

Commitment to Carers

In everything we do, we will take Carers into account



Introduction

The NHS in Devon, Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, and Torbay Council want Devon to be a good place for Carers.

“A Carer is considered to be anyone who spends time looking after or helping a friend, family member or neighbour who, because of their health and care needs, would find it difficult to cope without this help regardless of age or whether they identify as a Carer.”

- [Carers National Action Plan](#) 2018 - 2020 “Supporting carers today”
Department of Health 2018

We recognise that Carers are providers of significant support to the people they care for, which across the whole County of Devon (including Plymouth and Torbay) has been valued at £2.5 billion annually, roughly the same cost as the NHS.

“Every year, more and more people take on a caring role. The enormous contribution of our country's carers not only makes an invaluable difference to the people they support, it is an integral part of our health and social care system and it deserves to be better recognised.

“.... Carers are the experts-by-experience turning treatment plans into reality..... To the people they help, they are the indispensable family members, friends, and neighbours that make each day possible. Within our communities they are vital partners.....What none of us must forget is that carers have their own needs too. We must be alert and responsive to those needs, or we risk compromising their health and wellbeing and – by association – the recipients of their care”

- *Carers National Action Plan 2018*

We commit ourselves to:

- embedding the principles identified in this document in all our ways of working and inviting all our partners to join us in doing so;
- adopting good employment principles and practices for those Carers who work or want to work for us, as promoted by Employers for Carers* (see appendix 1) and invite all employers to do the same;
- using all the ways we have available to us to encourage awareness and support for Carers in communities and businesses.

These high level commitments apply to all Carers, except where either: a) expressly stated; b) where age is an essential criterion (e.g. employment and Young Carers); or c) where differences in the legislation direct us (for Adult Carers of Adults the Care Act 2014 and for Young Carers and Parent Carers

of Children the Children and Families Act 2014). They also apply equally to Carers of people with all different conditions.

These are our high-level commitments. They reflect the commitments and priorities from the NHS Commitment to Carers (Commitment to Carers [here](#) and Toolkit [here](#)), the National Action Plan for Carers 2018 -20, the principles of Employers for Carers and the principles for organisations whose work brings them into contact with Carers embedded in the “Triangle of Care” (see below)

Detailed action plans will be written for each organisation which signs up, in order to ensure these commitments become a reality, (or something like that, otherwise the front section is not very user friendly)

1: Identifying Carers and supporting them

We will identify and recognise as many Carers as possible as early as possible in their caring journey, including Young Carers and Parent Carers.

- GP practices will identify, recognise, record and support Carers.
- All Health and Social Care Services will identify, recognise, involve and support Carers.
- Voluntary and Community Sector partners will identify, signpost and support Carers as appropriate to their roles.
- We will support Schools and Education services to identify Young Carers and Parent Carers.

2: Effective Support for Carers

We will ensure that support for Carers is well integrated within mainstream health, social care and community services, so that access to support is improved, Carers experience consistent holistic support, i.e. that looks at all aspects of their lives, and their lives and their mental and physical health are maintained or improved.

For Young Carers we will also ensure that we help to improve their educational opportunities and outcomes.

We will work to ensure that services are Carer-friendly, treat Carers with consideration (so they don't have to choose between caring and having treatment and support for their own needs), and link them into local community support and Carer support.

We will support Carers to have effective choice when caring and being in employment, encouraging employers in Devon to recognise the benefits of being carer friendly

We will ensure that all health and care services including Primary, Acute, Community and Mental Health Services recognise Carers, support them in their caring role and link them into sources of support.

When Carers need more help and to avoid reaching crisis point, we will ensure that they can access support as quickly and simply as possible.

We will work to improve access to replacement care when Carers need a break:

Replacement care, also commonly known as respite care, is any care arrangement designed to give rest or relief to unpaid carers. It aims to support carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities.

[Carers Assessments](#) will always be a helpful and useful opportunity in themselves. They will identify measures that support Carers in staying well, caring effectively and safely, making their own life choices, in maximising their resilience and the independence of the person they care for, and their own most important life goals.

We will take a whole family approach to support in order to promote the wellbeing of the Carer's family and ensure that "no door is the wrong door" for any Carer.

3: Enabling Carers to make informed choices about their caring role

We will enable Carers, and support others to enable Carers, to make informed choices about their lives. We will support Carers to make decisions about their caring role including choosing not to provide care or to limit caring.

We will ensure that information about local support and services is easily found and clear, in order that Carers can choose appropriate support for themselves and the person they care for.

We will take into account wider [determinants of health](#) in our approach to supporting Carers' wellbeing and resilience; such as education, work, housing suitability, financial stress, Carer choice in caring and the sustainability of the caring role.

Support we arrange will include planning for end-of-life care, and life after caring; for example, supporting a return to employment where appropriate, dealing with grief and having a good life.

4: Staff awareness

Our staff will be aware of Carers, sensitive to their needs and aware of the support available to them. They will encourage and support Carers to access the help they need.

We will make Carer awareness training a core element for our staff at induction and as part of their continuing professional development as part of our workforce development plans.

We will encourage our staff to recognise signs of Carer stress and make it easy for them to signpost and refer Carers for support.

We will make it easy for social care staff who identify health needs in Carer Assessments to refer the Carer to their GP for health support.

In this way we will work holistically with the Carer and the person(s) they care for at all points of contact – diagnosis, review, and planning for discharge.

5: Information-sharing

We will share information appropriately to support Carers and work to avoid Carers having to repeat information.

We will encourage Carers to allow sharing of their information so support is sensitive, tailored, joined-up and effective.

We will encourage people with care and support needs to share information about their needs with their Carer(s) to enable their full participation in care and support planning.

6: Respecting Carers as expert partners in care

We will respect Carers as expert partners in care and involve them holistically in care planning, decision making and reviews.

Health and Care professionals will support and empower Carers to fulfil this role.

We will involve Carers in monitoring and reviewing services so that we can demonstrate where we are successful and where we need to improve.

We are committed to and support the implementation in all services of the principles behind the "[Triangle of Care](#)" so that Carers are universally recognised and respected as expert partners in care and supported by services in their role (see Appendix 2).

7: Carers whose roles are changing or who are more vulnerable

We will identify Carers who are more vulnerable or at key points of transition to focus support.

We will work to shape services to match Carers' needs.

We will focus attention on ensuring we get it right for Carers particularly at these key points of transition:

- For Young Carers, moving between schools, onto further education or between adolescence and adulthood;
- For Parents as Carers, particularly when children leave the family home or become eligible for adult services;
- Transition to permanent residential care or living independently;
- End of life;
- Bereavement and life after caring.

And on getting it right for vulnerable Carers, including:

- Carers of people with substance misuse problems;
- Carers aged over 75 years;
- Carers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and/or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) backgrounds;
- Carers with multiple caring roles.

Appendix 1: Employers for Carers

Devon County Council, Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council have membership of “Employers for Carers”.

The benefits of this membership are available to all NHS partners and all Small and Medium Enterprises in Devon.

They include advice on Carer-friendly employment policies and their benefits.

You can find information about Employers for Carers at www.employersforcarers.org

We also support Carers by providing information on employment rights, available here:

<https://www.carersuk.org/files/helpandadvice/2613/factsheet-uk1031-your-rights-in-work.pdf>

Appendix 2: The Triangle of Care – principles for all services on working with Carers

See: <https://professionals.carers.org/triangle-care-mental-health/triangle-care-resources>

Principles:

1. Carers, and the essential role they play, are identified at first contact or as soon as possible thereafter;
2. Staff are carer aware and trained in carer engagement strategies;
3. Policy and practice protocols regarding confidentiality and sharing information are in place;
4. Defined post(s) for carers are in place – appropriate to the service, for example a lead senior manager, team champions;
5. Information for carers on the service is available across the pathways;
6. Carers are enabled to access a range of carer support services including a self-assessment tool.