

## Supporting unpaid carers in Somerset

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Cabinet Member: Cllr David Huxtable

Division and Local Member: All

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The 2011 Census shows that there are approximately 6 million unpaid carers nationally. In Somerset, 58,000 have identified themselves as carers and there are many more that we don't know about. We recognise and value the contributions that carers make to our communities and want to make sure we are supporting them to carry out their caring role and to achieve their aims and ambitions.

Somerset County Council commissions a broad range of support services for carers. These services are currently commissioned by Adults & Health and Children and Young People and delivered by several different providers. We would like to make sure that these services continuously improve to ensure that they are meeting carers needs now and into the future. We would like to involve carers and our partners to help us to understand what is working well and where we need to further develop services and practices in order for carers to get the right support they need at the right time.

This report sets out how by working together, we will seek to continually develop our offer for carers, introduce new ways of working to develop more choice and control for Carers to realise their ambitions whilst ensuring equity of service provision and improved outcomes.

- 1.2. This work supports the County's joint Vision of:
- A County of resilient, well-connected and safe and strong communities working to reduce inequalities.
  - A County and environment where all partners, public, private and voluntary sector, focus on improving the health and wellbeing of all our communities

### 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to endorse the aims of the Carers Continuous Improvement Plan.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. In December 2019 we had an opportunity to involve Scrutiny Members to help us co-design a Carers Transformation Programme. This took place as a workshop where members were able to hear about commissioned services for carers and

benefited from hearing about the experiences of a carer (Alison Birkett) who articulated very well the frustrations and concerns that carers can face on a day to day basis. The event led to the launch of the Carers Transformation Programme and a plan of carer engagement was about to get underway, but unfortunately had to be put on hold due to the Pandemic.

- 3.2.** The Pandemic has affected carers in many ways, and we have had to adapt the way in which we provide support and have therefore adjusted our plans. 48% of UK population supported someone during lock down (compared with 11%).

The Somerset Corona helpline brought together access to information, advice and services from all 5 councils in Somerset making it easier for people (including carers) to get timely support.

The Somerset Carers Service (provided by the Community Council for Somerset - CCS) provided online carers groups, a dedicated helpline and a website for carers. They also worked closely with colleagues from SPARK Somerset to develop in excess of 70 community support groups across the County, many of which were providing vital support to carers in their neighbourhoods.

During the Pandemic CCS also extended the role of all their Village Agents and Carers Agents to ensure carers are supported by all (i.e. not just the 5 assigned carers agents) which meant there were a total of 63 agents who supported over 8,000 carers during the critical months of the Pandemic.

- 3.3.** There has since been a further re-organisation of the Somerset's Carers Service. In early 2020, following extensive consultation with all Agent teams, external partners and stakeholders and beneficiaries, CCS made the decision to rename all Carers Agents as Village Agents and adopt a "One Family, One Agent" approach. This has streamlined and standardised the service, ensuring that there is no confusion for people about the role of each Agent, but also importantly there are no barriers to accessing Agent support as all Agents now support Carers – thus effectively quadrupling the size of the team.

CCS have also consulted with stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries to establish what other improvements could be made to our offer and this resulted in the development of (initially) a Carers Academy now renamed Carers Hub, which is more accessible. This is a considerable upgrade to the Carers Website, which is due to be launched in September (delayed due to the pandemic), to incorporate a range of additional support, training, advice and information to help carers in their caring role. There will be multiple options for delivery including face to face and online and the Hub will regularly be updated with courses and training also delivered by partners and options for social interaction, physical activity and carers groups.

CCS has recently appointed a new Development Manager (funded from core funds and not specifically the Carers commissioned service) who will be the strategic lead for important services such as Carers and Community Agents and will assist in identifying new areas where CCS can add value to health and social care systems in Somerset. The role will also attend the South West Carers Strategic meetings and liaise at a strategic level to ensure we deliver the best

possible service for carers including to contribute to their voice and influence.

CCS has also recruited a specialist Carers Service Coordinator whose role is to support the Agents and the overall Carers service by providing a single point of contact for health and social care professionals and primary care carers champions. The aim is to ensure that every single GP practice has a champion who has knowledge of the support on offer from the Carers Service and who is armed with the necessary information to make appropriate referrals to Agents and provide information and advice in the practice. This will involve working closely with the partners in the service, Spark Somerset. They have also appointed a dedicated Carers Support Worker to specifically work with the carers groups and online forums to offer support for carers and former carers.

CCS Village and Community Agents with SCC have been nominated and shortlisted in the Municipal Journal Awards for the exceptional Covid response, which included coordinating the Somerset Food Resilience Task Force distributing 678,150 items of food, undertaking 78,035 community support activities and 357,721 people through our Talking Café Lives. A decision is expected in September at the awards ceremony in London.

Over the last 12 months CCS have also made significant improvements to the data capture system and customised it further to ensure they are collecting the most useful data to drive service efficiencies and improvements. See Appendix 1 for current service data since April.

- 3.4.** The Carers Transformation Programme has been reviewed and re-developed into The Somerset Carers Continuous Programme which will be an ongoing plan of activities that will be designed and delivered in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group our contracted service providers and carers.

The aims of the Programme are to:

- Continue to improve internal practice and processes consistently provide good outcomes for carers as well as the cared for
- Review Carers Voice Somerset to ensure that it is effective in carer engagement
- Seek continuous improvement through the contract with Community Council for Somerset who deliver the adult carers service
- Develop working agreements between adults and young carers services to ensure that young adult carers through transition get the support that they need.
- Develop new ways to support carers to ensure that services are flexible and gives the carer choice and control
- Deliver wide promotion of carers support services so that carers know where to go for support when they need it.

A working group has been established between commissioning and operations to oversee the design and implementation of a training module for SCC's workforce, including promoting Direct Payments to Carers, and how we can improve

monitoring of carers through Eclipse. The group will also look at how we can use tools like The Loop to promote best practice as well as learning from other Local Authorities through the Association of Directors of Social Services Commissioning Leads Network. This will have a particular focus on innovation for respite options for carers.

**3.5.** Adult Social Care also undertake formal carers assessments. During 2019/20 a total of 92 assessments were carried out, 55 of which were combined carers assessments. Between 2020/21 a further 72 assessments were completed.

**3.6.** A new Somerset Carers Strategic Group has been convened to oversee the refresh of Somerset's Commitment to Carers that was developed by Carers Voice Somerset in 2016. The Group consists of health and social care commissioners, commissioned service providers as well as voluntary and community sector organisations that deliver support to carers in Somerset. The group have identified a significant gap in terms of hearing the voice of carers, Carers Voice Somerset became unactive during the Pandemic and a proposal for a new Carers Engagement Service has now been developed by the Group.

The ASC Assistant Director and the Operational Strategic Manager attended the full Board meeting of Somerset NHS Foundation Trust to further illustrate the needs of carers in and out of hospital based care. The Trust also runs Carers services, supporting their own dementia and older mental health clients. The Board heard from carers themselves about the difficulties faced and the Chief Nurse and head of Mental Health are working with us and their teams on improving the awareness and offer. We intend to reintroduce a physical presence of the Carers Service in our hospitals when it is safe to do so.

**3.7.** The newly designed Carers Engagement Service linking into the Strategic Group is expected to improve the ways that SCC, and system partners, engage with the unpaid caring community in Somerset on an ongoing basis, this includes young carers. We want to hear more voices and widen the reach of carers networks and influence. The aims and objectives of the service will be to:

- empower and supports unpaid carers to make their voice heard in a wide range of situations.
- Ensure more unpaid carers voices are heard especially those from communities likely to suffer health inequalities
- Provide opportunities for Integrated Care System partners to consult and engage with the Unpaid Carers Community.
- Ensure the unpaid carers voice is heard by system partners and works in partnership to improve the lives of unpaid carers.
- Feedback to unpaid carers on the difference that their involvement has made.

- Demonstrate a dedication to continuous improvement.
- Commission, monitor and review services that support the current and future needs of unpaid carers in Somerset

The service will be commissioned through a light touch Expression of Interest process which will be started in September.

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

### Appendix 1 – SCC Carers Service demand data collection (New) (April 2021-June 2021)

	Running Total	Apr	May	Jun
<b>Total Number of Carers Supported</b>	592	160	209	223
Age 18-25	6	3	1	2
Age 26-64	119	34	48	37
Age 65 -84	178	46	64	68
Age 85+	52	12	15	25
Pref not to say	35	5	14	16
Not recorded (AA)	202	60	67	75
<b>Total Number of New Carers Supported</b>	406	106	151	149
Age 18-25	5	2	1	2
Age 26-64	94	26	43	25
Age 65 -84	141	31	56	54
Age 85+	39	9	11	19
Pref not to say	25	3	12	10
Not recorded (AA)	102	35	28	39
Total number of Carers resolve first contact (AA)	202	60	67	75