

## **Torbay Interagency Carers' Strategy 2024-27 – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board**

### **Report to Cabinet on 19 March 2024**

#### **Background**

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board met on 14 March 2024 to consider the submitted draft Torbay Interagency Carers' Strategy 2024-2027 which had been co-designed with Carers, users, partners and professional experts to bring together the work of Health and Care Organisations to ensure joined up, working towards best practice and provide good quality services with Carers at the heart of their work. Carers were people who support family, friends and neighbours who cannot manage alone due to their health and care needs. It was noted that 13 March 2024 was Young Carers' Action Day and Young Carers had circulated a video that they had made to raise awareness.

Members noted that Carers had agreed that the priorities from the previous strategy would remain the same. They have developed 'I statements' showing what they want.

1. 'As soon as I start my caring role, I want to be identified, recognised and valued as a Carer.'
2. 'I want to be able to easily find information, advice and support to meet my needs as a Carer.'
3. 'I want to know that every Carer involved in a person's care can have a Carer's assessment when they need one.'
4. 'I want to be confident that Carers guide all things that affect them.'
5. 'I want the care and support to the person that I care for to also meet my needs as their Carer.'

Within these priorities, there were other issues to be addressed:

- a. Information to Carers to include support to the person they care for.
- b. Carers and employment.
- c. Carers' own mental health and support to people with Mental Health issues and their Carers.
- d. Partnership working / information sharing across organisations.
- e. Carers finance / cost-of living challenges.
- f. Improving support at transitions.
- g. Improving use of technology and digital support.

Carol Brown, Chair of the Carers' Strategy Steering Group, who was also a Carer herself explained some of the difficulties facing Carers and outlined a number of questions relating to funding, early identification of Carers by all professionals through professional curiosity, equality between those caring for people with mental health and those with physical disabilities, respite services, the Community Helpline, access to technology and communicating changes resulting from feedback. These topics were also highlighted in the Strategy. It was agreed that a written response would be provided to those questions not responded to at the meeting.

Pat Harris, Healthwatch Torbay advised that Healthwatch had been working with Carers to evaluate the last Carers' Strategy and helped to reassure Carers that they were being listened to and their feedback taken into account. Two reports would be published following this work which would be shared with partners. Replacement care (also known as 'respite') was identified as a major issue due to lack of provision when people wanted to go away, especially when this was planned in advance as providers would not reserve the places. Ms Harris highlighted the complexity of Carers accessing services whilst supporting those who they cared for particularly GP and Dentists trying to arrange appointments for two people at a time. Members were also informed that a lot of Carers did not recognise that they were Carers, especially when it was a loved one as they feel they were someone they look after rather than care for. It was noted that future work by Healthwatch Torbay would be done face to face rather than by survey as Carers receive lots of surveys.

The Board asked a number of follow up questions relating to waiting lists, the Impact of the Integrated Care Organisation (ICO), access to technology, key performance indicators around the five 'I statements', early identification of being a Carer and referral to services, equality, diversity and inclusion, support to young adults (18 to 25 year olds) and transport.

The Board was informed that initial Carer's assessments were generally carried out within one to two weeks with the longest wait being six weeks for Carers supporting people with dementia. Having the Integrated Care Organisation and wider Integrated Care Board were positive and as they were all working together to support Carers with Carer Support Workers based in GP surgeries one day a week. The biggest wait was for mental health services which has a severe impact on Carer. Healthwatch Torbay was proud to share offices with the Carers Team and recognised the benefit of this. It was acknowledged that there was still a need to work with all agencies to identify Carers at the earliest opportunity.

The Carers' Lead, Katy Heard, advised that Carers UK did a lot of lobbying on behalf of Carers particularly around benefits and rights for working Carers. When asked about equality, diversity and inclusion, she responded that the Carers Team had a stand at Torbay Pride and Young Adult Carers worked with 'Proud to Be', based at Paignton Library. There had been some targeted outreach work with black and minority ethnic groups and Polish communities. The Carers Team capture how people identify themselves when they access Carers' services and work towards ensuring equality. More work needs to be done to identify more Carers who don't access services. Support was also provided to young adult Carers from 16 to 25 to help support them with

education, apprenticeships and employment and to help give them confidence to leave home and spread their wings. The newly developed Carers' Passports provides signposting to support.

The Board was advised that the Carers Team worked closely with the community and voluntary sector through community hubs and Torbay Communities had introduced a volunteer sitting service to help provide respite for Carers.

The Director of Adults and Community Services, Jo Williams, gave reassurance that the Council was looking at a new contract for the Community Helpline and would liaise with Carol Brown and Pat Harris about what outcomes they feel should be included in the contract. Reviewing technology solutions was part of the transformation plans as having the right equipment used properly can have a transformational impact on people's lives.

Members were advised that replacement care was a big challenge and lots of different solutions had been tried in the past, but this was a national issue and a Replacement Care Strategy would be co-produced with Carers and Carer Services to try to address this issue.

The Board requested their formal appreciation and recognition to the Carers and partners for all their hard work and support, which had resulted in delivery of most of the targets in the previous Carers' Strategy and the co-design and development of the revised Carers' Strategy be placed on record and shared. Members also acknowledged how much Carers do and the extra demands that it places on them and welcomed the two reports being developed by Healthwatch Torbay which represents the voice of the user and would help inform future service delivery.

2. The Board reflected and debated the information provided to them, both in writing and orally and formed the following recommendations to the Cabinet. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.
3. That the Cabinet be recommended:
  - a) approve the Torbay's Interagency Carers' Strategy 2023-27 (as set out at Appendix 3) to the submitted report; and
  - b) ensure that key performance indicators are developed to enable monitoring of delivery against 'I statements' and ensure that Councillors are kept updated on delivery against the Torbay's Interagency Carers' Strategy 2023-27.