



Adult Social Care Select Committee
17 January 2012

**Member Reference Group – Services for Carers – Interim
Report**

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services/Policy Development and Review

This report informs the Committee of the work of the Member Reference Group, monitoring the officer Task and Finish Group on improving services for carers, prior to the final officer report.

Introduction:

1. In July 2011, the Committee received a report on the Multi-Agency Carers Strategy. The report outlined the services available to carers and included information on Surrey's performance on carers assessments.
2. The Adult Social Care directorate is well known for providing excellent services for carers, particularly those commissioned from the voluntary sector; however, the rate of providing carers assessments has been low for many years. Despite regular pledges for improvement, the rate of assessments had remained low.
3. At the meeting, the Committee recommended that a Task and Finish Group be set up to address the low rate of carers assessments. In the course of scoping the project, it became apparent that the Service had already set up their own officer-level Task and Finish Group to look at improving all services to carers, including assessments. As such, it was agreed that the Committee's Task and Finish Group become a Member Reference Group to monitor the officer Task and Finish Group's work.
4. The Member Reference Group was made up of:
 - a) Linda Kemeny – Spokesperson
 - b) Caroline Nichols
 - c) Fiona White, and
 - d) Chris Pitt

5. It was also agreed to have a co-opted Member from Action for Carers. Jane Thornton, CEO, joined the Member Reference Group and provided valuable feedback from a carers point of view.

Carers Assessments – Legislative Framework

6. The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 first required the Local Authority to provide an assessment to any carer who requested one when the person they were caring for had an assessment. The council must take account of the assessment in deciding what services to provide for the person who is looked after.
7. The Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000 changed this to allow carers to request an assessment regardless of whether the person they are caring for is having one. It created the power for councils to provide carer direct payments and carer break vouchers.
8. Finally, the Carers Equal Opportunities Act 2004 now requires Authorities to:
 - a) inform carers of their right to an assessment;
 - b) assess not only the ability of the carer to continue caring but also any plans to take up/continue to undertake paid work or access training or leisure; and
 - c) request that other public bodies (i.e. Health) also undertake an assessment.
9. The assessment will determine what, if any, help the Authority should provide to help the carer in their caring responsibilities. A support plan will be developed to deliver this.

Member Reference Group – Monitoring
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10. The Member Reference Group (MRG) met each month following the officer Task and Finish (T&F) group. The T&F group produced an action plan for Members to review as well as other data on identification of carers.

Data recording

11. One of the first major issues that the T&F group addressed was recording of carers in AIS, the Service's social care database software system. There are difficulties in the system with linking carers to the cared-for and this meant many carers were known to the Service but were not linked to a service user in the system and vice versa. This, in turn, could mean that carers were not being offered an assessment or other services or that the assessment had not been recorded properly.
12. In order to address this, the T&F group ensured there was additional training provided for practitioners on AIS and requested a data cleanse of the system. At each MRG meeting, graphs have been presented showing the number of carers identified in the system. The numbers of

carers identified have been steadily increasing since August, from around 1600 to nearly 5000 in November. **Appendix 1** contains graphs showing the improved number of identified carers by geographical area; the estimated number according to what would be expected from the caseload; the percentage of cases with a carer; and the percentage of carers in receipt of an assessment.

13. The number of carer recording errors at the end of November 2011 has decreased dramatically from June 2011. A graph showing this improvement is at **Appendix 2**.
14. Realising the importance of IT in daily practitioner duties, the Service has now added an IT competency test to its recruitment process. Furthermore, in addition to the refresher training already delivered, all staff are expected to be fully IT-competent by the end of March 2012. After this point, any practitioners that are still struggling may face competency proceedings as being able to work with IT systems is now a core component of a practitioner's basic job description.
15. The MRG is satisfied that this work has produced good results in ensuring carers are identified in the AIS system. It is hoped that this will continue, with all new staff being properly trained on the correct recording process for carers. The MRG will want to ensure that proper, effective monitoring of data recording continues in the future.
16. The next step for the MRG will be to work with officers specifically on carers assessments. Addressing the historical incorrect recording of carers in the system had to be the starting point for the project. Now that this has produced results, the logical next step is to ensure carers assessments are recorded properly. Many carers could have been in receipt of an assessment, but unless they were recorded properly, they would not have counted towards the overall total rate of assessments.
17. The graph at Appendix 1 also shows that there is still much work to be done to improve the numbers of carers in receipt of an assessment. The T&F group will be working on an action plan at its January meeting to focus the work on improving the number of carers in receipt of an assessment. This work will be brought to the MRG and will be monitored for its effectiveness. It is hoped that the final officer report will be able to show significantly improved numbers of carers in receipt of an assessment.

Mental Health

18. The Service has worked with Mental Health colleagues on improving take-up of carers assessments. A representative from Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust (SABP) attended the October meeting to discuss their work with carers.
19. SABP has undertaken targeted training for its staff and has recently produced a dedicated information pack for carers. They have Carers Liaison Workers in each of the integrated teams, which are made up of

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SABP and Surrey County Council adult social care staff and are aimed at working jointly across the two organisations.

20. Last December, a formal Section 75 agreement was put in place to allow health staff to undertake assessments as well as County Council employees. As a result there has been a significant increase in the number of carers assessments undertaken by the joint service this year. In 2010/11 there were 268 carers assessments undertaken in Mental Health and in the first two quarters of 2011/12 there have already been 388 undertaken.
21. The MRG welcomed the information provided by SABP. The MRG would also like to commend SAPB and Surrey County Council for their excellent joint working and hope that this continues.

Carers and Whole Family Assessment Conference

22. On 2 November, the Adult Social Care directorate, in partnership with Action for Carers and Surrey Young Carers, held a conference for staff to push the message of 'carers count'. Representatives from Carers UK with expertise on carers legislation and Surrey Young Carers held workshops aimed at highlighting the need to remember carers and young carers throughout the assessment process.
23. The conference was a success with 140 staff attending. The workshops provided an excellent learning opportunity for staff, especially on the specific legislative framework for carers, which differs from service users. Additionally, two of the workshops used case study exercises to engage staff on how they would handle the assessment process, including identifying all potential carers.
24. The feedback from the workshops highlighted the good work already being done by Surrey staff. The Carers UK representatives indicated that their experience at some authorities was a very negative attitude towards carers. Carers were a burden or a stumbling block in an otherwise smooth process. This was not the case at Surrey. Staff present at the conference were overall very positive about carers and eager to engage with them.
25. The MRG welcomed the aim of pushing the 'carers count' message to ASC staff. It is hoped that the culture of 'remember the carer' will continue to bed down throughout the directorate.

Quality Assurance Exercise

26. In November, the MRG received the report of a Quality Assurance (QA) exercise undertaken by the Service earlier in the year. The exercise was aimed at how Surrey had performed on carers assessments.
27. The QA team chose a random day from June and all those service users given care packages on that day were contacted three months later and asked a series of questions. The team sought feedback on the

assessment process, amount of information presented and satisfaction with the practitioner. Their findings are as follows.

28. The quality of recording on AIS was variable. Eighteen people were assessed, with thirteen identified as having a carer who had a carers assessment. Not all carers were recorded where an assessment had taken place. It was not easy to use AIS to find available services.
29. Carers indicated that it was not a simple process. Comments related to it being a long process but most were relieved to be getting support for the cared-for person. Six carers were unaware they had been assessed. Not all considered themselves carers and many found it difficult to recall what they were asked. Most carers were happy with the services for their relatives and with their practitioner but had little sense of what services were available to them as carers.
30. The QA team reported that practice wasn't consistent. The team queried when the level of caring was considered substantial enough. Some had packages of care involving relatives that were not identified as a carer. With the questionnaire being three months after an assessment, many carers found it difficult to remember everything. There was little sense of what was available to carers. The carers part of the questionnaire was not always used. Most were satisfied with the practitioners working closely with the carers on services for the cared for but practitioners need to consider the carer too.
31. Officers pointed out that it is common to see low returns on these types of exercise as most people, despite being given loads of information, cannot always recall being given it months later. The MRG requested that a question be added to the next exercise about whether or not a carer had received a written record of their assessment. Another exercise was completed in December using data from November. The report on this new exercise will be brought back to the group when it is available.
32. The MRG found the report on this exercise very useful, given that it was undertaken with data before the T&F group began its work. It highlights that there are still some cultural issues to be addressed as well as the previously identified issue with recording. It is hoped that the December exercise will show an improvement in both areas, following the actions implemented by the T&F group.

Information Availability

33. The Group has identified the availability and distribution of information as an area for improvement, specifically, information being supplied to carers at the right point in time or at all. The information exists – pamphlets, leaflets, etc. – but it is about ensuring that this information is provided in a timely manner and in the correct locations.
34. The Service has agreed to look into improving the availability and level of information. They are performing an audit of outpatient clinics to assess what information is available.

35. Action for Carers has been working on a GP recognition scheme whereby GPs are encouraged to identify carers on medical records and refer them to other appropriate sources of help such as Social Care or independent Carers support services. They have also been working on getting GPs to hold information for carers in their waiting rooms.

Carers Breaks and Support Through Carers Organisations

36. The Service has worked with NHS Surrey to develop a Carers Breaks scheme facilitated by GPs and has begun a light-touch assessment process leading to direct payments for carers through partner organisations. Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC) administers both schemes.
37. GPs will be able to nominate a carer for a break and allocate up to £500 for the purpose. The pilot began on 1 December. GPs nominate carers based on their stress levels and need for a break. The GP can nominate the carer from their computer during the consultation. The aim is to support up to 550 carers in the first year.
38. Surrey's light-touch assessment process enables carers to receive up to £500 to support their own needs. The 'Carers Support Evaluation' will be undertaken by carers organisations and are for carers undertaking regular and substantial care where support could help prevent them from becoming unable to cope with caring responsibilities. It will be targeted at those not already receiving ASC services.
39. Feedback from carers, and specifically Action for Carers, is that these schemes represent the Service listening to carers needs. It is also a good example of when outsourcing some services can be beneficial.
40. The schemes are primarily aimed at preventative measures, attempting to support carers that may not have an eligible need or are not otherwise known to adult social care. There are other means of providing breaks and respite to carers in receipt of services from Surrey; however, this does not preclude them from also benefiting from the schemes.
41. The MRG is fully supportive of both schemes, ensuring they provide consistent outcomes for carers across the County. The group commends the joint working between health and social care.

Conclusions:

42. The MRG has worked efficiently and effectively with ASC senior officers to monitor the Task and Finish Group. The work of all involved is already producing good results in the numbers of carers identified and the MRG commends this. The next steps will be ensuring the assessments are recorded properly and embedding the culture of 'carers count' across the directorate. The MRG looks forward to continuing its work with officers and to contributing to the final report in May 2012.

Financial and value for money implications

43. There are no financial or value for money implications arising directly from this report.

Equalities Implications

44. Around 5.5 % of services for adult carers are provided to people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of young carers supported from BME backgrounds is higher at 9.5%. Throughout the project, the Group has remained mindful of equalities implications for all actions.

Risk Management Implications

45. There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

Implications for the Council’s Priorities or Community Strategy

46. The work of the T&F group, that the MRG has monitored, is contributing to the Directorate’s Carers Strategy and the Directorate priority to “support all carers to balance their caring roles and maintain their independence and desired quality of life.” It contributes to the Council’s Performance Objective to outperform other councils.

Recommendations:

- a) The Committee is asked to consider this report and make any comments or recommendations prior to the final report in May 2012.

Next steps:

The Group will continue to meet monthly to April 2012 to monitor the work of the T&F group and to contribute to the final officer report.

The T&F Group will make its final report to the May 2012 Adult Social Care Select Committee.

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Sources/background papers:

Carers and Their Rights: The Law Relating to Carers, Fourth Edition; Carers UK