

SOUTH TEES CARERS FORUM

25 November 2020

REPORT

Attendance and apologies list attached (Appendix 1)

Overview

The session was prepared by the South Tees Joint Commissioning Group, with the Chair and facilitator, Declan Baharini, who also prepared the report.

The online meeting brought together members of the South Tees Carers' Forum for the first time since it was established in December 2019. The Forum members:

- Had a presentation on progress on the Carers' agenda and steps towards a South Tees Strategy and action plan to inform commissioning (p1-3)
- Had an opportunity to ask questions, share reflections and raise emerging issues (p3-4, p6)
- Considered and agreed the Terms of Reference (p5)
- Explored how task groups will develop action plans and refine the South Tees Carers Strategy and who else should be involved (p5)

Decisions

Members agreed the Forum Terms of Reference.

Actions

Members will register themselves (as appropriate) and engage any others with an interest or specialism in the task groups in December. Please register with the Chair by email at declanbaharini@talktalk.net

- Task Group 1: Services and systems that work for Carers - 10.30-12.00, Monday 8th December
- Task Group 2: Employment and financial well-being 10.30-12.00, Tuesday 9th December
- Task Group 3: Supporting Young Carers 10.30-12.00, Monday 14th December
- Task Group 4: Recognising and supporting Carers in the wider community and society 10.30-12.00, Tuesday 15th December
- Task Group 5: Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for Carers 10.30-12.00, Wednesday 16th December

Next Forum meeting: 10.30-12.30 24th February 2021

PROGRESS ON THE CARERS AGENDA IN THE LAST YEAR AND TOWARDS A SOUTH TEES CARERS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN TO INFORM COMMISSIONING

Gareth Harding, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council and Chris Walker, Middlesbrough Council (on behalf of the Joint Commissioning Group)

Where We Were

South Tees Carers Forum met in December 2019 following intentions outlined by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and South Tees (now Tees Valley) Clinical Commissioning Group to move towards a collaborative approach to commissioning carer support services across South Tees and developing a joint all-age Carer Strategy. This intention remains the same.

The Forum was intended to act as an advisory body to the Joint Commissioning Group. The draft Terms of Reference were discussed by the Forum in 2019 and have been revised, based on feedback. The Forum also discussed in detail the five themes from the national strategy and proposed local priorities and who should be involved in the development of a South Tees Carers Strategy. This fed into the draft Strategy, circulated in June and updated in October for the Forum meeting.

A number of serious issues occurred in 2020, which have delayed progress on the draft Strategy and the commissioning of services: Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council suffered a cyber-attack, which rendered its systems inoperable and then the Covid-19 pandemic hit. In theory the Joint Commissioning Group could have used the draft Strategy and worked towards commissioning South Tees carer support services in October 2020. However, it was felt that:

- more time was needed to understand the impact of the pandemic and its effect on Carers and services
- the timing was not right to commission new services, which might not be fit for purpose within 6-12 months, given the changing landscape
- it would be unfair to destabilise current providers in the middle of the pandemic and create further uncertainty for Carers themselves

Where we are

Commissioners agreed to extend carer support services for one year across Middlesbrough and Redcar. It was

agreed that further learning from the pandemic was needed to inform future commissioning of services. It has become clear that the provision of services has changed and the level and type of need. Commissioners wanted to know more about how Covid affected informal care, what shape services and support might take in the Covid-world, how people want services to be delivered and what is feasible.

The national action plan (2018-20) expired earlier in 2020 and was to be reviewed in the summer, but this did not happen, so it is not clear what any future national action plan will look like, but which will impact and steer what happens in South Tees. Given that there is another lockdown and no clear picture as to when we will emerge from the pandemic, it is now important to progress with a joint strategy to replace the local authority area strategies that have expired and build on the research that has been coming through locally and nationally about the impact of the pandemic on Carers.

Carers UK *'Caring Behind Closed Doors: Six months on'*

- 4 in 5 unpaid Carers (81%) are currently providing more care than before lockdown.
- More than three quarters (78%) of Carers reported that the needs of the person they care for have increased recently.
- Most Carers (64%) have not been able to take any breaks at all in the last 6 months.
- Over half (58%) of Carers have seen their physical health impacted by caring through the pandemic, while 64% said their mental health has worsened.

Carers Trust *'The Impact of C19 on Young Carers'*

- 40% of young Carers and 59% of young adult Carers say their mental health is worse since Coronavirus.
- 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult Carers are more worried about the future since Coronavirus.
- 66% of young carers and 74% of young adult Carers are feeling more stressed since Coronavirus.
- 69% of both young carers and young adult Carers are feeling less connected to others since Coronavirus.
- 11% of Young Carers and 19.7% of young adult carers report an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.
- 58% of Young Carers who are caring for longer since Covid-19 are spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities. Among young adult Carers the proportion is even higher at 63.6%.
- 7.74% of young carers and 14.94% of young adult Carers who responded to the survey, said that they

are now spending over 90 hours a week caring for a family member or friend.

These reports give a snapshot of some of the impacts and in addition to these statistics nationally, we know carers have been massively affected on a local level by:

- An increase in the time spent caring (many factors)
- Day services closing during lockdown and being on reduced capacity when open
- Reduction in respite opportunities, the ability to access community services
- Exclusion from services that have moved online – creating a greater digital divide
- Bereavement – through the pandemic
- Inability to access health services for themselves and cared for person
- Employment – worries about remaining in work, income, being able to care and work at the same time
- Mental fatigue associated with all aspects of the pandemic – anxieties around care services continuing – domiciliary care being one example.

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) is also developing a regional carer survey, which will provide more data and information.

Where we want to be

Early in the pandemic, we carried out a survey across Forum members to find out about how the pandemic is affecting Carers in our area. Survey findings were shared in June 2020 and it was evident that there was a lot of innovative practice happening during very testing times, but some valuable learning was highlighted:

- The need to work together
- Develop digitally inclusive solutions
- Recognition of the value of volunteers, esp. at a local level
- The need for responsive services particularly in times of crisis
- The need to come up with creative ideas and solutions
- The effect on mental health and the loneliness lockdown causes

Input from Carers and partners is important, to ensure that we can provide the services that Carers say they need, especially in light of the pandemic. The Forum will be our eyes and ears, an informative, advisory group reflecting on what Carers are telling you, what

Reflections, Questions and Answers

the government says we should be doing and defining what is best for people living across South Tees.

Building on the work of the Forum last year, the draft South Tees Carers Strategy is a broad, fluid document based on five key themes taken from the National Carers Action Plan. The original draft was shared with Forum members in June and was tweaked in October for sharing before the Forum meeting in November. Given the effects of the pandemic will last at least for another year and with uncertainties around when the government report is coming out, we feel the need to continue to develop an action plan around the five areas of the draft Strategy:

- Services and systems that work for Carers
- Employment and financial wellbeing
- Supporting Young Carers
- Recognising and supporting Carers in the wider community and society
- Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for Carers

Action planning through task groups on these themes will help determine what is needed, inform the shape of future services and what will be commissioned for delivery from October 2021 onwards.

The draft timetable for commissioning is as follows, being mindful of confidentiality and not giving any information which is not in the public domain. The specification, although it will be informed by the work of the Forum, remains the responsibility of the Joint Commissioning Group. Once the tendering process commences commissioners cannot enter into any discussion outside of the process, however, the work of the forum will continue during this time.

Stage	Dates 2021
Issue Invitation to Tender	June
Submission of final tenders	Late July
Evaluation of final tenders	August
Notification of evaluation to preferred bidders	Late August
Confirmation of award and mobilisation period	September
Contract commencement	October

The Chair opened the session to comments and questions. Some were on screen and some shared in the chat. This section includes both.

Julie Bailey, TV Clinical Commissioning Group: Is it worth explaining for the Carers present, what we mean by commissioning.

Gareth and Chris: Support services, such as Adult Social Care and health are designed and bought from different providers to meet statutory obligations in the Care Act. Commissioners of services seek to ensure that the services they buy reflect the needs of local people who need and use those services, based on evidence and intelligence. There is a tender process, an open competition, where providers propose what and how they would deliver services to meet particular needs. A panel selects which providers are awarded contracts and agree with them how they will deliver services and to whom and how this will be monitored.

Sarah Ross, Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind: The existing grant for a Carers' project was due to finish in December, but has been extended to February due to furlough. Does the commissioning timeline mean that this project will be extended to October?

Chris Walker: The grant was given by Middlesbrough Carers Forum via MVDA. Chris spoke to Mark Davies at MVDA and he will call a meeting to discuss this.

Lee O'Brien: The Carers Trust has produced a new report: A few Hours a Week to Call My Own: Unpaid Carers' call to action for the UK Government to urgently reform social care.

Lee said this report, based on a survey of Carers, reflects the real challenges being faced and the increase in the amount of care being delivered, as well as showing high numbers of Carers are having to give up or reduce work. He had shared this with the Chair and Joint Commissioning Group and it will be sent to the full Forum circulation list following the meeting.

John Cooke, Carer: What support is there for family or kinship Carers? With the closure of schools, lots of people are both caring for loved ones and children. Is there support available for the whole family?

Gareth Harding: Local authorities have a legal duty to ensure carers are able to take a break and also

commission support services from The Junction and Carers Together. There are other options available, such as looking at whole family support, joint assessment, direct payments and having a social worker develop a bespoke support plan for what is needed.

Lee O'Brien, Carers Together: Lee said that it can be difficult to have a whole family approach and as different people in the family may come under different statutory services provided by local authorities (Adult Social Care, Children's and others). Carers Together do provide support for kinship Carers and other services, such as parent carer forums.

Beth Major, The Junction Foundation: The Junction provides support for Young Carers. If there is a caring responsibility in the family, there will be impact on caring roles in the home. The Junction offer a range of support to children and young people depending on what they need. They support online social groups, as well as posting out materials posted out and provide support for emotional wellbeing. The Junction's family workers can develop a plan for the whole family and this might include working with other agencies such as Carers Together to coordinate a plan for the family.

Sarah Ross, M&S Mind: Mind provide a parent Carers service. Sarah said that one of the biggest obstacles for families is knowing what is available in their area. There is an important issue about how we publicise offer and how we communicate it to make the services more widely known about and more accessible.

Chris: Thanked John for raising the issue and said that it would be important for Carers like John to be encouraged to engage in the task groups, to bring these experiences and issues to the fore.

Kelly Baxter MVDA: Recommends looking at the We Care You Care website. There is a specific page on [Kinship Care](#) with contact details for the local Kinship Active Service which is provided by Grandparents Plus. They usually provide activities based on whole kinship families getting fit. Contact: Jane Harmer, who is the Middlesbrough project worker on 07943 865601.

Declan Baharini, Chair: The Chair thanked John for raising this. There is a focus in the draft Strategy on ensuring that services are both mapped and that they are communicated effectively, experiences in the task groups will help shape the strategy and action plan. [We Care You Care](#) is a conduit for a lot of information about services and also has a blog for questions and responses if people want to find out more.

John Cooke: How are commissioned services audited?

Chris Walker: There are quarterly meetings with providers to check they are delivering against what they said they would provide. In addition, there is a requirement to determine whether service users are getting positive outcomes.

Michael Janes, Area leader of Federation of Small Business in the North East and Company Director:

Michael explained he was caring for three different members of his family. He raised the issue of digital inclusiveness – both in terms of equipment, broadband, cyber security, but also in terms of how people interact with services and give support to Carers.

Do people feel that they can provide the services digitally? What is the shortfall? Are we putting in the infrastructure and support to ensure we can provide services and ensure support is there?

Gareth Harding: We are developing a Digital Inclusions Action Plan for Redcar & Cleveland across health & social care. This will be an important element of any future carer support commissioning going forward.

Sarah Ross: The Hope Foundation have a digital inclusion worker and access to free digital equipment for the over 50's in Middlesbrough.

Beth Major, The Junction Foundation: It is different across age groups, both in terms of access to mobile phones and tablets, affordability of data. The Junction obtained a grant to get the equipment for young people as some were not eligible for laptop support from the Local Authorities. There is a longer-term question about digital inclusion if digital services carry on. Some young people can engage better through digital than face to face, others prefer social interaction and in person services.

Lee O'Brien, Carers Together: We have been providing ipads with data to Carers and have developed a range of virtual groups. National and local feedback suggests that the Carers do not always find this helpful because they are caring for somebody and may not be able to speak freely. We are finding that some Carers are now really tired of using digital methods especially if they are in crisis. Access to face to face support has been vital throughout the pandemic. We should be careful not become reliant on digital support.

Terms of Reference

The Chair presented the draft Terms of Reference for the South Tees Carers Forum. These had been discussed in detail at the first Forum meeting in December 2019 and revised based on comments and suggestions at that session. The revised version was circulated with the papers for the meeting.

They were agreed and adopted as the Terms of Reference for the Forum and will be reviewed in November 2021 and annually.

Draft South Tees Carers Strategy and Task Groups

Following on from the previous presentation, the Chair reiterated the timescale and process of developing the Strategy and action plans up to February 2021. This process will inform the commissioning of services, with the invitations likely to be issued in June 2021 and services in place from October 2021.



The Chair gave an overview of the vision of the Strategy and introduced the five strategy themes, with their key objectives and priority outcomes (see draft Strategy document or the summary at Appendix 2). Five Task Groups, one for each theme in the Strategy, will take place in December and again in January/February.

There is an open invitation to Carers, Forum members and any additional experts or those who could help inform the action planning. Dates and online meeting

links for the task groups were shared a week before the Forum meeting and will be shared again after the meeting to encourage people to attend. Forum members were asked to assist in getting people involved who could provide insight or expertise. Anyone interested should register with the Chair.

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Each task group will:

- Share reflections on the impact of the pandemic on Carers and services for Carers
- Consider the Strategy theme in more depth
- Consider the objectives and outcomes
- Agree priorities
- Propose actions to achieve outcomes
- Recommend what needs to be developed to address any gaps
- Suggest key milestones
- Identify (potential) lead/s on actions
- Suggest how progress on actions will be measured

The Chair shared the suggestions from the first Forum meeting about who should be involved and called for any suggestions from those attending. In the chat, it was suggested that Public Health and Carers Together should attend all meetings and that Healthwatch South Tees should be involved across groups. Housing and Libraries were suggested for Task Group 4 and voluntary and community sector organisations supporting Carers for Task Group 1. Individual Carers at the meeting put themselves forward for groups.

Eileen Cowle from The Junction offered to convene a sub-group of Young Carers to feed into the task group discussions, rather than expecting them to attend the groups themselves, which might be intimidating. This was welcomed and any others who felt that this might be a more effective way of engaging Carers would also be welcome to facilitate an approach like this.

Final comments: Recovery and vaccination

In terms of the Strategy and action planning, Lee O'Brien from Carers Together, said that in light of the recent announcements about potential vaccines, one of the aims for national and local organisations will be how we integrate recovery into the strategy.

Next year, we will be in a position to think about the recovery and the task groups should consider whether we expect Carers to be in the position they were pre-Covid-19, what has changed and how we can incorporate recovery into the Strategy and action plans.

A further question was raised by Michael Janes (FSB) who said that how the vaccine is rolled out could also be problematic. If the vaccine is going to the elderly first and the carer is not vaccinated, this could be a major problem for people who are caring. He asked whether the vaccination should be prioritized for the whole family or support bubble, to ensure that care can be continued. In addition, not all cared for people or informal Carers are elderly, so this could present other issues if age is the priority for vaccination.

In terms of the Strategy, Gareth, Chris and Julie from the Commissioning Group said that this would be updated to reflect the changing circumstances. Recovery will be considered in all the task groups, alongside the pandemic and all the current objectives and outcomes.

Gareth said that if we go back to normal, which is unlikely for some time, we would need to rebuild trust, especially in how Carers engage in face to face services.

Chair's final remarks and next steps

The Chair said a reminder of the task groups will be sent out to all Forum members asking for registrations. Forum members were asked to register themselves and/or engage others who should be involved to register with The Chair. Groups will agree the dates of their second sessions when they meet in December.

The Chair will circulate the report of the Forum session within 7 days.

The next Forum meeting is 10.30-12.30, 24th Feb 2021.

The Chair thanked everyone for their input and involvement in the Forum.

Appendix 1: ATTENDANCE LIST

First Name	Second Name	Organisation
Michael	Janes	1600 Systems Ltd and Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
Anne	Sykes	Age UK
Marie	Kerr	Age UK Teesside (Time Out Project)
Kelly-Anne	Westwick	Beyond Housing
John	Cooke	Carer
Rachael	Stirzaker	Carer
Geoff	McPherson	Carer
Emma	Cooper	Carers Together
Lee	O'Brien	Carers Together
Diane	Fleet	Libraries Middlesbrough
Sarah	Ross	Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind
Chris	Walker	Middlesbrough Council (Commissioning)
Polly	Wright	Middlesbrough Council (Commissioning, Prevention)
Emma	McInnes	Middlesbrough Council (Public Health)
Kelly	Baxter	MVDA - Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (We Care You Care)
Jen	Olver	NHS South Tees Hospitals Foundation Trust (Patient Experience and Involvement) James Cook University Hospital
Julie	Bailey	NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (Partnership and Health Inequalities)
Toni	McHale	PCP Pioneering Care Partnership
Anne	Richards	RCVDA - Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Association
Gareth	Harding	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (Commissioning)
Aggie	Keightley-Smith	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (Early Help)
Hayley	O'Shea	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (Social Work)
Hannah	Erdem	Redcar and Cleveland Mind
Rebekah	McClelland	Sanctuary Housing
Declan	Baharini	ST Carers Forum interim chair and facilitator
Anthea	Motson	Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust
Beth	Major	The Junction Foundation
Eileen	Cowle	The Junction Foundation (Young Carers Service)
APOLOGIES		
Kate	Sulley	Redcar and Cleveland Mind
Hazel	Clark	Middlesbrough Council
Mike	Sharman	Middlesbrough Council (Adult Social Care)
Elspeth	Alexander	Middlesbrough Council (Adult Social Care)
Mark	Davis	MVDA - Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Kerry	Knox	NHS England and NHS Improvement
Nicola	Hall	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (Partnerships and Prevention - Early Help)
Julia	Speight	The Green House Surgery R&C (Practice Manager)
Lauren	Perkin	You've Got This

Our Vision

The vision is that, through a joint commissioning approach, an equitable and efficient offer is provided for Carers across South Tees, ensuring that local authority boundaries do not represent boundaries to services. At the same time a collaborative approach to services aligns with the priorities of the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board and the strategic vision for joining up health and social care.

We are committed to ensuring Carers are supported across South Tees in a range of ways. As part of a joined-up and inclusive approach we will:

- Value Carers as real and expert partners in care
- Ensure Carers have access to a wide range of support and supportive opportunities
- Focus on prevention to help avoid Carer breakdown
- Raise awareness amongst the public and staff
- Work in partnership and integrate our ways of working
- Develop a strengths-based approach to build on individual Carer's strengths and resources to make positive personal change

Services and Systems that work for Carers

Objectives

To improve social care and health professional awareness and identification of Carers so that they feel they are properly listened to and that their views are appropriately taken into account

To seek to ensure that individuals are able to access health and social care services in a way that is personal to them

To commission services based on the needs of the Carer, using outcomes data to influence change and develop the market

Primary outcomes

- Training will be available to health and social care professionals, knowledge gaps will be identified and new ideas developed
- Primary Care Networks adopt the National Quality Standards for GPs in supporting carers
- Mechanisms will be in place to routinely collect the views of Carers in the community
- A marketing campaign will be in place to provide Carers in the community with information in a range of formats in different venues across South Tees to provide community-based information
- Carer services across health and social care will have been mapped to identify gaps
- Carers in the community, particularly those not known to services are identified and community capacity and support developed
- Commissioned services will be developed based on local intelligence

Employment and financial well-being

Objectives

To raise the profile of Carers and encourage employers to improve their working practices to enable Carers to continue to work alongside their caring role

To provide support and training to carers to help them to return to work, and at a level that is commensurate with their skills and experience

To assist Carers who want to work to do so

Primary outcomes

- Carer friendly work practices across South Tees will be developed:
 - adopting the National Carer Confident Employer Benchmarking Scheme
 - NHS organisations will implement the new Working Carers Passport as part of the NHS People Plan
 - South Tees Carers Strategy partners will take a 'lead-by-example' role in policy development
- DWP and Welfare Rights will support Carers to access the benefits they are entitled to and the support to stay in work or education

Supporting Young Carers

Objectives

To address the impact of caring on young people and on their education and life chances

To develop training for social workers in adult services around identifying Young Carers and assessing their needs

To improve Young Carers' access to support services to make sure they are properly supported at an early stage and that interventions are put in place promptly where necessary

To improve support for Young Adult Carers to enable them to make positive transitions between the ages of 16-24

Primary outcomes

- Schools across South Tees to have achieved the national Young Carers in Schools Award
- Schools across South Tees will have identified Young Carers Champions
- There will be positive working practices within health and social care services to identify and assess the needs of Young Carers and their families
- Social media platforms are developed to engage with Young Carers in the community
- Robust transition pathway plans will be developed and maintained between Adult and Young Carer services and social care across South Tees

Recognising and supporting Carers in the wider community and society

Objectives

To increase recognition of Carers in society and their local communities and to improve their everyday experiences.

To seek to better understand how loneliness affects Carers and find ways to combat it

To work in partnership with Carers and agencies that support them to develop services to meet their needs

Improve opportunities for Carers to have a life alongside caring, to be active citizens, less isolated, and more connected to family, friends, work, volunteering, education, training, learning and leisure.

Primary outcomes

- Information will be available to Carers in a range of formats and through multiple services, not just those traditionally seen as carer support services
- We will have developed varied and innovative approaches to enable carers to take a break from their caring role
- Technology will be in place to connect Carers, particularly those isolated because of their caring role
- We will have developed services at a community level which are Carer and dementia friendly and help carers engage in social activities.
- There is a Carer Passport scheme established across South Tees

Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for Carers

Objectives

To build and expand on existing knowledge so that we can ensure we continue to develop policies and interventions that target support for Carers appropriately

To carry out research to improve the evidence base of information and data on Carers to inform future strategies to support them

To offer innovative solutions to support Carers

Primary outcomes

- Commissioned Carer support services are regularly and rigorously monitored
- Relevant and robust outcomes data is gathered by Carer services and used to inform future service design and delivery
- New approaches will have been developed to engage Carers not already in receipt of commissioned support, in order to gain their views on the barriers and gaps in service
- Learning and recommendations from national research will be adopted where necessary