One Croydon

Your health and care partnership

CROYDON CARERS STRATEGY 2024-2029

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Croydon GP Collaborative

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Foreword

By Mayor Jason Perry

As the Executive Mayor of Croydon and co-Chair of the Croydon Health and Care Board, I am delighted to launch this Carers Strategy for Croydon.

Carers are often the ones holding families and communities together, shouldering significant responsibility without always receiving the deserved level of recognition. Giving carers the right support at the right time during their caring journey can make a significant difference.

This strategy sets out how we will strive to support carers, who can be young or old and often unpaid family and friends, to be able to look after their own health and wellbeing. Together, working with our partners and carers themselves, the aim is to build carer resilience and deliver the right interventions for carers when they are most in need.

The Council and its local partners are committed to making Croydon a borough that values the contribution and experience of carers.

It is important in working to deliver change for carers that we build strong and meaningful connections with other relevant local strategies, such as the Autism Strategy and the Croydon Dementia Strategy. In this way we can facilitate a holistic approach to providing support.

I am determined to ensure that all partners will work together to deliver the desired outcomes for carers across the borough. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our carer community for the outstanding commitment they make to those in need of support.

Mayor Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon

Introduction

It is a privilege to have been invited to write the Carer Representative Introduction for the Croydon Carers Strategy 2024 – 2029.

The Croydon Carers Strategy Steering Group has provided the opportunity for key representatives from across the sectors to come together and work collaboratively to help shape the strategy. It has been essential that the voice of carers – informed by their unique insights, has been heard, listened to, and acted upon as part of this process.

Carer feedback has informed the key objectives of the strategy providing a clear vision of how the right action can affect the necessary outcomes. These are the issues that matter to all carers and are essential to a well-designed strategy in order to provide more positive outcomes for both themselves and the people they care for. I am especially pleased that young carers have been represented on the Steering Group and are included in the strategy objectives.

The impact of their caring role on their journey through life – on education and learning, opportunities for growth and development, positive relationships, mental health and wellbeing has too often gone unrecognised.

The strategy will provide the opportunity to fully address the identified gaps and will support the health and wellbeing of all carers in the London Borough of Croydon.

Angela Flood

Carer; Steering Group member; long-term carer; previously SLaM Foundation Trust Carer Governor; Adult Social Care and Health Commissioner; Healthy Ageing Lead for the WHO Healthy Cities programme; and teacher.

Who are carers?

"A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support."

(Carers Trust, 2023)

Carers can be any age and are often categorised as:

- Adult carers are over 18 caring for another adult aged over 18;
- Parent carers are over 18 providing care for a disabled child for whom the person has parental responsibility; and
- Young carers are under 18 caring for another person who could either be an adult or another child.

What carers have told us

Through our work with carers, they told us what would make the biggest difference to their wellbeing:

- Listen to them and appreciate their knowledge of the cared for person, and actioning their wishes, where possible.
- Promote the opportunity to have a Carer's Assessment and the difference this could make for the prevention of future crisis.
- Provide different opportunities for funded planned respite so that they can have a break from their caring role as this is important for their own wellbeing.
- Fund services that offer flexibility around their caring role, understanding that they may also be working or needing to be physically supporting their cared for person.
- Appreciate how much they give to their caring roles and what a benefit this is to the community and families.
- Understand communication is important, not only an awareness of what is available but communication from professionals and services.

National context

Between 2001 and 2011, the number of unpaid adult carers grew by 600,000 with the largest increase being in those who provide 50 or more hours of care per week. Unpaid care increased at a faster pace than population growth between 2001 and 2011 and an ageing population with improved life expectancy for people with long term conditions or complex disabilities means more high-level care is provided for longer. The most recent Census 2021 puts the estimated number of unpaid carers at 5 million in England and Wales[1].

Carers make a major contribution to society. Estimates show that the care provided by friends and family members to ill, frail, or disabled relatives is equivalent to £119 billion every year[2].

There are lots of different estimates of how many young carers there are. The 2021 ONS census reported that there are around 120,000 young carers aged 5-18 in England, while the school census in 2023 suggested that there were 39,000 'known' young carers in the country. Meanwhile, a 2018 BBC survey found that there were as many as 820,000 young carers aged 11-15[3].

Local context

According to the Census 2021, 28,831 Croydon adult residents (7.9% of the population) provide some form of unpaid care. 49.8% of unpaid carers in Croydon provide up to 19 hours of care per week; 27.2% provide 50+ hours of care per week. In Feb 2024, 9,299 adult carers were registered with the Carers Information Service, with the majority (73%) being female carers.

Based on local data, an estimated 870 young people (62% under 18's) are registered with the young carers service in Croydon. The largest concentration of young carers is in the CR0 area with the most likely source of new referrals being schools and social care.

Further information on the national and local context can be found in Appendix A.

1 Unpaid care and protected characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

2 https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carer-facts/

3 https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/supporting-young-carers/facts-about-young-carers

The Croydon Carers Strategy Steering Group

The all age Croydon Carers Strategy Steering Group brought together carers, Councillors and senior representatives from social care, health, and voluntary sector organisations to develop and deliver this strategy.

The group worked collaboratively with stakeholders with specialist knowledge, skills and expertise from the Council, Health and voluntary sector organisations to develop collective strategic objectives. Members of the Croydon Carers Strategy Steering Group can be found in Appendix B.

The Croydon Carers Partnership Board

The Board is all age and has been in existence for several years supporting carers across the borough to ensure that the voice of carers with lived experience are front and centre when it comes to the development of strategies and plans that directly impact them. The Board is made up of carers, Councillors, voluntary sector organisations, council officers and health representatives.

Co-producing this strategy

Following the consultation and learning from our previous carers strategy 2018 - 2022 (see Appendix C for our progress) six key themes were agreed as being important to carers and which form the foundations of the strategy. Whilst themes one - five may be applicable to carers of any age, it is recognised that there are specific areas that impact on a child or young person when they are undertaking a caring role.

The six themes are as follows:

1) Carer identification & impact

2) Carer experience

3) Carer wellbeing

4) Joining up Health and Social Care (services and pathways)

5) Carers' role & rights

6) Young carers

The evidence on which the themes are based is included in Appendix D.

In total, over 100 carers and professionals were engaged through a number of workshops. This was made up of carers and professionals attending workshops to coproduce the themes and discuss the proposed future plans. They helped to identify what is important for future service provision and which has informed the development of the strategy..

Once the strategy was available in its draft format, workshops were held with carers and professionals to test the themes and the proposed plans for future developments. It was also presented at internal meetings for comments on the links with other work.

Healthwatch held a carer focus group on the final draft strategy to discuss the plan objectives in further detail.

The children's integrated commissioning team will undertake co-production within the strategy delivery phase to inform the commissioning and procurement of services. Work has already started through the current young carers provider, which has highlighted some of the areas that will inform future service delivery.

All photos included in the strategy are kindly included with the permission of Croydon carers and voluntary sector staff.

Monitoring our progress

This strategy will be used to develop annual delivery plans where actions will be specified, with clear timelines and measures of success. A delivery plan which is refreshed yearly will enable a dynamic approach across organisations and build on the previous year to achieve the best possible outcomes for carers.

We will be using a range of methods and tools to collect important data and information that helps us evidence our progress in delivering the six key themes. This includes for example; national and local surveys, adult social care and health data, feedback and case studies from our provider services.

We will feedback to carers on a regular basis on our achievements and delivery plans.

4 See appendix B for further details on our previous strategy

"IT WAS A LIGHTBULB MOMENT WHEN SOMEONE TOLD ME I WAS A CARER AND THAT THERE WAS SUPPORT AVAILABLE. I SUDDENLY DIDN'T FEEL SO ALONE AND BURDENED WITH EVERYTHING."

Carer identification & impact

Carers told us that it was a relief when someone identified them as a carer as it meant there could be support to help them in their caring role. Some of the carers haven't previously thought of themselves as a carer as they were caring for a loved one.

Carers told us that they have frequent contact with various health and social care professionals. We felt therefore that this was an important area to increase carer identification.

We know that not enough carers are being identified, which means that many people are going without the support they need and are entitled to. It's important to take every opportunity to offer support and champion carers to recognise the important impact they are having.

Our plan is to:

- improve the quality of culturally tailored person centred, **information for carers**, considering if any AI technologies might improve the digital offer;
- improve the identification of carers within **Primary Care**, and pharmacies and how they are referred to local carer services;
- work with the NHS to identify carers during **hospital appointments, admission and discharge;**
- provide **support for employers** to identify carers and know how to support them; and
- address barriers to people identifying as a carer and increase the number of carers registered within the borough.

Carer experience

Carers told us about the different experiences they had during their caring role both with services, professionals and other carers. They felt it was a key responsibility for us to ensure carers feel supported and heard 'when they ask for our help' or are in crisis.

Some carers kindly shared their experiences where a negative interaction with a service was detrimental to their wellbeing. In these instances, they had often been left feeling frustrated and unsure where else to go for help. We also heard of some positive experiences with our services and the support that carers continued to receive. Positive experiences tended to be when a professional had really taken the time to listen and try to understand the circumstances without judging, but instead working as a team to find solutions.

Our plan is to:

- provide support so that **carers feel empowered** to ensure their voices are heard regarding the cared for person;
- provide services in a way that **recognises and respects differences** in ethnicity, language, culture, faith, sexuality, gender identity, and socioeconomic background;
- recognise the **importance of carers** within the Borough with events which highlight the role of carers; and
- create a Croydon carer awareness training programme for health and social care staff involving carers in the training development and as trainers.

"TOO MANY ASSUMPTIONS ARE MADE ABOUT CARERS - THEIR BACKGROUND, EDUCATION, QUALIFICATIONS AND LIFE EXPERIENCE - RATHER THAN REALLY SEEING THEM AS AN IMPORTANT PERSON FIRST."

"I LOVE MY SISTER AND MOTHER BUT SOMETIMES I JUST NEED SOME TIME TO MYSELF TO RECHARGE."

Carer wellbeing

Carers told us that they often don't have time to look after their own health for many reasons including a lack of time around caring responsibilities or being unable to leave the cared for person alone. Some carers reported suffering from back and shoulder injuries caused by either having to physically move another person or performing household tasks.

For those carers that were working, the balance between work, caring and looking after themself was challenging. Carer's work had been affected by tiredness and stress and they raised that it was more difficult to get support if they were working all day.

Carers highlighted being able to take a break, respite, as being particularly important to them. The ability to have anything from a few hours to a proper holiday really helped both their mental and physical wellbeing.

Our plan is to:

- provide a range of **timely funded respite opportunities**, through an easy to follow process, for both emergency situations and as part of the ongoing support for carers;
- ensure that through training, carers are informed about how to **safely undertake their caring role** whilst maintaining their own health and wellbeing;
- work as a system to create opportunities with the carer card and promote them widely;
- provide support for carers following a bereavement or when caring responsibilities end; and
- address the aspects which detrimentally affect a carer's wellbeing such as financial pressures, work/caring/life balance and feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Joining up Health & Social Care

Carers told us that to be able to support them effectively, we need to build and maintain a good understanding of the local carer population. Only by doing this, can we understand what their needs are and develop support offers to meet that need. As part of this they were keen that we continue to include them (carers) in our decision making and strategic developments.

Carers provided us with examples of where they are a vital part of the joined-up approach across different health and care service providers. These included how they are the person who knows all the different aspects and who has a complete picture of the cared for person. To reduce the burden on carers, the importance of removing the need for duplication of information provided was highlighted as important.

"I ALWAYS HAVE INFORMATION AVAILABLE IF I NEED TO PHONE AN AMBULANCE OR THE GP AS IT HELPS THAT THEY KNOW HIS MEDICATION AND RECENT MEDICAL HISTORY. THEY ARE ALWAYS APPRECIATIVE OF HAVING THE INFORMATION."

Our plan is to:

- ensure that future Health & Social Care strategic plan development aligns with our carer strategic objectives;
- include in any future service planning the importance of identifying carers and understanding their needs;
- promote the identification of carers in case of an emergency situation / illness and encourage them to register as carers and receive their carers card;
- provide options for holistic, seamless combined support for carers to maintain their own health and wellbeing whilst undertaking their caring role; and
- reduce the amount of duplication of 'providing our story' between our services.

"SERVICES SHOULD BE FAMILY FOCUSSED AND NOT FINANCE FOCUSSED, WE ALSO DON'T ASK FOR MUCH, JUST SOME HELP SOMETIMES."

Carers' role & rights

Carers told us that it can be difficult for them to know what their role and rights might be and what support they could be entitled to. This included how to take action when they felt that their rights are not being met. Our discussions split broadly into areas around finances, work, education and wellbeing.

Carers' role and rights should be understood and recognised across our Croydon communities. It is important that carers are aware of their rights and how to voice their concerns when these are not being met. To do this, we will raise the profile of carers and their rights within communities including educational establishments, employers, professionals, and the public.

Our plan is to:

- improve pathways to timely **Carer's Assessments** which are offered in a variety of formats including options for working carers;
- provide support for carers to retain their **employment or get back to work** around their caring / after caring ends;
- work with Croydon organisations to support **the implementation of the Carer's Leave Act** (Unpaid carer's leave - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)); and
- review our assessment and recording process to capture a **robust carer support plan** that provides advice and guidance including financial, end of life planning, and links to other services.

Young carers

Young carers told us that they tend to experience poor mental wellbeing. Nationally 4 in 10 young carers reported feeling sad, 1 in 4 reported feeling lonely, and 1 in 2 reported feeling angry in the preceding week. They are more likely to be bullied in school, to have missed days of school and have fallen asleep in school in the preceding week.[5]

Young carers tell us of the importance of joined-up working and the real difference that timely and effective support services make.

To help make this a reality a model local Memorandum of Understanding was published jointly by the Carer's Trust, the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in 2009 and refreshed in 2024.

The "No Wrong Doors for Young Carers" approach aims to help local authorities ensure they are complying with the DFE's Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 statutory guidance relating to young carers and young adult carers.

It's not a one-size-fits-all approach but rather an opportunity for Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and other system partners to commit to actions and approaches that we believe, together, will make a difference for young carers and young adult carers in Croydon.

Our plan is to:

- prioritise the identification of young carers in collaboration with schools, colleges, further education, voluntary sector organisations and other partners;
- test how the "No Wrong Doors" approach could be introduced across our local system in Croydon;
- raise awareness of the needs of young carers in the community;
- arrange young carer awareness-raising sessions for school staff and pupils;
- provide support for young carers to achieve improved school attendance and attainment levels as their peers;
- improve young carers health and wellbeing through appropriate support including access to timely support, respite, access to GP, counselling etc.;
- work with Public Health to ensure the School Census identifies young carers;
- support young carers who have disengaged from school to restart school and help them to settle-in;
- ensure carers assessments are being undertaken in a timely manner, and that young people can access case worker support, respite and practical interventions to address need;
- have closer collaboration and communication between those working with young carers and social workers, health and other professionals to secure timely high-quality support; and
- develop a database of services and resources that young carers can be referred to including family and parental support agencies.

I HAVE FELT ALONE...IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SOME SUPPORT.

5 https://stateofchildhealth.rcpch.ac.uk/evidence/family-and-social-environment/young-carers/).

What to expect in the first year of the strategy

JUNE 2024 — Finalise detailed commitment delivery plans with timescales

JULY 2024 — Launch Strategy

AUG 2024 — Commence procurement for the Croydon all-age Carer Core Offer

AUG 2024 — Commence development of feedback and methods for ongoing engagement with carers

SEPT 2024 — First quarterly reporting to Carers Partnership Board on delivery plan

OCT 2024 — Work with Public Health and Schools to ensure the School Census returns identify young carers

DEC 2024 — Second quarterly reporting to Carers Partnership Board on delivery plan

MARCH 2025 — Third quarterly reporting to Carers Partnership Board on delivery plan

APRIL 2025 — New Croydon all-age Carer Core Offer commences

JULY 2025 — First annual strategy progress report to the Carers Partnership Board

Appendices

Appendix A: Further national & local context

The most recent Census 2021 puts the estimated number of unpaid carers at 5 million in England and Wales. This, together with ONS Census data for Scotland and Northern Ireland, suggests that the number of unpaid carers across the UK is 5.7 million[6].

This means that around 9% of people are providing unpaid care. However, Carers UK research in 2022 estimates the number of unpaid carers could be as high as 10.6 million (Carers UK, Carers Week 2022 research report).

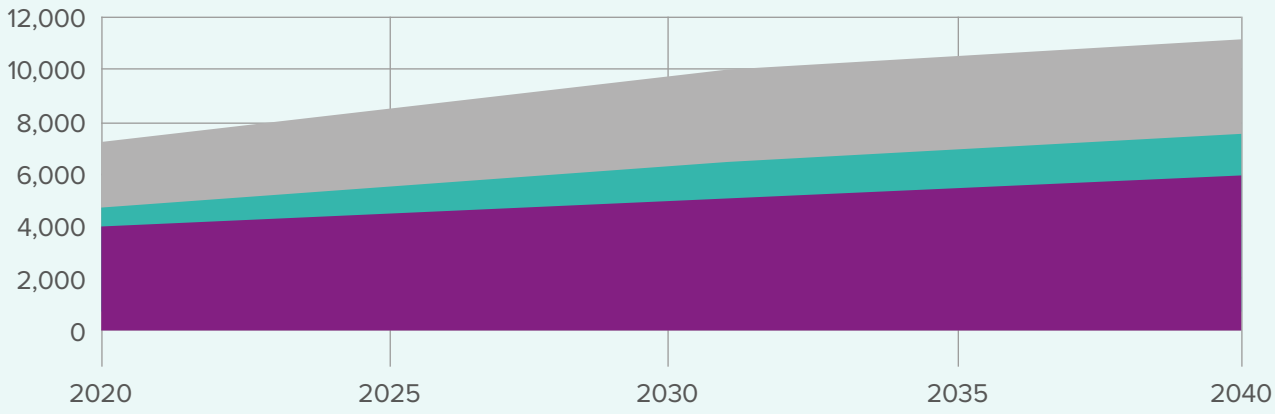
The first year of school census data relating to young carers was released in June 2023. The data showed that there was significant under-reporting of the number of young carers in schools (both when compared to the estimated number of young carers in schools, and the numbers known to local young carer services). Nationally, 38,983 pupils were recorded as young carers, representing 0.5% of the pupil population and an average of 260 young carers per local authority (126 young carers were recorded for Croydon in 2023).

In contrast, research by the University of Nottingham and the BBC suggests that around 10% of all pupils will be providing high or very high levels of care[7].

Juggling paid work alongside unpaid care places additional stress on the carer and has led thousands of people to leave work entirely. On average, 600 people a day leave work to care – with over 500,000 people leaving work to provide unpaid care in the two years before the Covid-19 pandemic[8]. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, almost 5 million people were working whilst providing care (around 15% UK population). In 2020, the number of people in paid work who were also providing unpaid care increased to over 7 million.

Voluntary sector organisations working closely with carers in Croydon have highlighted an emerging number of new carers, especially those who are caring for people with long-term post Covid-19 conditions. Our aim is to continue to identify carers at an early stage, assess their needs and offer them support appropriately to prevent, reduce, and delay future needs for support.

Number of people aged 65+ providing unpaid care in Croydon, projected to 2040[9]



6 https://www.carersuk.org/policy-and-research/key-facts-and-figures/

7 https://carers.org/campaigning-for-change/young-carers-and-the-school-census

8 Right to Carer's Leave | Carers UK

9 PANSI: https://pansi.org.uk/index.php. POPPI: https://poppi.org.uk/index.php

Appendix A: Further national & local context

The national Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) 2021 to 22[10] takes place every other year and is conducted by Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (CASSRs). This survey has been developed to learn more about whether services received by carers are helping them in their caring role and their life outside of caring, and about their perception of the services provided to the person they care for.

Excluding carers that had not received support or services, around 15% of respondents felt that they were always involved in discussions in the last twelve months compared to 35% of respondents reporting they were usually or sometimes involved and 20% who never felt involved (30% felt there had not been any discussions in the last 12 months).

32% of respondents had not had an interaction with social care support or services within the last 12 months. Out of the 68% who had some interaction, 35% of those were in some way satisfied with the support provided and 23% were in some way dissatisfied with the support they were provided.

Only 25% of respondents felt they had time to look after their own health and wellbeing, with 40% reporting that they feel like they are neglecting themselves and 35% sometimes feeling that it was difficult to look after themselves.

59% of respondents had accessed advice and information services in the last 12 months, with 45% getting support from carers groups or confidential advice. Only 7% though had been able to access training to help support their caring role.

Many respondents (86%) said they often or always felt socially isolated and had little social contact with people due to their caring role. With 30% of respondents saying they had been caring for someone for more than 20 years and 20% caring between 10-20 years.

Respondents to the survey were mainly female (75%) and caring for people in the 55-64 years age bracket (31%).

10 Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2021-22 - NHS Digital

Appendix A: Further national & local context

2023 GP Patient Survey

The GP Patient Survey (GPPS) is an England-wide survey, providing data about patients' experiences of their GP practices. Within the South West London Integrated Care Systems (SWL ICS) area, 84,219 questionnaires were sent out, and 20,470 were returned completed. This represents a response rate of 24%[11]. The data provided below is for the whole of the SWL ICS area and not specifically Croydon.

For those carers with a long-term condition, excluding those that answered, 'I haven't needed support' and 'don't know / can't say', 61% of carers felt supported to manage their physical long term condition but only 13% felt supported to manage a mental health condition.

With regard to making an appointment and the experience of seeing a GP, the results for carers were similar to that of non carers with 71% of carer and 74% of non carers being satisfied with the appointment. Carers tended to have more contact with NHS services when GPs were closed, with 33% answering yes to have contacted an NHS service. It is not possible though to know if this was for themselves or their cared for person.

Having a preferred or consistent GP was mentioned a few times in our consultation with carers as it can help with continuity of care and reduce duplication of providing information. Although 57% of carers reported they had a preferred GP as part of the survey, only 35% got to see that GP when they would like to either always or almost always.

11 Survey and Reports (gp-patient.co.uk)

Appendices

Appendix B: Croydon Carers Steering Group membership

Representative	Job title, Organisation
Claire Fletcher (Chair)	Older People and Carers Strategic Commissioning Manager, Croydon Council
Leanne Bobb	Head of Strategic Commissioning & Improvement, Croydon Council
Hsio-Ling Mei	Older People & Carers Senior Commissioning and Contracts Officer, Croydon Council
Tracy Dumbarton	Interim Older People & Carers Senior Commissioning and Contracts Officer, Croydon Council
Sasha Lindsay	Older People & Carers Commissioning and Contracts Officer, Croydon Council
Eloise Kilbride	National Management Trainee, ASC, Croydon Council
Cllr Yvette Hopley	Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care
Cllr Margaret Bird	Deputy Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care
Tanya Fitzgerald	Carers Information Service, Croydon
Emily Collinsbeare	Young Carers Service and Community Team lead, Off The Record. Croydon
Katherine Wynne	CEO, Croydon Mencap
Jacqui Dyce	Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing Services, Mind in Croydon
Cris Green	Disability and Autism Strategic Commissioning Manager, Croydon Council
Shirley Moyes	Mental Health Strategic Commissioning Manager, Croydon Council
Tracey Francis	Commissioning and Contract Officer- Mental Health, Croydon Council
Connie Ikhifa	Senior Commissioning Manager - Children & Young People's Mental Health, SWL ICB
Shelley Prince	Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement, Croydon Council & SWL ICB
Victoria Blinks	Communications and Engagement Lead, Croydon Council
Jennifer Daniel	LIFE Service & Development Manager, Head of Hospital Services ASC
Sharon Judd	Principal Social Worker, Croydon Council
Judith Sekyonda	Carers Champion Social worker, Croydon Council
Sedley Wilson	Carer Representative
Angela Flood	Carer Representative
Roxanna Kishore-Bigord	Carers Representative, Parent Carer Form from Croydon Active Voices
Paul Connolly	Head of Integrated Contracts and Performance, One Croydon Alliance
Deba Hussain	Transformation Programme Manager, Community Care, SWL ICB
Karen Barkway	Head of Primary and Community Care Transformation – Croydon (Central Locality)
Felicity Hunter	Virtual wards, CHS

Appendices

Appendix C: Our progress since 2018

The Mayor's business plan was a catalyst for refreshing the strategy and demonstrated a commitment to carers and the important work that they do in the borough. This was informed by the voice of Croydon's carers and recognises the diversity of carers' individual experiences and the support they need.

During and post pandemic the work became stilted and some plans were not implemented. We now have a newly refreshed strategy and delivery plan which has been co-produced with carers, which has taken into account lived experience and has identified what action we need to take to best support carers here in Croydon.

Since publishing the strategy, we have undertaken the following actions to achieve the priorities identified:

2018	The Carers Information Service issues all carers who are registered with them, with a carer card which can be used as part of the carer identification process.
2019	The Carers Information Service carried out work with GP surgeries to help raise carer awareness and promote the support services available to carers in the borough.
2020	During Covid, The Carers Information Service worked on providing up to date information for carers and their rights, including offering PPE supplies and issuing carer identification cards to ensure carers had priority access to supermarket shopping times.
2021	The Carers Information Service provides support for former, bereaved carers through its bereavement café. It has run specialist bereavement courses and provided 1:1 counselling for bereaved carers during Covid.
2022	Our Carer Information Service provides both digital and paper format fact sheets and information for carers
2023	The council has a working carer staff network who provide emotional and practical support to staff with caring responsibilities. Through discussion, members are able to raise issues of policy, practice and procedures and support staff who are working carers to improve their life at work.

Appendices

Appendix D: Evidence for strategic aims

Young carers

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014, both significantly strengthened the rights for young carers. They aim to assess and support children and young people from taking on excessive or inappropriate care.

Many young people with caring responsibilities aren't known to their schools or colleges and don't see themselves as being young carers or feel too worried or embarrassed to ask for help. Often young carers don't get identified until a crisis. The sooner we can find out someone is a young carer, the more support can be put in place to help keep them safe, well and able to attend and achieve their best (https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Young-Carers-Identification-Guide-a-tool-for-education-staff.pdf).

The Government recognises that schools have a vital role to play and are ideally positioned to identify young carers and to initiate support. Doing so will ensure they are able to fully participate in their education and have a fair start in life. From spring 2023, schools will be asked to include young carers in the school census. This won't be limited to young carers who have had a young carers needs assessment. The Young Carers in Schools programme can help your school identify the young carers and ensure they are supported in partnership with the local authority, the local NHS and the local voluntary sector e.g. young carers' services (https://youngcarersinschools.com/ycis-guide/).

Young carers are a specific group within the vulnerable pupil category; OFSTED recommend the identification and support of young carers as 'best practice' in schools, sixth form and FE colleges, making necessary adjustments where able (https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Supporting-young-carers-in-school-March2022.pdf).

Carer identification & impact

The Carers and Hospital Discharge Toolkit for London Hospitals and Community Providers (Carers Trust) is intended to help providers improve the experience of carers during hospital discharge. The good practice contained within the toolkit will be used to inform our strategic actions within this and other priorities (https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/142-carers-and-hospital-discharge-toolkit-for-london-hospitals-and-community-provider/).

The National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE) identified back in 2020 the importance of identifying and supporting carers. If carers are not identified (by themselves and by health professionals, it is a barrier to them receiving appropriate support and being involved in patient care. It notes GPs are an important first point of contact for encouraging carers to identify themselves and are in a good position to identify and support their patients who are carers due to their long term relationship with patients (https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/support-for-adult-carers/background-information/identifying-supporting-carers/).

Carer experience

The 2023 State of Caring Survey (Carers UK) found that a widespread lack of support and recognition from health and care services is severely damaging unpaid carers' mental health. It highlights how people caring round the clock for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives do not have adequate support from statutory services that are in place to help them (https://www.carersuk.org/policy-and-research/state-of-caring-survey/).

NICE identified that although there are rewarding, positive, and beneficial aspects of a caring role, including personal fulfilment, strengthening family ties, and saving family resources, many carers are not well prepared for their carer role. Stressors related to providing care can frequently be persistent, uncontrollable, and unpredictable. Carers have valuable skills and knowledge about the person they care for and are often key to understanding the person's needs and preferences. Carers value being recognised and respected as core members of the team around the person they care for. Providing the person gives consent and their wishes remain central, carers should be supported to actively participate in decision making and care planning for the person they care for (https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs200/chapter/Quality-statement-2-Working-with-carers).

Appendix D: Evidence for strategic aims

Carer wellbeing

The 2023 State of Caring Survey (Carers UK) found that not being able to access the support they need is taking its toll on unpaid carers, many of whom are worn out and exhausted. Far too many carers are having to wait long periods for health treatment - or putting it off because of the demands of their caring role. They are unable to rely on fragmented social care services to support with caring and are struggling financially because they cannot earn a higher income (https://www.carersuk.org/media/xgwlj0gn/soc23-health-report_web.pdf).

Compared with the general population, carers are seven times more likely to report being often or always lonely. Caring can also affect relationships and the ability to participate in activities (RCGP, 2014; Carers UK, 2019b).

Financially, carers may face difficulties, and their income may be affected by their caring role. The time and costs of providing care may also result in higher bills and financial pressure (Carers UK, 2019b; Treanor, 2019).

NICE guidance (2020) highlights the importance for health and social care practitioners to remind carers of the value of taking a break and the options available to them. This could be as simple as making some time for themselves in their daily routine to arranged breaks with replacement care (https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs200/chapter/Quality-statement-4-Carers-breaks).

Joining up Health & Social Care

Supporting carers involves multidisciplinary input from the health and social care services and the voluntary sector (RCGP, 2014), but the support of primary healthcare professionals can make a significant difference to carers' health and wellbeing (Fox, 2010).

Providing support for the carer means the person being cared for may also be healthier and happier and experience benefits such as improved confidence and trust in their carer, reduced anxiety and feelings of guilt, and reassurance that their carer will continue caring for them (NHS England and NHS Improvement, 2019).

Supporting carers can also lead to better care planning; improve the care of people with long term conditions, people receiving palliative care, and elderly and vulnerable people; and reduce unnecessary hospital admissions. Improved carer health and wellbeing may reduce demand on services and prescribing costs (RCGP, 2013; NHS England and NHS Improvement, 2019).

Carers' role & rights

NICE guidance (2020) highlights the importance of cares being offered supportive working arrangements by their employer. Employers have an important role to help carers to remain in employment and reduce stigma by offering supportive working arrangements (https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs200/chapter/quality-statement-5-helping-carers-stay-in-work#quality-statement-5-helping-carers-stay-in-work).

Rights to Carer's Leave

On 11 December 2023, the draft regulations for the Carer's Leave Act 2023 were laid in Parliament. The legislation came into force from 6 April 2024. Employees will be able to take up to one week of leave every 12 months. A 'week' means the length of time they usually work over 7 days. For example, if someone usually works 3 days a week, they can take 3 days of carer's leave (Unpaid carer's leave - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)).

Rights to a Carer's Assessment

The Care Act 2014 strengthens the right of adult carers of adults to have an assessment of their needs (called a Carer's Assessment). It places a duty on the council to plan support for those carers who meet the eligibility criteria. The rights of parent carers have also been addressed within the Children and Families Act. The council has a duty to provide an assessment to a carer of a disabled child aged under 18 if it appears that the parent carer has needs, or the parent carer requests an assessment.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 is statutory guidance and states that local authority services to adults must consider whether any children are providing care to the adult and whether the young carers are in need of support. In such cases, or when requested by a parent or the young carer, the local authority is under a duty to conduct a young carers' needs assessment under Section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989.

Rights under the Equality Act

Carers and disabled people have the right not to be discriminated against or harassed under the Equality Act. Carers have the right not to be discriminated against as a result of their caring role and "association" with a disabled person. Employers can demonstrate that they are meeting the requirement of the Equality Act 2010 to actively promote a positive culture towards people with caring responsibilities.

12 Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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