

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Interim Executive Director of Social Work and Health

Social Work and Health Improvement Committee

18 November, 2009

Subject: Carers Service

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To advise committee on the Carers Strategy for West Dunbartonshire and to seek approval for the associated Improvement Action Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1** Over the past few years carers' services in West Dunbartonshire have developed in line with increasing demand and need.
- 2.2** The Carers Centre has been expanded and is now run by an independent charitable organisation: Carers of West Dunbartonshire. The organisation is properly constituted and has local members of the public as board members.
- 2.3** Throughout 2009 a series of meetings of the Carers Strategy Group were held to develop a new Carers Strategy. These meeting were attended by a wide range of carers, representatives of voluntary organisations, and officers across Social Work and Health.
- 2.4** As part of the process three extended meetings were arranged in order to make consultation available to a wider group. These meetings were well attended and took place at both ends of the Authority in order to ensure equality of access and representation.
- 2.5** In order to further evidence an open and transparent approach in the prioritisation process we arranged an independent facilitator.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** A range of priorities were identified by carers. These included:

3.1.1 Consultation and Involvement

Carers want to be treated as key partners in the provision of care and support. They want to be able to make an informed contribution to the strategic decision making process.

3.1.2 Strategy Funding

The issues relating to funding and resources which support carers are complex. Some services are designed to meet personal care needs e.g.

home care services whereas others provide an outlet for social contact and activity e.g. day care and day activities.

Carers felt that all funds identified for carers services should be reviewed against key priorities, efficiency and effectiveness and, in individual cases, against eligibility criteria, related to meeting the greatest need.

3.1.3 Information, Communication and Advice

In a range of consultation and research exercises, carers have made it clear that good quality communication and information is fundamental to knowing what assistance is available, how to access support and how to make the best use of it. This is true both for carers of people receiving services and for hidden carers.

NHS Boards have a statutory duty to provide carer information, and the carers Improvement Plan identifies key points within the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Carer Information Strategy which carers want progressed locally.

3.1.4 Carers Assessments and Support Plans

Carers wanted it to be clear that people who require services and their carers are experts in their own needs and in the care and support that will meet those needs. Their views about their circumstances and needs are crucial as are their views on what outcomes are desirable and what services are required to achieve these. This should be integral to assessment, care planning and review processes.

3.1.5 Short Breaks, Respite and other Support Services

Short breaks (also known as respite services) are a key support for carers. Carers recognised that there has been significant investment to increase these services in West Dunbartonshire in recent years, however they believe that there are still unmet needs. They feel that there is potential to improve the way these services are organised and to make better use of resources, e.g. when a service is not being taken up by one service user, then it should be made available to another. The second priority for improvement in care services is the way in which responses can be made in crisis and emergency situations and how carers access such support.

3.1.6 Health Services

Carers felt that more had to be done to raise awareness of carers rights and needs amongst health service staff to ensure that the emotional and physical impact of caring is recognised. This should include addressing carer ill-health, providing them with appropriate information and signposting to relevant support services.

3.1.7 Training for Carers and Staff

Carers wanted to have good opportunities for training to support them in their caring role. They identified key areas where they felt that this could be developed. If this was progressed carers felt that it would enable them to develop the skills they need to take greater control over their own health and the health of those for whom they care.

3.1.8 Income and Employment

Carers drew attention to key recommendations in the Care 21 Report and suggested a range of local initiatives which would support this. This included support from Welfare Rights to facilitate income maximisation.

3.1.9 Carers Organisations supporting carers in West Dunbartonshire

Carers felt that it was important that they had appropriate opportunities to share and represent their mutual interests in relation to the special needs of those for whom they care and for their own well being.

They felt that it would be desirable that a review of the Council and NHS funding of all Carers Organisations supporting carers in West Dunbartonshire be carried out, with a view to determining how funding is currently deployed and how effectively it is being used.

3.1.10 Planning, Implementation Monitoring and Research

Carers feel that although there are currently performance measures in place as Local Improvement Targets for carers in relation to the uptake of Carers Support Plans, respite provision and short breaks services that there was potential for further development. Within West Dunbartonshire the overall planning arrangements for carer's services through the Carers Strategy Group, ensure good involvement from carer's organisations. However, the arrangements for monitoring services were felt to be less comprehensive and did not include the same level of involvement. Within the Council's Social Work Department each adult care group has an operational plan which includes the need to identify carers within their specific service area. The NHS Carers Information Strategy has also increased the attention given to identifying carers. It was felt however that variations remain within care groups in relation to taking account of carer's experiences.

3.2 Taking the strategy forward

- 3.2.1** As part of the consultation process an Improvement Action Plan was developed to progress work within agreed timescales. The plan is appended to this report.

4. Personnel Implications

- 4.1** The Improvement Action Plan for services to support carers may have some future personnel implications and these will be identified where relevant as the actions in the plan are developed.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The Improvement Action Plan for services to support carers may have some future financial implications and these will be identified where relevant as the actions in the plan are developed. It is recognised that the Council has limited scope for the provision of additional funding and is facing overall reduced levels of resources; therefore the strategy seeks to identify alternative funding sources and potential efficiencies in service delivery.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The exercise to review the Carer Strategy for West Dunbartonshire identified key priorities for carers and produced an Improvement Action Plan to progress them. If these are not progressed the process of carer involvement in service prioritisation will be undermined.

7. Conclusions

7.1 West Dunbartonshire has in partnership with carers and Carers of West Dunbartonshire reviewed priorities for carers and identified what needs to happen to progress these. An Improvement Action Plan has been developed with clear responsibilities and timescales.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Committee is asked to agree the Improvement Action Plan for Carer Services and to request regular progress reports to future meetings of this Committee.

Stephen West,
Interim Director of Social Work and Health.

Person to Contact: David Elliott, General Manager, Learning Disability Services, Beardmore Business Centre, 9 Beardmore Street, Dalmuir, Clydebank, G81 4HA.

Appendix: WDC Carers Strategy

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All Wards