

People's Scrutiny Committee

Support for Carers / Young Carers Task Group

Update Report

March 2013

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Preface



Councillor Andy Boyd
Chair, Support for Carers / Young Carers Task Group
People's Scrutiny Committee

In January 2012, I published the *Support for Carers Task Group / Young Carers: Joint Report* on behalf of Devon County Council's People's Scrutiny Committee. This report was a 'follow-up' to previous work monitoring the implementation of the recommendations. In July 2012 the Task Group met officers to evaluate progress over the last 6 months, and updated the Committee on 27 September 2012.

It was immediately apparent to members that the positive work to improve carer's services has continued. This brief update report looks over the recommendations and evaluates progress to date.

I would like to thank the officers from Devon County Council, NHS Devon and provider organisations for their evident efforts to improve the provision for carers of all ages. Work cannot ever be felt to be complete in this regard, as carers services are so important, there can be no room for complacency. It must be ensured that Devon continues to strive to identify and support its most vulnerable and both young and adult carers are among this group.

Andy Boyd
Chairman

Introduction

The Task Group — Councillors Andy Boyd (Chair), Alison Boyle, Caroline Chugg, Polly Colthorpe and Philip Sanders — would like to place on record its gratitude to the officers who contributed to the review.

The Task Group was originally set up to review the implementation of the recommendations made by the Support for Carers Task Group (CX/10/95) and the Young Carers Task Group (CX/11/01) and to revise the recommendations according to both Groups' findings.

In January 2012 People's Scrutiny Committee received *the Support for Carers Task Group / Young Carers: Joint Report* (CX/12/01), updating on the work of the previous Task Groups. This report was then presented to Cabinet in February 2012, where the revised recommendations were actioned accordingly.

On 27 September 2012 the Task Group presented an update report (CS/12/21) to People's Scrutiny Committee. In reviewing the recommendations Task Group Members were extremely encouraged by developments in the 6 months previous and agreed to review the latest position early in 2013.

This brief update report further examines progress to date on the recommendations and seeks to evaluate where work may be required, as well as any other themes or issues moving forward.

On 7 February 2013, the Task Group met with the Ian Hobbs, Senior Manager (Commissioning) – Social Care Commissioning, People; Sue Younger-Ross, Carers Project Lead, People and Jenny McNeil, Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning, NHS Devon to discuss the implementation of the recommendations from the *Support for Carers Task Group / Young Carers: Joint Report*.

Recommendation that the Committee:

- notes this progress report
- actions work where necessary
- seeks a further update in six months

Recommendations Update

In reviewing the recommendations from the Support for Carers / Young Carers Joint Task Group, members were broadly encouraged by developments in the last 6 months; however a period of further change is anticipated, with national reforms to the NHS, the County Council's transfer of Integrated Children Services to Virgin Care, as well as the possible impact of the Government's welfare reforms on the carers agenda. Devon is in a strong position to minimise any direct impact on carer's services.

Members welcomed the draft Care and Support Bill, which is the first piece of primary legislation for carers to be introduced by a government. Prior to this legislation has derived from private members bills. The Task Group felt it essential officers monitor and assess the impact on carers of the Care and Support Bill.

During discussion with officers regarding implementation of the recommendations, the following issues were raised by the Task Group:

Identifying and Supporting Carers

Recommendation 1

- (i) **That all schools in the County have a 'young carer' policy and be provided with a resource pack for identifying and supporting young carers.**
- (ii) **That the new providers give a presentation to and make strong links with the Devon Association of Governors, Devon Association of Primary Headteachers and Devon Association of Secondary Headteachers highlighting the role and responsibilities of schools in identifying and supporting young carers. The presentation should also be made available for individual schools to present to the governing body.**
- (ii) **That it be ensured that carers continue to be involved in the planning and decision making process for carer services.**

The Task Group was disappointed that there has been some considerable delay in the provision of a young carers policy and young carers' resource packs. The delay was, in part, attributable to the length of time it has taken the Devon Carers' Service to appoint the young carer leads. There was also some delay in the production of the resource package itself.

Officers reported that a resource pack has now been developed and work has been undertaken with Devon Association of Secondary Headteachers (DASH) and Devon Association of Primary Headteachers (DAPH) to ensure that the pack is ready for schools. The pack is currently being piloted in a number of schools across the County and will then go out to all schools in Devon accompanied by a young carers policy document. The roll-out is expected to be completed in the next few months.

Members were reassured to learn that every school in the County will receive the resource pack irrespective of status: there should be no difficulty in cascading information to academies and free schools. The young carers policy will also be promoted to the Devon Association of Governors (DAG). It should be noted that the information pack will be introduced by Devon Carers, working closely with officers from the County Council.

With regard to the development of policy within schools, consideration will be given to whether this is best managed as part of safeguarding policy or in a separate young carers policy. Supported by the resource pack and young carers policy and leads, schools should develop more confidence in recognizing and supporting young carers.

The Chair flagged up a possible problem where schools are not passing on information about young carers to further education providers as their students make that transition. More information needs to be made available to all FE providers.

The involvement of carers has rapidly matured. There are carer members on the County Carers Strategy Delivery Board as well as at the main contract monitoring meetings. Carers contribute fully and are extremely forthright and challenging. Carers' representatives on these groups are chosen by the wider carers' groups. Previously just 2 or 3 carers tended to attend everything but there is now a much wider and more diverse contribution.

Care is being taken to ensure that there is continuity from within the NHS as the new Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) come into being from April 2013. Some review of links between locality sub groups and carers is indicated and members would like to highlight this as a possible area to keep under review.

Devon Carers is now fully accredited with The Carers Trust (formerly the *Princess Royal Trust for Carers* and *Crossroads*). This gives independent, external validation of the quality of carers' services in the County.

Health

Recommendation 2

- (i) That GP practices be strongly encouraged to improve their ability to identify and support carers, particularly young carers.**
- (ii) That ways be found to ensure that carer information is available in the electronic discharge summaries made by hospitals to GPs and that carers are kept fully informed.**
- (iii) That all young carers' aged 14+ be offered a health and wellbeing check appropriate to their age and circumstance.**

There are 104 GP practices in Devon; of these 74 are holding carers' advice clinics and 48 have signed up to undertake Carer Health and Wellbeing checks. Further practices are in the process of signing up to conduct the checks and additional action is being taken to encourage others. Dr Simon Kerr, the clinical lead for carers, is for example attending a meeting in the northern area of New Devon CCG - a GP leading the engagement of other GPs. Members welcome his leadership and trust that it will result in wider and more pro-active promotion of the carers' agenda amongst GP practices.

While there is much still to be arranged, the NHS budget for carers will be maintained in 2013/14 during the transition to the CCGs. The NEW Devon CCG has a strong carers' champion in the clinical lead, Dr Kerr; it is expected, therefore, that this area of work should remain a high priority for the NEW Devon CCG. Torbay and South Devon CCG are also supportive of the carers' agenda.

The CCG configuration brings new complexity but also some benefits in terms of clinical leadership and engagement. Joint work is being undertaken between DCC and the CCGs led, for the NHS, by Paul O'Sullivan, the Managing Director

of the New Devon CCG Partnership Directorate. Simon Tapley, his counterpart at the South Devon and Torbay CCG, is also very supportive of the carers agenda.

The issue of electronic discharge summaries remains a cause of concern and needs further consideration. The problem may be easier to address when the CCG's are fully established - there has been some slight progress in the hospitals but a great deal more remains to be done.

Contract Monitoring

Recommendation 3

- (i) To ensure adequate and appropriate services for carers are available equally across the County.**
- (ii) That the monitoring procedures for the new carers' services contract be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently robust and that the bespoke young carers' element remains distinct within the wider contract.**
- (iii) That there is member involvement in the contract monitoring process.**

Westbank reports quarterly on a series of indicators, many of which are generated automatically through their systems. The contract monitoring meetings focus on the issues that matter most, with officers proactively involved in problem solving rather than 'ticking boxes'; and contract monitoring is 'smart', for instance: officers are looking at the outcomes from young carer activities rather than simply checking the amount of provision that is offered. Members of the Task Group have attended a number of these meetings and felt they were very positive overall.

Carer Support Helplines

Recommendation 4

That national help lines (such as Childline) are widely promoted to young people via carers' projects; schools and other partners such as health

The numbers registering with Devon Carers is increasing and more are expected through planned closer working with schools. National helplines will be promoted to young people through all information sources and promoted to young carers as a way in which they can discreetly get advice as some young people do not want to be identified or labeled as young carers (for example on moving to new schools). Members felt that it is vital that support is in place in schools even if the young people concerned may not want to be identified.

Respite

Recommendation 5

- (i) That an open and available short break provision be continued to allow respite for all carers.**
- (ii) That advance bookings be allowed for respite provision for short or longer breaks.**

The Take a Break scheme has continued to be popular and the reduction in vouchers which was necessary in 2011/12 to stay within allocated resources has now been restored to its previous level. The Flexible Break budget has come under pressure because of its popularity and the 'need' profile of carers applying to it; this is being looked at for 2013/14 as part of a review of spending priorities within the carers' budget.

There is an 11% redemption rate on the Short Breaks vouchers. The budget takes account of this and the budget is fully committed by the end of the financial year. For some carers it is comforting and reassuring to have the vouchers and thus the opportunity to take a break; often, however, they do not feel it necessary to redeem them.

Bookable respite remains a difficult issue as many homes do not want to dedicate bed spaces to respite without a guarantee of use and block booking of this kind restricts choice. Much of the respite provision continues to be offered through County Council care homes.

An increasing number of service users are receiving direct payments and finding creative solutions to their care needs. Direct payment rates in Devon are up from 11% last year to 27%, putting Devon into the upper quartile, although the Government target of 70% remains some distance away.

Officers also increasingly work with providers to improve their offer to service users, trying to ensure that they are able to offer more flexible responses to the different things people want.

Andy Boyd (Chair)
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Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972 List of Background Papers		
Report originated by:	Dan Looker	
Room:	G.31	
Tel No:	01392 382232	
Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Bibliography

- Support for Carers Task Group, Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee; DCC, 2010
- Young Carers Task Group, People's Scrutiny Committee; DCC, 2011
- Support for Carers Task Group / Young Carers: Joint Report, People's Scrutiny Committee; DCC, 2012