

South Tees Carers' Forum Terms of Reference

Background

The Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act place a legal requirement on local authorities and all agencies involved in public care to adopt integration, co-operation and a partnership approach to delivering services. This is in line with the strategic vision of the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board for joining up health and social care across South Tees.

Purpose

The purpose of the South Tees Carers' Forum is:

- To help develop a shared vision and promote robust coordinated services to support both adult and young Carers across South Tees
- To facilitate and enable the voice of Carers to feed into the work of the Forum and reflect their views and needs based on coproduction principles developed by the forum
- To be a conduit for influencing the development of Carers' services across all statutory agencies and in partnership with the voluntary and community sector

Objectives

The main objective of the Forum is to act as an advisory body and help develop a South Tees Carers' Strategy and Action Plan based on local and national priorities set out in the government's National Carers' Action Plan 2018-20:

1. Services and systems that work for Carers
2. Employment and financial well being
3. Supporting Young Carers
4. Recognising and supporting Carers in the wider community and society
5. Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for Carers

As part of this, the Forum will also seek to:

- inform and influence joint commissioning across South Tees and ensure all community-based opportunities are identified and promoted
- help align commissioning intentions into one strategic vision for Carers in South Tees

Outputs/Deliverables

The main output for the Forum is to provide input into and influence a strategic framework and integrated commissioning plan to reflect the needs of Carers and Carers' services in South Tees, which will promote joint priorities and through which statutory responsibilities can be carried out.

As part of this, the Forum will also seek to deliver the following:

- Attract additional resources to the area by supporting partners and stakeholders' joint funding approaches for Carers' support and services, either led by statutory sector organisations or the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Feed into local governance mechanisms and decision-making processes to ensure a joined-up approach across South Tees to include (see Governance):
- Develop and promote different ways that Carers can have their say, share their views and ideas about the progress of the South Tees Carers' Strategy
- Cascade information on service or policy development to Carer groups and relevant departments within their own organisations

- Promote the implementation of service pathways related to Carer support within all organisations where relevant
- Work with Carers and colleagues from across key partnerships, programmes and service departments to implement a comprehensive action plan to enable better support and quality of life for Carers.

Membership

In addition to Carers themselves, the Forum will represent a varied contingent of public and private sector organisations that have first-hand experience of providing support to Carers in our region and can represent the Carer's 'voice' when engaging with Local Authority and strategic partners.

Core stakeholders are anticipated to be:

- Young Carers and Adult Carers' voices
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- Middlesbrough Borough Council
- South Tees Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys Foundation Trust
- Healthwatch
- Local Adult & Young Carer Support Organisations
- Housing Support Organisations
- Voluntary Development Agencies
- Other Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
- Primary Care & GP representatives
- Schools & Education
- Local businesses including representatives from Carers Domiciliary Care Services.

The Forum membership will be flexible to recognise the need to have the right people in the sessions, depending on the topic being discussed.

Terms of Reference and membership will be reviewed annually and may also be altered at other intervals in accordance with the implementation of health and social care national policy reforms and subsequent guidance.

Roles & Responsibilities

Chair

From April 2026, the Chair of the Forum will be a Senior Manager from each local authority. The Chair role will alternate between the two authorities for each of the four Forum meetings held between April 2026 and March 2027. A suitable deputy will be nominated if the Senior Manager is unable to chair the meeting.

The agenda will be prepared by commissioners, in conjunction with the Forum Chair, incorporating input from Forum members. The Chair will approve agendas in advance and agree the draft minutes of meetings for presentation to the Forum.

Meetings will be conducted by the Chair, with remarks directed through the Chair and in line with the principles of good conduct.

Where task and finish groups are established to progress work in particular areas, these will be supported by members of the Forum.

Arrangements for appointing the Chair beyond March 2027 will be reviewed in line with the beginning of the new South Tees Carers Support Service contract period and updated Carers Strategy.

Administration

The provider of Lot 1: Adult Carers Information and Support Service will provide administrative support to the South Tees Carers' Forum in consultation with the Forum Chair as detailed at 3.7 of the South Tees All Age Carers Support Service Specification.

Administrative support will include preparation of agendas (with the Chair), minute taking, , organising and co-ordinating Forum meetings and sharing ongoing communications. Where appropriate additional administrative functions may be delegated to other forum members subject to agreement by the STJCG and Forum Chair.

Email will be the main form of communication between the Forum members.

Agendas and supporting papers including minutes will be circulated 7 days in advance of meetings. Minutes and actions will be agreed and circulated, in draft, within 14 days of each meeting.

Forum members

All Forum members make the following commitments and agree to good conduct guidelines. Members will:

- have authority to represent their organisation (if appropriate)
- contribute to the development and delivery of an agreed work programme
- attend meetings regularly on an agreed basis or provide a substitute if they cannot attend
- contribute effectively to Forum discussions and offer expertise on behalf of their organisation/network
- abide by their specific roles and responsibilities
- consult with relevant staff/networks to inform their contribution to meetings
- report back through the relevant structures in their organisations/networks
- share information with relevant staff/networks
- uphold the law and act responsibly on behalf of the organisation and people they represent
- cascade information within their organisations and to the people they represent
- act with integrity
- fulfil any duties or obligations they make to the Forum in a timely and efficient manner
- declare any private interests or conflict of interest relating to their participation in the Forum and take steps to resolve any conflicts in a way that protects the interests of the Forum and the organisations and people they represent
- respect confidentiality when it is highlighted in their dealings with the Forum

All members agree to respect each other by:

- giving people space to think or express opinions
- actively listening to each other
- actively exploring each other's ideas
- contributing our ideas
- challenging issues, not people
- taking confidentiality seriously
- respecting timetables
- being supportive of each other
- ensuring Carers' views are represented
- using inclusive language and refraining from discriminatory behaviour or remarks which would offend anyone present or not present
- ensuring we attend meetings, put in apologies or send a substitute
- being well prepared for meetings
- using plain English

Meetings

The Forum will meet on a quarterly basis coordinated by the Forum Chair, South Tees Joint Commissioning Group and administrative support function. Each session will address particular themes outlined in the South Tees Carers' Strategy.

Additional meetings may be scheduled as agreed. The Forum will review the frequency of meetings as and when they feel that this is appropriate.

Task and finish groups will meet when additional discussion or work is required around a particular strategy theme or issue identified by the Forum.

Each task and finish group will be led by a member of the Forum, with support from the JCG as appropriate, and will be responsible for chairing the group, helping to engage relevant partners from within or outside the Forum in discussions and reporting back to the Forum. Conclusions and any additional recommended action will be reported to the Forum through the regular cycle of meetings, or by email if required.

Governance

Reporting

The Forum is an advisory body, rather than an accountable body. The South Tees Carers' Forum will report directly to the South Tees Carers' Joint Commissioning Group who have overall responsibility for commissioning services and support for Carers.

The STJCG will monitor progress and be responsible for producing the Strategy.

The Forum will not have any jurisdiction to commission or fund services on behalf of either Middlesbrough or Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's, but will act as an advisory body to Commissioners.

The Forum will feed into local governance mechanisms and decision-making processes to ensure a joined-up approach across South Tees to include:

- South Tees Health & Wellbeing Board
- Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- Primary Care Networks
- Forum representative on Health and Wellbeing Board (across South Tees area)
- Health & Local Authorities work streams

Conflicts of Interest

The Forum acknowledges that there are challenges when commissioners and providers work together and also real constraints when providers may be in competition with each other.

A member should disclose any interest in items arising at a meeting and if the Chair decides, withdraw from the meeting while it is being discussed. This will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting. A member should not participate in the discussion, without declaring this if:

- they have, or their organisation has, a direct financial interest
- when their personal interest creates a danger of bias in the discussions
- they could be seen to use their position to secure preferential treatment for themselves or those with whom they are connected (friend or family)

Resolving problems and disputes

Members will endeavour to resolve conflicts and disputes quickly, transparently and fairly and sort out problems informally in the first instance.

Dispute resolution

Any dispute shall be addressed by direct discussion of the dispute by the members involved. If no agreement is reached within 15 working days, the dispute will be discussed by the Chief Executive Officer (or their nominated representative) of the partner organisations or networks involved. The Chief Executive Officer (or their nominated representative) can request a meeting to discuss any matter of concern, which will be convened by the Chair within one month.

If there is no resolution to the dispute after 40 working days, and there is a deadlock in proceedings, a third party will be asked to mediate, to be agreed by the Forum.

Addressing a breach of good conduct

If, in the view of the Chair, a representative's conduct falls below the standard expected, the Chair reserves the right to notify the organisation or network the person represents, or they were nominated by, and report the breach. This will also be reported to the Forum.

If the behaviour fails to improve, the Chair may seek a replacement representative, if deemed necessary and the representative will be removed from all consortium groups. If the breach is by the Chair, this will be reported by the other members of the Forum to the board of the Chair.

Communications and Engagement

The Forum recognises the need to communicate both internally within organisations and across the Forum and also externally with service users and Carers, the public, other stakeholders, partners and partnerships and policy and decision makers.

The Forum will:

- Raise awareness of service users' and Carers' issues and needs
- Communicate the Carers' Strategy and Action Plan with service users and Carers, the public and wider partners
- Raise the profile of the role, achievements and impact of the Forum and Strategy
- Influence policies, strategies and partnerships to align with the achieving the objectives in the South Tees Carers' Strategy
- Use different tools to communicate, engage and inform people about activities, support and opportunities to engage and influence
- Share learning and informing future priorities and activities
- Use of an appropriate logo for its work