discharges.

3.5.2 The term "carer" is defined in the Care Act 2014. The Brent Carers Strategy recognises carers in a far broader sense. Too narrow a definition risks people not getting the recognition and support they need. A carer is anyone who provides any care or support to an individual, such as a relative, partner, friend, or neighbour, who needs assistance in their day-to-day life and cannot manage without help. Carers do this without payment, and they are not under a contractual obligation to provide care.

3.5.3 The engagement programme for the new Brent Carers Strategy 2024-2027 began in November 2022 and consisted of officers hosting a series of events and attending existing carers groups and forums to undertake focus groups and interviews with both unpaid carers, and relevant professionals.

- 3.5.4 Although some of the conversations were challenging, they were necessary. Carers highlighted the requirement for services to do more to support and appreciate carers in Brent. Those conversations were essential in developing a shared vision of how services can improve.
- 3.5.5 Feedback from engagement with carers was very consistent in terms of the challenges that carers felt needed to be addressed most urgently:
- Information is hard to find - both health and care information for the cared-for person, and wider support for carers such as GP appointments, benefits and so on
 - Services are fragmented – creating frustration in continually repeating requests or information.
 - Carers don't feel valued or listened to by some Health and Social Care professionals.
 - There isn't enough support for well-being - there is demand for more and varied respite and more personalised opportunities for self-care.
- 3.5.6 Throughout the development of this strategy, we have kept the values of the Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) in mind; putting the resident at the heart of its development, working in partnership, and really listening to our community of people who care, to understand what matters to them, and what will have the biggest impact for them, whilst also considering the sustainability of the health and care system. This strategy takes its roots in what carers have told us they want, rather than the vision of what has been set out by the Health and Care system.
- 3.5.7 Collectively, we agreed that we want Brent to be a place for people who provide unpaid care are:
- Seen and heard when accessing services
 - Supported as individuals, with more opportunities to be themselves
 - Valued for the care they provide.
- 3.5.8 A collection of actions, grouped within six key themes, were developed with carers to address these challenges, and to address the significant gap between the number of carers known to the health and care system, and the number of residents providing unpaid care according to census data.
- 3.5.9 Co-produced to reflect the voices of the carers we spoke with; we have identified 6 key commitments we intend to implement in the next 3 years.
1. Access to information
 2. Partnership working
 3. Supporting wellbeing
 4. Carer awareness
 5. Reaching into communities
 6. Supporting young carers at the start of their caring journey

3.6 Carers Strategy Implementation

- 3.6.1 We are currently developing a Carers Strategy Implementation plan to ensure that the strategy is effectively executed, and the commitments made to carers and young carers are delivered. An overarching principle of the Strategy will be adopting the No Wrong Doors Memorandum of Understanding designed to improve joint working between adult and children's social care services, integrated care boards and other key organisations in respect of identification and support for young carers and their

families. It covers a range of areas such as identification, whole-family approaches to support and transitions from children to adult services.

- 3.6.2 As there are around 30 activities identified in the strategy, a prioritisation exercise has also taken place involving engagement with carers via the attendance of a listening event and the publication of a survey, to solicit their views on what activities included in the strategy should be prioritised.
- 3.6.3 This plan will include key milestones, actions, and resources required for each of the activities, as well as associated timelines. It will also incorporate project management tools such as a risk register and will ensure accountability by indicating how the impact associated with each activity will be evaluated.

3.7 Carers Support Services

- 3.7.1 Brent Adult Social Care commissioned a Carers Support Service through a contract with Brent Carers Centre. Work on the specification for the newly commissioned service ran alongside the engagement of the new Brent Carers Strategy. Based on feedback from carers, outcome measures were included in the carer's contract to ensure the new Carers Service can meet the needs of Brent's informal carers and address the key issues highlighted in the Carers Strategy.
- 3.7.2 Brent Carers Centre provide support to 7199 local informal carers. Services include the following:

Adult Carers

- Advice and information
- Benefits advice, form filling and money matters
- Carer Assessments (assistance in completing the carers assessment)
- Education and training workshops
- Peer Support Groups & Activities
- Respite (sitting service / short Breaks / befriending and PA support)
- Quarterly Carers Forum
- Emergency planning
- Carers counselling

Young Carers

- Early Help Assessments
- Information, advice and signposting
- Advocacy and representation
- Young Carers support group and forums
- Trips and activities

3.8 Review and Monitoring of the Carers Strategy and Implementation Plan

- 3.8.1 The Brent Carers Strategic Board reports to the Health and Well-being Board. It includes membership from Brent Council Adult Social Care, Public Health, Children and Young People Services, Integrated Care Partnership, CNWL Mental Health Trust, the voluntary sector, the independent sector, and, most importantly, service users and Carers.
- 3.8.2 The Carers Strategic Board will oversee the implementation of the actions in the Carers strategy, measuring meaningful outcomes and monitoring impact. The Board

will review the Carer's strategy to ensure it responds to changing circumstances and remains relevant to the needs of local carers.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 Brent Council Officers organised two carers celebration events at the Brent Civic Centre in November 2022 and June 2023, where we invited the entire carer community in Brent, including providers and unpaid carers. We were able to hear the views and experiences of participants, which helped to shape the development and implementation of the Carers Strategy.
- 4.2 In addition to the above events, officers set aside specific engagement with young carers in the Granville community centre in August 2022 and young carer's social activity events in March 2024.
- 4.3 Engagement has been undertaken with a wide range of partners in the development and implementation of the Carers strategy and gaining commitment to the proposed actions.

This has included:

- Regular updates and drafts to the carers board
- Regular updates to the Lead Members for Community Health and Wellbeing, Children and Young People and Schools
- Presentations to the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Executive
- Report and presentation to the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
- Attendance at Mental Health workstream meetings, and the CP partnership forum
- A Senior Managers Group (SMG session) to gain Council-wide input.
- Meetings with relevant service leads from across our provider partners.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 Adult Social Care commissions an all-ages Carers Support provider on behalf of both Adults and Children's services. Recommissioning of the service was aligned to the strategy development work, to ensure that the contract specification was able to specifically address the challenges being raised.
- 5.2 Three unpaid carers were part of the evaluation panel in May 2023, and the contract was issued to Brent Carers Centre in July 2023. The contract is let on a 2+1+1 term, with an annual value of £224,000 per year, so up to £896,000 over the duration of the contract if it is extended for the maximum term.
- 5.3 While the commissioned provider will lead on many of the initiatives outlined within the strategy, given the importance of unpaid carers to the health and care system, and the complexity of working across multiple organisations, it is proposed that a "Carers Resources Officer" post is created on a time-limited basis that will support the work of partnership forum, and make a step-change in the provision of accurate information to carers from across the wide range of stakeholders and services.
- 5.4 Carers UK estimates that the cost avoidance to the health and social care system from unpaid carers is £162 billion, so is arguably an area in which care, health and well-being collectively cannot afford not to invest.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The Care Act 2014 is regarded as major legislation focusing on increasing the rights of carers. It puts carers on an equal footing with the individual they care for, with statutory entitlements to assessment and support in their own right. There is a clear focus on promoting carers' well-being and considering the impact caring has on all aspects of their lives.
- 6.2 The Care Act places "well-being at the heart of care and support". Councils must promote the principle of well-being in carrying out assessments and providing support services to carers.
- 6.3 Under the Care Act, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to carry out a Carers Assessment, if they believe a carer may require support, or if a carer requests one. Unpaid Carers have a legal right to access services to support them in their caring role where the assessment identifies needs, and the carer meets the conditions of eligibility set out in the Care Act.
- 6.4 This strategy does not seek to discharge the statutory duties of the local authority. What it hopes to do, is improve unpaid carers' access to universal support services, and improve their overall experience when accessing health and social care services for their loved one. The Council must meet its statutory duties as set out in the Care Act 2014.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 Census 2022 data shows us that the burden of providing unpaid care falls disproportionately on more deprived communities (insert stats). Given that provision of unpaid care is known to place additional pressure on household finances, and the health of the carer themselves, this will exacerbate existing health inequalities within our communities.
- 7.2 Brent Council will build on our statutory duty to carers and will endeavour to routinely identify carers when they access services, assess impact on carers of any policy or service change, and monitor equality of access as we would for other groups who are known to experience inequalities.
- 7.3 The Carers Strategy promotes an integrated approach across the Care Health and Well-being Directorate to advance equality of opportunity to health services and reduce inequalities through accessible health care that achieves outcomes in an integrated way.
- 7.4 In the development and implementation of the Carers Strategy, officers had "due regard" to the provisions of the Equality Act: to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- 7.5 A high proportion of carers face health inequalities. Carers' health is known to be worse than that of non-carers due to the pressures of the role and is compounded by many factors, including providing more than 50 hours of care each week. Carers UK reports that caring has been announced as being a social determinant of health recently by Public Health England. Feeling lonely or isolated is a common experience for carers, as a direct result of their caring role. The impact of isolation on health is wide-reaching, including increased risks of death, cognitive decline, dementia, coronary heart disease and stroke.
- 7.6 The Carers strategy does not disproportionately affect people with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Research also identifies that carers from ethnic

minorities are more likely to have concerns about services not meeting their needs (Carers UK, 2024), the strategy aims to remove or minimise the disadvantages suffered by all unpaid Carers in Brent.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 These proposals have no direct impact on the Council's environmental objectives and climate emergency strategy.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 This report does not relate to any HR or property related issues.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 A comprehensive Community Engagement and Communications Plan supported carers engagement events, carers week celebration events and Carers Strategy Launch.

10.2 Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring for others, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. It also helps people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

10.3 The purpose of this community engagement and communications plan is to:

- Raise awareness and provide information on caring.
- Celebrate carers and highlight different services.
- Launch the carer's strategy to the community.

10.4 The key audience groups we seek to reach and engage with include the following:

- Residents
- Key community organisations/groups/partners, inclusive of emerging communities
- Internal staff
- Young carers
- Formers carers
- Parent carers
- Adult carers
- Sandwich carers – those with caring responsibilities for different generations
- Media
- Universal and specialist services

10.5 The engagement methods will include the following:

- Drop flyers across hubs, libraries, family wellbeing centres, schools and community centres across each Brent Connects area
- Engage with Carers organisations.
- Share information with ethnic minority groups
- Multimedia campaign; website, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
- Share information internally and engage with Brent's internal forums
- Video to be created and circulated highlighting information on carers' experiences.

Report sign off:

Rachel Crossley

Corporate Director of Community Health and Wellbeing