

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was held on Wednesday 10 March 2021.

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Platt (Chair), S Hill (Vice-Chair), D Jones, G Purvis, D Rooney, J Walker and G Wilson

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

**OFFICERS:** S Blood, E Scollay, Beevers and Walker

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors

20/44 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

20/45 **MINUTES- ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL - 10 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Adult Social Care and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 10 February 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/46 **SUPPORT FOR CARERS- FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Chair welcomed Lynn Beevers, Principal Social Worker & Service Lead (Adults) and Christine Walker, Commissioning Officer to the meeting.

Following the Panel's meeting on 10 February 2021, the Panel wished to gain further background information in relation to support for carers.

Prior to the meeting, the Panel had submitted a number of questions to the service areas and these were addressed in turn:

**1. Could you provide the panel with the number of Carers in Middlesbrough, including an age breakdown of these carers. What age is a Carer considered an Adult?**

Data management teams have been tasked with providing comprehensive info that will be shared once available on:

- Ward
- Age groups
- Ethnicity
- Service area – of the person they care for
  - Mental health
  - LD
  - BAME
  - Physical

- Dementia
- Elderly/Frail
- Parent Carers

For information, during the first 9 months of the current financial year the adult social care workforce database records showed that the social care workforce completed 706 Carers Assessments, with a further 1940 assessments offered during that time, but declined by the Carer. However they may take up the offer of an assessment further down the line.

Carers Together who currently provide the commissioned support service for adult carers carried out 134 assessments. These carers presented themselves to Carers Together who, at present carry out assessments for these carers on behalf of the council. The new South Tees commission will remove this function and all assessments will be the responsibility of the council

Carers considered adults at 18yrs

## **2. How are Carers identified and what are is the process for assessment for Carers pre Covid and now?**

The Care Act 2014 put in-place significant rights for Carers in England including:

- A right to a Carers' Assessment based on the appearance of needs.
- A right for Carers' eligible services to be met.

Social Workers receive referrals from Carers' themselves either directly via the council, from commissioned services and also when undertaking assessments for the cared for person.

The Panel were made aware that the Council know from national data that only a small percentage of carers are known to councils. Carers may not identify themselves as such, for a variety of reasons, and would be classed as 'hidden'. Some of the reasons they are hidden include:

- it is part of what they do for their family and/or friends
- it is normal within their culture to care for family and friends and not seen as exceptional or something they would seek support for from statutory or other services
- they may be anxious of scrutiny from public authorities for a variety of reasons, unrelated to caring roles
- they may fear or have experience of a blame culture, where they have been made to feel that they are to blame for the situation of the cared for person or their own circumstances

Once a Carer is identified, a Separate Carers Assessment is offered so that the Council can better understand the impact of caring, and whether additional support is required for the cared for person, or the Carer themselves (e.g.

Direct Payment)

The Council also identify whether the carer would benefit from an Assessment of their own needs, so that appropriate support can be provided.

During Covid, the Council has needed to adapt rapidly. Many of the Social Workers are now working from home, and our Risk Assessments and Guidance encourage staff to undertake face-to-face visits only if “essential.”

The Council have therefore needed to utilise other methods of assessment, including telephone, web-based solutions, letter and e-mail. Many of the Carers we work with have adjusted well to these alternative methods of Assessment and support.

However, the principles around completion of Assessment remain the same. Social Workers are still available to offer advice, support and guidance although the practicalities of how this is delivered any have changed.

**3. How many Social Workers does the Council have to support Carers and what is their caseload?**

Middlesbrough does not have any Social Workers specifically identified to work solely with Carers. Support for Carers is seen as a key part of their role, and it is often beneficial to enable us to offer coordinated support and services to both the Carer and cared for.

**4. Have Middlesbrough received an influx of Carers identifying themselves during Covid?**

In the first 9 months of this financial year approx. 2,800 Carers Assessments were offered to Carers in Middlesbrough. This is a significant increase on the previous year (19/20) when 1,900 carers Assessments were offered over a 12 month period.

**5. Point 5 of the Council’s statutory responsibilities outlines that there is a duty on Local Authorities to provide information & advice to Carers in relation to their Caring Role and their own needs. Please could you provide the panel with information on this, how information is given to them, do you use Social Media / lovemiddlesbrough, etc.**

There are significant overlaps with the Social Work role. When assessing carers’ needs Social Workers provide Carers with advice and information and also identify if Carers need an assessment in relation to their own needs.

The council commission a number of bespoke service to carers. One of their key functions is to provide information and advice to enable them to make informed choices. In addition the We Care You Care communication and

campaigns project has been established over the past year.

This projects key function is to ensure that carers have easy access to information and advice through the launch of a website, social media tools, offline tools and a series of campaigns.

The information provided is relevant to carers, the public, other stakeholders, partners, partnerships and policy and decision makers.

The project is being developed under the auspices of South Tees Carers Partnership established in November 2019. At present the project is funded by Middlesbrough Council however, RCBC will be joint funding the project up to the commission so it cover the South Tees area. Therefore, from April 2021, the project will cover both council areas in readiness for the commissioning of a South Tees Carers offer in October 2021. The website can be viewed at [www.wecareyoucare](http://www.wecareyoucare)

## **6. celebrate and recognise Carers? (National Carers Week) and what sort of activities would normally be provided (out of Covid).**

The We Care You Care Project leads on campaigns such as Carers Week and World Mental Health Day. Organisations across the town come together to provide a coordinated offer. This has been challenging during the current pandemic however media campaigns have proved very successful and the project and provider organisations work alongside the council communication team to reach out to carers.

Commissioned services also run support networks and groups and council teams provide support on a regular basis i.e. LD carers support group, Middlesbrough Library service Dementia Cafés. Other community and voluntary organisations not commissioned by the council provide invaluable specialist support to carers through on line resources and support groups.

The South Tees Commission will provide a more coherent offer to carers across South Tees whilst not losing the need for more localised support. The Carers Small Grants pot was established and launched during Carers Week 2020 in response to the pandemic. It encourages small community based groups to apply for funding up to £5000 to develop bespoke carers support offers.

Following the presentation, the panel members asked a number of questions.

1. How are social workers able to work from home? In response, the Principle social worker advised that since the outbreak of covid, social workers have had to become quite imaginative. Social workers have had to use new means of communication and utilise the telephone more to communicate with service users and carers. However as advised, the Principle Worker did remind the panel that Social workers will conduct face to face visits if deemed necessary and full PPE was used.
2. What happens when there is a conflict of interest e.g where the carer needs medical care? In response, the officers advised that there are many cases where couple of mutually dependent on one another and

we would look at these case by case to ensure we provide the best support and do not upset the status quo. As mentioned only a small percentage of carers identify themselves so quite often the social worker may need to make a judgement if they feel the one offering support is a carer and might benefit from further advise.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation.

AGREED- That the information be noted.

20/47

**SUPPORT FOR CARERS- DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Panel were presented with the draft terms of reference in respect to the review on support for older carers.

However, following agenda distribution and from information presented in the meeting, the Panel Panel learnt that there was to be a large scale South Tees Carers procurement process which would be completed by October 2021. The panel therefore agreed there would be little value at considering the support for carers at this stage and would relook at this issue after the procurement process was completed.

AGREED- That the review on support for carers be revisited at a later date.

20/48

**CHAIR'S OSB UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update of the issues addressed at the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 11 February 2021.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

20/49

**ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

No items.