

Support for Unpaid Carers (aged 50 or over) Westminster

National Context

The 2011 Census indicated that there were around 6.5 million unpaid carers in the UK, with 1.3 million being over 65. Most carers were aged between 50 and 64 but people aged 65 and over made up a higher proportion of carers (19%) than in the population as a whole.

It is estimated that the number of carers will increase to 9 million by 2037. This rise is linked with a number of factors, not least the increasing number of people aged over 85 (the group most likely to need care and support).

In addition, according to a survey conducted by Dying Matters, 70% of people expressed a wish to stay in their own home, and to die at home rather than in hospital or a nursing home. This is likely to further increase reliance on family members and friends.

There are some 13.6 million unpaid carers across the country, including 4.5 million people who first started caring during the pandemic.

Over the past year, the role of unpaid carers has become more important than ever, with many people shielding or unwilling to go out. Unpaid carers have stepped up to provide additional support and keep people safe throughout the pandemic, but the reality is that these carers do not feel that their role is being recognised.

Caring for someone can take its toll on a person's health and wellbeing; according to Carers UK (Juggling work and unpaid care)- almost 1 in 10 UK adults have given up work or reduced their hours to accommodate care. Also, leaving or reducing work affects carers' own independence and wellbeing, and, their contribution to the economy, which may also have a substantial effect on their former employers' productivity and lead to high costs in recruitment and training.

Carers may also give up other activities and may face isolation. They may report feelings of depression and a reduced quality of life. Good quality, consistent support helps to address this, providing benefits for the health, wellbeing and resilience of unpaid carers. It can also enhance the life of the person being supported and help to reduce admissions to hospital and support earlier discharge. However, the amount and quality of support available to unpaid carers varies widely across the UK. Even where it is available, it may be neither appropriate nor affordable and complex local systems can be difficult to navigate with little guidance and direction.

The needs of carers should not be seen in isolation from those of the people for whom they care, and carers need support in their own right. Carers should have choice and control over the services they receive and the way they are delivered. Promoting individual requirements for independence for both carers and the people they care for will result in improved lives for carers.

Services must be sensitive to the needs of all people within society and reflect local diversity. Our vision recognises that the provision of care and support will be the responsibility of a wide range of agencies from both the statutory and independent

sectors. Only with effective partnerships at all levels can positive outcomes for carers be delivered.

1. Aims and objectives - service level

The aim of the service is to provide service users access to a programme of activities and trips so carers have a break and to help improve their own health and wellbeing.

1.1 Outputs of the service

- 35 sessions (including a mixture of trips, visits, venue based and online delivery) of carer-specific activity over the year
- Minimum of 15 older carers attending including online by end of the year
- The project coordinator will develop the service, activities will be based on what carers say they want, and in addition to activity, sessions will include 'social time' to benefit the carers involved.

1.2 Outcomes of the service

- 50 older carers benefit from the service (receive information, telephone support, and/or attend activities).
- Minimum of 15 (15/50) older carers enabled to access opportunities for themselves outside of their caring role (includes participating in respite activities/ attend sessions)
- 65% of carers attending benefit from improved health and wellbeing as a result of accessing this service
- 50% of carers attending report more friends/ social life (increased number of personal relationships)
- 75% of carers attending rating quality of service as good or excellent (reported annually)
- 70% of carers attending likely to recommend service to a friend (reported annually)

1.3 Description of service

The service will offer free or low-cost leisure activities for people over 50 years of age who look after a family member or friend as an unpaid carer. The service will provide a programme of activities and trips so carers:

- Can have a break to help improve their own health and wellbeing
- Are able to connect with other people in a similar situation, reducing feelings of isolation and providing peer support.

1.4 Eligibility Criteria

Unpaid carers (aged 50 years and over) who are resident in the Borough of Westminster. These may be carers of older people, or those with physical disabilities, mental health problems or learning disabilities. This service particularly targets those who have little outside support and little time for themselves, outside of their caring role.