

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

12 July 2023

Title	All Age Unpaid Carers Strategy for Reading
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author (name & job title)	Melissa Wise – Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Health
Lead Councillor (name & title)	Cllr Paul Gittings – Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care
Corporate priority	Thriving CommunitiesThriving Communities
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee endorses the development of an All Age Unpaid Carer's Strategy for Reading in conjunction with key partners2. The Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee agrees to the planned consultation with Carers to codesign and develop the strategy for Reading.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Reading has an established Carer's Steering Group bringing partners including Carers together to determine local need and set the direction of travel for services.
- 1.2. A deep dive document was created to better understand the needs of local Carers which highlighted the need for a cohesive strategy outlining services for unpaid carers.
- 1.3. The Carer's Steering Group is currently carrying out a needs assessment exercise including consulting with unpaid carers and partner organisations which was launched to coincide with Carers Week (5th to 11th June). This will begin to inform the joint development of a strategy which will be owned by Reading Borough Council, Brighter Futures for Children, health partners, voluntary sector organisations and unpaid carers themselves.
- 1.4. Further codesign will take place which will result in a finalised Strategy which will be presented to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee for final approval.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Care Act 2014 gave new rights and recognition to carers, including a duty on local authorities to prevent, reduce and delay their need for support.
- 2.2. The development of this strategy aligns with Priorities set out in the Berkshire West Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy. All five priorities within the strategy are relevant for unpaid carers.
- 2.3. Delivery of this strategy contributes to the delivery of the Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan.

3. The Proposal

Identifying the Need:

- 3.1. The Carer's Steering Group is a partnership between Reading Borough Council, voluntary sector partners, health partners and unpaid carers themselves. The group have identified the need for a Reading specific strategy to bring services together, with the voice of unpaid carers at the heart.
- 3.2. The specific areas identified by the Carer's Steering Group as needing improvement reflect challenges, we know are faced by unpaid carers nationally, including:
 - The barriers around recognising unpaid care and the role itself, many do not consider themselves as carers despite providing unpaid care for many reasons
 - The challenges around knowing what support you are entitled to and how to access it
 - Difficulties in navigating the health and social care system as an unpaid carer
 - Having your voice heard as an unpaid Carer
 - Difficulty in understanding the needs of unpaid Carers as a result of misidentification or lack of identification of Carers across the system
- 3.3. 7.5% of Reading's population provide between 9-50+ hours of unpaid care (ONS 2021 census data) which is around 13,000 people.
- 3.4. In the most recent ASCOF (Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework) data, unpaid carers accessing Adult Social Care in Reading reported a lower quality of life and consistently reported worse outcomes than the regional and national averages. (2021/22)
- 3.5. Carer identification and data collection is lacking across the Borough – the census estimated around 13,000 unpaid carers, however across our system partners the figures are not representative of this suggesting there is not a clear joined up view of the need which could be resulting in Carers not getting the support they need:
 - 3.5.1. There are currently 518 unpaid carers registered with Adult Social Care (according to 2021/22 SALT returns) who are actively caring for someone
 - 3.5.2. There are currently 1756 people receiving Carers Allowance in Reading (as of May 2022, according to the Department for Work and Pensions)
 - 3.5.3. There are currently 4,274 people registered as Caregivers in Reading on the Shared Record System (Connected Care, accessed 03/01/2023).
- 3.6. Since launching the new Reading & West Berkshire Carer's Partnership in November 2022 delivered by our Voluntary Sector Partners, 125 carers assessments have been completed and 458 carers have been supported with information and guidance (Reading data).

The Strategic Framework:

- 3.7. There is no current joint strategic document which focuses on unpaid carers in Reading, but there is a commitment for improving the experience of Carers in Reading which can be seen across various strategic documents in the system including:
 - Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust have a Carers Charter
 - Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust have a Friends, Family & Carers Charter and a Carers Strategy
 - Berkshire West, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Partnership reference carers as a priority within the recent Integrated Care Partnership Strategy

The Proposal:

- 3.8. The Carer's Steering Group is proposing to use the responses and input from the needs assessment activity to inform the development of an All Age Unpaid Carers Strategy for Reading.
- 3.9. This strategy will be driven by the Carer's Steering Group and will be accountable to the appropriate governance structures to be defined through the development process to ensure the Council and Partners have oversight of delivery.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. Thriving Communities

- 4.2. Unpaid carers are at risk of facing health inequalities due to the impact of their caring role on their own health and wellbeing. Unpaid carers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds are less likely to identify as an unpaid carer and less likely to access support. This work will look to improve the visibility of carers and the support they can access, especially across groups who are more likely to be experiencing health inequalities.
- 4.3. This process will build relationships and strengthen the capacity and resilience of not only the voluntary and community sector, but the wider system/partners who are supporting carers.
- 4.4. This work will create opportunities for unpaid carers from some of our most marginalised group to be heard. Listening to unpaid carers and working with them to identify the needs they feel should be prioritised will be crucial to this work.

4.5. Inclusive Economies

- 4.6. There are many unpaid carers who are also working but are struggling to maintain their employment.
- 4.7. Unpaid carers who are providing 50+ hours of unpaid care are more likely to be in from lower socio-economic areas (IMD 1 and 2). This work will encourage improved data collection and sharing which will give us better insight into the support that is needed locally to support these cohorts.
- 4.8. Local businesses and employers will be key partners in this work to promote supportive workplaces and policies for unpaid carers, promoting best practice across Reading employers.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. At this stage of strategy development there are no environmental or climate implications arising from the decision although these will be further considered once the Strategy has been completed.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Through this phase of engagement, responses are being collected via two separate surveys. One for carers who are over 18 years and one for young carers, under 18 years. There is a timetable of engagement activity that will take place between 5th June – 31st July, with members of the Carers Steering Group taking ownership of different engagement events.
- 6.2. The needs assessment surveys have been co-designed with members of the Carer's Steering Group, including Carer Leads from Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Reading and West Berkshire Carer Partnership,

Brighter Futures for Children and Adult Social Care/Reading Borough Council. There is one survey for carers over the age of 18 and another survey for young carers. Different methods of engagement will be used throughout the survey period to ensure views are captured from as wide range of Carers as possible.

6.3. The surveys are available to complete online, with a full range of accessibility options available including contacting the team by phone, requesting a posted copy of the survey or translated versions of the survey. However, consideration is given that a survey is not always a preferred or accessible option for people to share feedback. There will also be a number of more informal discussions and focus groups held in partnership with members of the Carers Steering Group as part of their existing activity.

6.4. **Young Carers:**

Brighter Futures for Children will gather further insight through focus groups and discussions with young carers they already support at their Young Carer Clubs and through the support offered by Reading Play. We will work together with BFfC partners to engage local schools with the survey as well, encouraging schools to support their students and families to engage with this activity.

6.5. **Key engagement partners:**

Engagement partner	Method of engagement
Reading & West Berkshire Carer's Partnership (includes: Communicare, Age UK Reading, Age UK Berkshire and Reading Mencap)	Mailing list send out; promotion at carers week events; sharing on website and social media; facilitating focus groups and informal discussions at support groups
Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust	Sharing on social media platforms and display screens around the hospital; sharing with internal staff carer network and with RBFT carer champions; sharing with cancer champions
Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Sharing with internal staff carer group and across services; sharing with carer support groups
Brighter Futures for Children	Sharing with staff; leading engagement sessions with young carers; sharing with parent carers through short breaks team
Berkshire West, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board	Sharing through GP bulletin; sharing through primary care management teams; sharing through patient voice groups
Healthwatch Reading	Sharing through mailing lists and networks; sharing with advisory board
Compass Recovery College	Sharing with participants attending sessions; sharing through mailing lists
Reading Borough Council – key departments include Adult Social Care, libraries, public health and wellbeing, New Directions	Sharing with staff; encouraging staff to support customers to engage; drop-in sessions at libraries and New Directions
Partnership forums including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dementia Friendly Reading Steering Group - Older People's Working Group 	Sharing the survey and raising awareness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access and Disabilities Forum - Mental Wellbeing Group - Befriending Forum 	
<p>Wider voluntary sector partners including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading Voluntary Action & social prescribers - Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE) including Alafia and Community Health Champions - Autism Berkshire - Alzheimer’s Society - Fifi’s Vision - Citizens Advice Reading - Swings and Smiles - Together UK - Refugee Support Group - Support U - Thames Valley Positive Support - Berkshire Vision - Reading Association for the Blind - Alana House (PACT) - No 5 Young People - The Mustard Tree (Starting Point and Engage befriending) - Reading Community Learning Centre - Younger People with Dementia 	<p>A range of engagement methods including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting the survey to service users - Supporting with hosting focus groups/allowing us to attend pre-existing sessions and support groups - Raising awareness of the survey and the Carers Steering Group

6.6. The surveys launched on Monday 5th June 2023 to coincide with Carers Week. Printed copies of both surveys were available at a Carers Week event organised by Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership in the Broad Street Mall and Carers Steering Group member organisations were on hand to support people to complete the survey.

6.7. The needs assessment surveys will close on Monday 31st July.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this decision not least because of the wide ranging approach to consultation being adopted. However the need will be reconsidered once the Strategy is written.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. There are no other relevant considerations for this decision.

9. Legal Implications

9.1. There are no legal implications for this decision.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. There are no financial implications for this decision as the consultation and engagement are being funded from existing resources.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. The timeline for the development of the strategy is as follows:.

Activity	Expected Timeline
Needs Assessment Engagement	5 th June – 31 st July
Analysis of needs assessment responses	1 st August – 22 nd September
Strategy development with Partners	25 th September – 18 th December
First draft of strategy ready	18 th December

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. There are none.