Support for Carers

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What the issue is:
This report provides an overview of the current and proposed carer’s services in Oldham and presents suggestions for how the Health Scrutiny Subcommittee can influence and support Oldham’s Carers services.

Requirement from the Adult Transformation Board:
For the Health Scrutiny Subcommittee to note and feedback on the proposed model for Carers Services.

How to be actioned:

☐ Report author attending
☒ Discussion item
☐ Presentation
☐ Workshop
☐ Circulate offline to Leadership for information
1.0 Background

1.1 According to the 2011 census there are 24,322 carers in the Borough of Oldham, with just under 5000 carers currently registered with the Oldham Carers Centre. The caring role is often very demanding, draining and tiring both physically and mentally, with a high proportion of carers giving up their own work, hobbies and interests to focus on the life and support of the cared for. More often than not support, provision, health care or health checks are aimed at the cared for as they are recognised as needing care. However it is often the carer who is left exhausted and run down and in many cases at crisis point. Treating the carer as we would the cared for and recognising their needs, is something the Care Act 2014 outlines as a key requirement.

1.2 The role of carers and the support provided to them is of critical importance in addressing health and social care needs in Oldham. This is a key theme in Oldham’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy; Better Care Fund is also high on the council’s agenda. Without carers giving up their time to care for loved ones there is an estimated cost to the care system of approximately £119 billion pounds per year. Therefore it is essential we support carers in the best way possible to ensure they can continue to carry out their caring role.

2.0 Oldham’s Current Carers Provision

2.1 Oldham’s current provision for carers is a Carers Centre which Oldham Council commission Wired to deliver and this contract ends in May 2015. There is also a small in house Carers Strategy team who support the delivery of carer’s services in Oldham in particular supporting several carers groups. The carers groups supported by the Carers Strategy team are based at the Link Centre and across Oldham. They are extremely successful and are provided by carers who are essentially supporting and networking with other carers. The in house council provision supports these groups in a number of ways from subsidised funding, physically supporting the groups or working with the lead carers to overcome any barriers or challenges the group may face.

2.2 Under the Care Act, from April 2015, all carers will be entitled to a carer’s assessment which could lead to a range of services and support being put into place for the carer. Secondly carers should have quick and easy access to signposting and information about services available. There are new eligibility criteria for carers set out in the Care Act which tests a carer’s eligibility for services and support. Currently the provision includes a number of drop in facilities, a range of activities, support groups, emergency card and short term respite facilities. Oldham also offers carers the opportunity to apply for a one off carer’s individual budget of up to £300 based on caring responsibilities, subject to certain criteria. However, under our new duties, we will need to demonstrate that in exceptional circumstances, where the impact on a carers wellbeing can be reduced with a higher amount of funding then this is allocated. The Care Act requires that all impacts on carers wellbeing and any methods to reduce the impact needs to be assessed and clearly evidenced.

2.3 The Carers Centre currently delivered by Wired undertakes a proportion of carer’s assessments and Carers Individual Budget assessments. They provide information about services available to carers, run a number of drop ins, create a quarterly newsletter and offer carers counselling and advocacy services. Unfortunately there have been some negative comments received from carers accessing the services provided by Wired and suggestions have been put forward that the Carers Centre should be brought in house; as some carers thought this would be more cost effective and potentially provide a better service. The numbers of carers accessing the Carers Centre drop ins have been very low and sometimes as little as two or three. This led to
an action plan being developed to look at increasing the number of activities/ options available to carers in the hope that the drop ins would be more successful. Unfortunately this wasn’t the case. However, those groups led by carers for carers and supported by the in house Carers Strategy team have proven to be a great success. Some of these groups have become that well attended they have needed to look for larger venues and are often oversubscribed. From meeting with the groups and attendees it seems they enjoy attending groups provided by carers as there is a shared onus and understanding amongst likeminded carers. As they are run by carers they are tailor made to carers based on personal knowledge and experience.

3.0 Proposed Model for Carers Services in Oldham

3.1 The current Carers Centre Contract terminates in May 2015. There are a number of drivers to review and reshape carer’s services in preparation for the end of the contract, including:

- the implementation of the Care Act
- the introduction of the Better Care Fund
- the Transformation of Adults Services programme and savings required from the service
- the Council’s co-operative agenda;

3.2 The proposed model enables the continued delivery of much needed carers services whilst also offering value for money and ensuring optimum use of the Oldham pound. The proposal is to have a small Carer’s Strategy team (in house) who would undertake carer’s assessments and Carers Personal Budget assessments (Social workers also undertake assessments when the cared for is known to them) and provide information about services available to carers. The team would work with volunteers and carers to provide a number of drop ins; signposting/ advice service from the Link Centre and create a quarterly newsletter. The Carers Strategy team would also work with the local colleges to commission counselling services as counsellors require a set amount of practising hours to qualify and will often do this at no cost, other than professional supervision. The team would also work with a local charity or public sector organisation to commission advocacy services for carers.

3.3 Alongside the Carers Strategy team there will be groups of carers who would provide support and services for other carers. The internal Carers Strategy team would support and direct the groups set up, helping them overcome barriers and challenges, refer carers through to the group and allocate funding as appropriate. Over time the Carers Strategy team would help the group’s source external funding streams to enable them to become self-funding and self-reliant.

3.4 A ‘Carers Forum’ would be set up where representatives from each of the carers groups would attend. The Forum would be an arena for sharing best practice, discussing any queries or issues, updating carers on any new legislation or asks from the Council or the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The forum could also discuss services to be commissioned to meet the needs of carers in Oldham. The forum would act as a consultative group of carers for proposals and any changes requiring carer’s engagement or consultation.

3.5 The governance arrangements would expand on those currently in place. Alongside the Carers Forum there would be the Carers Partnership Meeting. This is a vehicle for partners involved in supporting carers along with Council staff and representative carers, to meet and discuss updates to carers and also make suggestions on services carers need. These would filter through to the Integrated Commissioning Partnership Board were senior Directors from both the Council and CCG sit and ultimately the Health and Wellbeing Board. The CCG would also discuss any papers at their Clinical
3.6 Working with volunteers is key to the proposed model. Eight in ten carers have experienced loneliness and isolation caused by their caring role (Carers UK). The recognition of the service they provide and the chance to have a break can prevent carer breakdown resulting in harm to the carer’s wellbeing and also the need to provide social care services to the cared for person. As well as potentially funding sitting services through a Carers Personal Budget we could take this a step further by matching a volunteer befriender with a carer, who would act like a sitting service for the person they care for providing them with a break of four hours. This will not be suitable for everyone and should not be used to replace skilled workers. However if we provided 50 carers with a four hour sitting service for a period of 12 months then the cost would be £132,600. Alternatively if we matched 50 befrienders to carers then the cost would be greatly reduced as it would be made up of carer’s expenses and also a proportion of funding towards the Volunteering for All Coordinator, who recruits, supports and places befrienders and other volunteers. This also meets with one of the milestones set by the Better Care Fund for Carers which is to ‘Link with Co-operative agenda to develop volunteer and befriending services for carers’. The new model enables flexibility to work with carers as volunteers or linking them up with the services of volunteers.

3.7 As outlined the new model would comprise of carers groups led and supported by carers for carers. There is evidence already in Oldham that this model works well and is a success (please see appendix 1 for list of existing groups). Each of these groups are well attended and often oversubscribed with many of the groups having to look for larger venues or expanding the offer to different days. One of the groups even has a waiting list. From visiting these groups and speaking to the carers attending the groups the comments suggest that the following are reasons for the group’s successes:

- Having a shared common ground
- An understanding of what one another is going through
- Ability to share experiences, challenges and barriers and how carers have overcome these
- Updating one another on information and details they have found
- Fun and enjoyable place to meet which provides a safe, understanding and welcomed environment
- Groups provide a welcomed break for the carer
- Some of the groups enable the carer to bring the cared for and this mix works well
- As carers run the groups and give their time carers are more obliged to attend

3.8 As the groups would be carer led it provides an opportunity for the carers to meet the needs of other carers in the group, as no one will have a better understanding than carers themselves on what is needed. The Carers Strategy team will be able to influence and direct the group’s offer to ensure each group meet with legislative, CCG and Council requirements.

3.9 The new model provides a vehicle to work in co-production with carers ensuring their input and thoughts are valued and acted upon, with the carer at the centre of any services or changes. The Carers forum provides a way of ensuring carers are engaged and informed of services and support available to carers which meets with the Care Act. This model also meets the objectives set through the Better Care Fund and meets with the Co-operative Borough’s agenda; as it encourages self-reliance and improving resilience of Oldham Carers where they do things for themselves and each other.
4.0 Current Progress

4.1 A report outlining the proposed model was received at Leadership and the proposed model was included in the Star Chamber efficiencies paper that was agreed at Cabinet and Council in December 2014.

4.2 We are now consulting and working with carers and relevant partners to develop the detail of the new model and see how this best meets the needs of carers in Oldham.

5.0 How can Health Scrutiny Influence Carers Support Services in Oldham

5.1 As part of the consultation process the thoughts and views of Health Scrutiny on the proposed model of carer’s services and support are welcomed.

5.2 Also for Carers Services to attend future Health Scrutiny meetings to update on progress and any key issues.
Appendix 1

List of carers groups currently supported by the in-house Carers Strategy Team.

• 16+ Autism Group
• Saddleworth Carers Group
• Failsworth Carers Group – C/O Cancer Support
• Springboard dementia Carers
• Carers for Positive Change
• Mental Health Carers Group