

**Herefordshire Carers
Strategy
2021 – 2026**

First draft

March 2021

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Introduction

A commitment is made by key stakeholders in Herefordshire to recognise the role played by carers and improve the experience of unpaid and family carers in the county. This strategy outlines what has been identified as important to carers and what action will be taken to help enable improvement to their lives and experiences.

This carer's strategy has been developed during the COVID 19 pandemic. Therefore the engagement and direction of the strategy has been shaped by the climate in which it has been prepared.

Herefordshire's vision for carers

This strategy seeks to *“improve the life and experience of Herefordshire's carers by recognising, valuing and equipping them to carry out their caring role, whilst enabling them to keep well and live their own life.”*

Who is the strategy for?

There are estimated to be over 21,000 carers supporting people with care or support needs in Herefordshire.

Carers are anyone, young or old, who provide unpaid care or support for someone they know who cannot cope without their support because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction. Many of us will have caring responsibilities at some point in our lifetime, often whilst juggling other roles such as work, study and other family commitments.

Carers and those they care for may have many different relationships with one another; they may be a couple, part of a larger family living together or friends. Carers often don't recognise themselves as a carer, because it can be difficult to define the type of support they provide and separate it from the relationship they would have with the cared for person in any other way. It often takes up to two years for a carer to recognise themselves as such.

Terms frequently used for describing carers include;

- Unpaid carers (to distinguish from the paid care workforce)
- Parent carers (where a parent has additional caring responsibilities because of a child or Young person's illness or disability).
- Young Adult Carers (Young adult aged 16 to 18 with caring responsibilities)
- Young Carers (Anyone aged 15 or younger with caring responsibilities).

The sort of care and support provided by a carer will vary from person to person in each scenario. Below are some examples of the type of support a carer may provide.

I am 12 years old and I support my mum when she is finding things hard. I help to cook meals, care for my younger brother, make sure my mum has taken her meds and get things she needs when she is feeling low.

I am retired and live in the countryside. My elderly neighbour does not have any family nearby, they are quite frail and have had some falls. They also get lonely. I get their shopping for them and pop in to say hello when I deliver, although COVID has made this difficult. They have an emergency alarm and I am the first point of contact if they have an emergency like a fall.

I am self-employed working part time and I care for my sister who lives with me. My sister is often awake at night and I have to get up several times, which makes me very tired in the day when working.

What is the strategy about?

The carer's strategy is a document which sets out what carers, and others have told us is needed to improve the lives of carers in Herefordshire and what action needs to be taken to achieve this.

In developing this strategy council officers have engaged with many different people including;

- A focus group of carers from different backgrounds with different caring responsibilities.
- Young carers and young adult carers.
- Other key stakeholders such as health organisations, the police and specialist carer focused organisations.
- Making it Real Board; a group of people from Herefordshire with different experiences of health and social care services.
- Councillor's
- The wider public through a public survey.

This strategy will bring together the information gathered from engaging with these groups and carrying out desktop research in the form priority areas to improve lives for carers. Each priority area will have a set of actions that will need to be taken to achieve the improvements for carers.

Who is responsible for making the actions happen?

Anyone who interacts with carers, including carers themselves, can make a difference to the experiences carers have in Herefordshire. Carers can be of any age, from any background and with any of the challenges of day to day life that all residents of Herefordshire may face in addition to their caring role.

Overarching responsibility for driving and delivering the actions set out in this strategy lies with a number of different organisations, including the council. A Carers Partnership Board, made up of carers with lived experiences, key stakeholders and other relevant organisations or voluntary groups, will be established to challenge and support the key stakeholders in the delivery of actions. Progress in implementing the strategy and further challenge will be reviewed by the council scrutiny committees. Herefordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board will hold the key stakeholders to account, with a formal midpoint review of the strategy implementation and delivery of actions.

Identifying themselves as a carer can enable people to take the first steps to make a difference for themselves and for other carers. Former carers can also be an invaluable source of support

for other carers and in raising awareness. The council's whole system initiative, Talk Community provides important context for the carers strategy The Talk Community approach considers;

- What can I do for myself?
- What can I do for my community?
- What can my community do for me?

As a member of the community, be that local, shared interest or another form of community, each person can make a difference for carers as part of that community.

When someone is receiving care and support they are often able to offer something in return, albeit in a slightly different way than they may have previously. For example, a grandchild may call in to help their grandparents with some cleaning and whilst they are there their grandparent may share a skill such as art, or their experience and knowledge of a subject the grandchild is studying at school or college.

Feedback from the public engagement survey told us that 57% of those who responded were working and a further 14.3% were engaged in volunteering. Employer, education providers and places that offer volunteering opportunities have a key role to play in supporting carers to be able to continue to live their own lives, whilst also being a carer.

Policy and Strategic Context

A Strengths based approach

Herefordshire's adult social care and wider community services follow a strengths based approach to identifying people's needs and supporting them. This is focused on personalised planning and promoting independence. The approach starts from understanding the person; who they are, their aspirations, their role in their community and what they can do for themselves. It then seeks to understand what they can do with the support of their family, their carer and their wider community.

The strengths based approach also informs Talk Community and other strategic initiatives including Project Brave. In social care services for children and families, the national Signs of Safety programme encompasses the principles of strengths based working.

COVID 19

This strategy has been developed during the COVID 19 pandemic. As such some carer experiences will reflect the additional pressures of these times.

Nationally Carers UK have reported that;

- 70% of carers are providing more care due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- Over a third (35%) of carers are providing more care as a result of local services reducing or closing.
- Carers are, on average, providing 10 additional hours of care a week.
- 69% of all carers are providing more help with emotional support, motivation, or keeping an eye/ checking in on the person they care for.

Funding from the Herefordshire public carers engagement survey in 2021 are 79.3% have found that COVID has made their caring role more difficult.

The main issues faced by carers during Covid-19 were listed as:

- 42.3% carers stated I am spending more time caring.
- 40.4% stated I am concerned about increased risk to the person I care for.

Unpaid family carers are included in Priority Cohort 6 as part of the national vaccination programme. Herefordshire is one of the leading areas in England for the rapid delivery of vaccination to its communities. Up to 10,000 family carers have been contacted by GPs and the council to offer them a first dose of vaccine

Herefordshire's County Plan

The County Plan 2020 – 2025 encompasses a renewed focus on People and Communities. The plan sets out the ambitions for Herefordshire under three areas;

- **Environment.** Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live.
- **Community.** Strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together.
- **Economy.** Support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources.

The plan commits to continuing to develop approaches that build on people's strengths and the many resources they have in their local communities, such as our exceptionally strong voluntary sector and family carers. With the aim to recognise and support the role that these important people play in enriching the lives of many vulnerable people in our community.

Talk Community

Talk Community is an all-encompassing approach to communities and their partnership with the council. It is about all communities and people of all ages. Talk Community recognises that the council cannot and should not commission or deliver everything required to promote wellbeing and manage demand for formal care or support for all vulnerable people in the future. A successful strengths-based, prevention focussed system depends upon the council finding the right ways to support, promote, inspire and enable local communities to develop their own assets.

The Talk Community vision is that the council will be "innovating to make independence and wellbeing inevitable".

The plan is set out under three main areas, indicating how Talk Community will focus on:

- People; creating sustainable vibrant communities;
- Place and space; where people live, work, study and get together;
- Economy; how promoting wellbeing and supporting vulnerable people benefits from the local economy and contributes to it.

The current strategy

"A Joint Carers Strategy for Herefordshire 2017 – 2021" is now to be replaced by the new strategy. It has been reviewed throughout the strategy lifespan and the impact measured against an action plan. Learning from what has worked and what has not worked within the current strategy has informed the content of this new strategy.

The current strategy now expiring set out six priorities and each priority had numerous actions under the title of “what needs to happen”.

In autumn 2019 a review of the Joint Carers Strategy for Herefordshire 2017 – 2021 identified that of the 47 actions planned, the majority had progressed well and had either been delivered or were in the process of being delivered. This has also been reflected on during engagement in planning for the development of this strategy. Whilst consequently there have been some improvements for carers there is still much to be done, this strategy will seek to build on the former strategy, as well as addressing newly identified priorities.

Nationally and locally there is still a challenge in carers recognising themselves as carers, as well as others **recognising and valuing carers** input. Whilst there have been some improvements in local online information available to carers, it is mainly people supporting carers who use this rather than carers themselves.

Support available to **young carers** and **young adult carers** has increased through a whole family service provided by the council. The service has met with generally positive feedback and responses from those using it, along with some suggestions about how the service can be developed further encourage young carers to come forward for support.

The family support worker has changed my family for the better. I have a better relationship with my parents, I can control my emotions better and understand them. I have a lot of support in school now from my teachers and this is because my family support worker has told them everything and they now understand, they answered all the questions I couldn't. Thank you.

A new **commissioned carer's service** was mobilised in 2019 and is working within communities to build local support networks for carers. Engagement with communities as a key way of enabling carers continues as a priority in this strategy, within the context set by Talk Community

Your advice was most helpful and enabled us to contact and stir into action relevant social care services when I began caring for my wife after hospitalisation and we have now engaged professional carer's. It gives us confidence to know you can and will point us in the right direction to tackle any problems arising from social care needs.

Employer and school awareness of carers to enable carers to continue or re-enter the workplace requires attention and is addressed further within this strategy. Access to support networks and somebody to talk with is a high priority for carers. This has been raised by the carer's focus group and consolidated by the public survey. Many carers went on to express the need to have someone to talk to, including at night.

Whilst carers have had some positive experiences that evidence **health and social care services are more carer aware**, there are equally still some negative experiences indicating an inconsistency in service responses to carers.

Overarching themes

There are two defined overarching themes that are key to all aspects of this strategy and are linked the five priorities.

Think carer

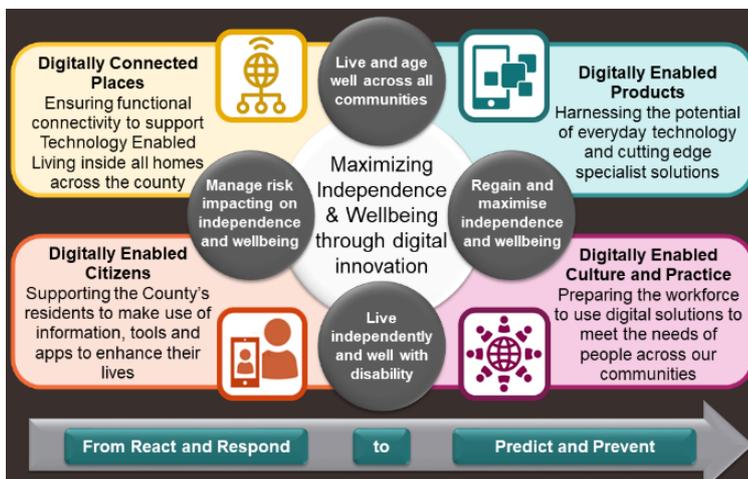
“Think carer” is a simple concept of asking services and professionals to consider that customers may be carers and how that should affect the service provided. Raising awareness of carers across the wider community will provide a better understanding of carer needs, better responses and customer experiences.. Also carers say that health, social care and other public services always considering carers when interacting with them and the cared for person is vital key in improving their experiences. Opportunities to explore and promote “think carer” include;

- Principle 1 of the NHS Commissioning for Carers Principles is “Think carer, think family; make every contact count”
- Carers Week is held in June each year. This is a national awareness week that helps to raise awareness of the vital contribution carers make and highlights the challenges carer face.
- Carer Awareness programmes and training seek to raise awareness of carers in the health and social care workforce.

Technology

Technology is continually evolving and will continue to do so at pace during the lifespan of this strategy. There are several projects underway in Herefordshire exploring and implementing ways to use technology to increase independence for those with care and support needs. The potential benefits for carers of these developments are also significant, if fully realised. Carers first considerations are for the cared for and a shortage of time is a recurring challenge and strain for carers. Through the use of technology there is the opportunity to improve independence for the cared for and carers, by increasing time and flexibility available to them.

Herefordshire council’s technology approach seeks to progress beyond using equipment and applications simply for monitoring purposes, It is investing in proactive and predictive technologies to support the wider health and wellbeing of local people and communities. The image below summarises the local approach.



Priorities

There are five priorities adopted in the strategy and these describe what is important to carers and what can action is proposed to make a difference and improve outcomes;

- Carers voice
- Services offered to Carers
- Carers in the community
- Carer wellbeing
- Financial independence for carers

Making a difference to carer's lives will not come from one person or one organisation. It is important that many different people and organisations recognise their role in making a difference, embrace these priorities and take action to make this a reality. Each intention will identify 'what can I do' as well as formal actions for key stakeholders to undertake.

Priority 1 – Carers voice

Actions;

1. Key stakeholders will proactively seek to **identify carers** in the process of delivering their normal services. Where a carer is identified they will ensure that they record this and provide relevant information and advice, including signposting WISH.
 - Key stakeholders will hold a record of carers.
 - Carer's feedback will report that following engagement with key stakeholders they are able to locate relevant information and advice sources.
2. Where appropriate carers should be included in any **cared for planning, assessment or delivery of care provision**. Where this is not appropriate this should be clearly explained to the carer, with opportunity for the carer to clearly articulate their thoughts.
 - Cared for records will identify and link to carer records.
 - Carer feedback will report inclusion and / or opportunity to articulate thoughts in cared for planning, assessment or delivery of care.
 - Carers will report offer of carers assessment at time of cared for assessment.
3. As employers, key stakeholders will set out to model good practice to other employers in Herefordshire by proactively seeking **to identify carers in their organisation, raise awareness of carers** amongst their workforce and seek ways to support carers as a responsible employer.
 - Key stakeholders employment records will identify carers.
 - They will have relevant policies in place to support carers.
 - They will have an evidence based programme to raise awareness of carers in their organisation and will be able to demonstrate impact of this on the workforce.
 - Feedback from key stakeholder employees who are carers will need to illustrate an improved understanding of caring roles and reasonable measures to enable workers to continue and progress in their employment.

4. A Carers Partnership Board will be established to ensure that the voice of carers are heard by key stakeholders in developing services and to support the implementation of this strategy.
 - Carers with lived experience (current or former) will feel that their voices are heard and see them reflected in service delivery changes by key stakeholders.
 - In delivering the actions required within the action plan key stakeholders will be able to access challenge and support of carers with experience of caring in Herefordshire.

5. Key stakeholders will model **engagement** with carers and how their **participation** can shape individual and wider service experiences.
 - Key stakeholders will be able to demonstrate engagement with carers and the impact this has had in any new services, operational procedures, strategies or other developments that directly or indirectly impact on carers.
 - Herefordshire Council will actively involve carers in procurement of services and development of projects relating to the use of technology in promoting independence for people with care and support needs.
 - Impact will be indicated by carers reporting that they have been engaged with and listened to in service developments.

What can I do?

1. As a carer I will actively seek opportunity to make my voice heard, offer reasonable challenge and feedback to services where I have had a positive or negative experience as a carer.
2. As a resident of Herefordshire I will support friends, family, neighbours, colleagues or anyone else I know who identify as a carer in making their voice heard and increasing understanding of what carers do.
3. As someone who requires care or support, I will make professionals or other services that I interact with aware that I have a carer and what they do to support me.

The issues;

Hearing Carers' perspective

To enable carers to have a voice, awareness of and respect for carers must be raised. This will only be achievable if more people are aware of carers and consciously think about the carer when engaging with them or the person they care for. This may be in education or employment, where the educator or employer can enhance support for carers and productivity by being aware of the role of carers and the potential impact this may have on the carer whilst undertaking their studies or work.

I find it hard with working and making sure I have enough money to live on whilst taking the needs of the person I care for into consideration. If the person I care for has appointments it's sometimes difficult asking an employer for time off, not all employers are understanding.

The GP is not very understanding. Not being allowed to have flu vaccinations at the same time as the person I care for means we have to make two journeys, which are difficult.

When I struggle to get homework done my teachers will just tell me off and sometimes I just need a time to myself. I don't think school know what I do at home. They don't take in to consideration caring responsibilities and no flexibility with work. Nobody checks in with me.

Carers' Contribution

Carers make a substantial contribution to supporting vulnerable people in Herefordshire. The census in 2011 indicated that around 11% of the total population in Herefordshire were providing at least an hour of unpaid care a week, this is slightly higher than the nationally reported proportion of at 10%. During the COVID pandemic the support provided by carers has been even greater, stepping in or increasing input as paid support services have been stopped or reduced contact. In the public survey in early 2021 79.3% reported that the COVID pandemic has had an impact on their caring role, with 42.3% providing more hours of care.

Carers often have valuable knowledge and experience that should be listened to and respected. Carers have played a key role in the development of this strategy, informing and shaping the content through a range of engagement, including a focus group of carers, attendance at young carer virtual groups and online surveys.

Improving the experience of carers

Whilst many key stakeholders recognise the value of carer contribution in their strategic vision, this is not consistently the experience of carers in Herefordshire. Feedback from carers indicates that there are excellent examples of carers being recognised, consulted and offered valuable information or support. However, there are also examples, even in the same setting, of poor experiences that have left carers feeling undervalued, uninformed and therefore unable to carry out their caring role effectively.

To date carers have not been engaged with in the development of technology enabled living projects. Technology presents a number of opportunities to support carers in their role and to provide the cared for person with greater independence. This may include monitoring systems that can provide reassurance for a person to be left alone for a period of time, or environmental controls that can assist with activities such as turning lights on or opening curtains.

Valuing and championing carers

In engaging with carers a common theme raised is that carers want to be heard, both collectively and individually. Generally, carers in Herefordshire do not feel empowered to make their voice heard and they do not feel that there is a collective voice to champion the role of carers and pose challenge to ensure carers views are listened to. Through the carers focus group it has been highlighted that many carers do not know what their rights are or how to find information about what these may be.

Collectively carers identify that there is a lack of awareness of who carers are, the type of role they undertake, the pressures these bring and what carers contribute, in both their caring role and in the wider community.

In addition to being heard carers want their role to be respected and their contribution recognised and valued by professionals working in the health and social care sector, as well as more broadly in the community. By recognising and valuing the strength and offer that carers have, carers will be empowered to carry out their caring role, contribute to care for assessment and planning and enable carers to maintain their own wellbeing and live their own life.

Priority 2 – Support offered to carers

Actions;

1. Provide a carer specific service to act as a **single point of access** for information, advice, signposting, contingency planning and outcomes focused support.
 - Herefordshire Council will continue commission a carer specific service and promote continuing service improvement.
2. **Clear and easy to find web based content** to be available through a single point of access, providing links to further **reliable sources of information** and advice.
 - All stakeholders will ensure the Talk Community Directory has up to date carer specific information about their services.
 - All stakeholders will ensure their workforce is aware of the Talk Community Directory, will use this to direct carers to sources of information or signposting and will ensure carers know how to utilise the directory themselves in the future.
 - Carers will report being able to find clear and relevant web based information through a single source.
3. Key stakeholder workforce to be aware **'carer aware'** and to signpost carers to relevant services or information at all opportunities.
 - Key stakeholders will have a clear workforce development record that their workforce is 'carer aware'.
 - Carers will feedback that in all interactions with key stakeholders the workforce have been aware of the role of a carer.
 - Carers report being signposted to services or information relevant to their individual circumstances.
4. Support **voluntary and community organisations** to develop services for or inclusive of carers by providing information and guidance, including identifying and accessing relevant funding opportunities.
 - Talk Community encourages awareness and inclusion of carers in voluntary services.
 - Carers report being able to access services or areas of interest within their communities.
5. Ensure that **information about key stakeholder services** is available in a timely and accessible format to carers as well as cared for.
 - Carer's feedback that they understand what services are available and how to access these.
 - Carers are able to access information in an accessible format, such as large print.
 - Carers of young people transitioning to adulthood understand the changes this has for the carer, as well as the cared for.
6. **Carer's needs for social care support are appropriately assessed and reviewed.**
 - Adult social care ensures that all carers seeking support are aware of the right under the Care Act 2014 to a carer's assessment.
 - Where appropriate and the carer agrees, a strengths based or holistic assessment will be completed.
 - Social care performance data records the number assessments completed for carers, including statutory carer's assessments.
 - All packages of support agreed with carers are reviewed appropriately. .

What can I do?

1. As a carer I will seek information about what is available to me by the means I have available. This may be through searching the web or speaking to someone such as a health professional or specialist carer support.
2. As a resident of Herefordshire I will seek to support others who may find it difficult to search for information in finding relevant resources to help them in their caring role.
3. As someone who requires care or support I will seek information to help support my carer when interacting with services that support me.

The issues:

Information

An important part of empowering carers is to ensure that they have access to reliable sources of information and advice. Having a single point of access for carers and a reliable source of online information has been identified by carers as an important tool in being able to carry out their role as carer, as well as maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.

Services provided by key stakeholders vary in their accessibility to carers. The workforce of key stakeholders should be aware of carer specific needs and how to interact with carers to identify the relevant offer. The national “Carers Action Plan 2018 – 2020, Supporting carers today“ identifies the need to raise awareness of carers amongst health and social care workers. NICE guideline [NG150] “Supporting adult carers” also provides guidance in best practice for health and social care workers working with carers. The recommendations within the NICE guidance include the need to identify people who are caring for someone and giving them the right information and support.

Feedback from carers has been that they do not always have confidence in the workforce providing the service and they then do not communicate openly. Not all carers are aware of what a carer’s assessment is or how to access one. Further to this safeguarding reviews have identified that there are improvements to be made in practice relating to carers.

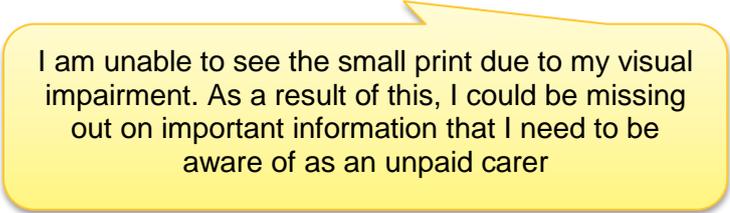
Trusted Sources

Whilst there is a growing understanding and use of web based information and social media, there are still a number of carers who do not have, do not use, or do not wish to have access to web based information. 48% of young carers used the web to find information, but most commonly asked parents, friends, school staff or family support workers for information when needed. Half of carers who responded to the public survey felt they had the information they need to carry on caring, half did not. Some of the comments in the public survey and the carer’s focus group reflected that more condition specific information is required from trusted sources and where to get support from.

WISH (Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire) is a website provided by Herefordshire Council. It provides information including local services and events to support the health and wellbeing of all adults, children, young people and families across Herefordshire, including carer specific content. Feedback has demonstrated that awareness of WISH amongst carers and professionals is increasing. Those who have used it have found it useful, if they know what they are looking for. Some carers have reported of not having heard of WISH or of not

having access to IT equipment or knowledge. In this scenario it is important that those who do have access to WISH or other web based information have support to find the relevant information, this may be a friend, neighbour, family member, school, employer, carer services or public services, including health and social care workers.

It is also important to consider how accessible information is in online or printed information. Feedback from the Making It Real Board highlighted that the current strategy is not accessible to those requiring assistive technology to read due to the layout and format. Through the public survey further comments were made about information provided by the council being in small print.



I am unable to see the small print due to my visual impairment. As a result of this, I could be missing out on important information that I need to be aware of as an unpaid carer

Carers support service

Herefordshire has a carer's service, 'Carer Links' that is purchased by Herefordshire Council and delivered by Crossroads Together. This service connects carers to information, advice and signposting. It also offers up to 12 weeks of support to help carers improve their health and wellbeing.

Further to this there are numerous community and voluntary organisations that offer carer specific support, such as local carer support groups, carer specific activities or adapting service offer to make it more accessible to carers, for example by making provision to support the cared for person at the same time.

At times, carers need access to training, this may be to assist them with physical requirements of their caring role, or it may be to enable them to understand relevant processes such as power of attorney, the importance of will writing, medication management or positive behaviour support.

Support for the cared for

Carers primary concern is often for the person that they care for, with the needs and wellbeing of the person they support coming before their own. Whilst replacement care for the person with care or support needs benefits the carer, eligibility for these services is assessed on the needs of the person requiring care or support. It is therefore not addressed directly in the Carers Strategy. There is a wide variety of replacement or respite care available, for example through health and social care, private care providers and charitable organisations.

Priority 3 - Carers in the community

Actions;

1. To provide community groups and voluntary organisations with opportunities to raise carer **awareness and inclusion of carers within their community.**
 - Carers are able to access support within their local geographical community.
 - Activities and social opportunities are organised to be accessible to carers.
2. Support the creation of **diverse and flexible tools to connect carers** to one another and support within their physical or virtual communities.
 - Carers are able to connect to other carers and local communities in a way that works for them as individuals, utilising technology and media as required.
 - Carers feel supported within their communities of interest.
3. Ensure suitable awareness of **safe online communication and gaming** for young people, including young carers.
 - Carers are safely able to engage with virtual communities and use online support service.

What can I do?

1. As a carer I will seek to connect with or maintain connection with my local and shared interest communities and actively participate.
2. As a resident of Herefordshire I will seek to be aware of carers within my community and make any community offer I am aware of inclusive for carers.
3. As someone who requires care or support I will seek to connect to my community independently of and if we both agree, with my carer.

The issues;

If Carers are visible and understood in their community, both the carer and the community itself will benefit .Participating in community life is good for you and other people. Communities may be defined geographically or formed from a shared interest, such as a hobby or faith.

With carers first concern being predominantly for the cared for person, it is not uncommon for interaction with their community to reduce or change as their responsibilities increase and time becomes restricted. This can lead to social isolation and has been identified as a key risk among carers. Many carers in engagement have commented on not having time for themselves. Over 50% of respondents to the public carer's survey indicated that they sometimes or often / always feel lonely.

When help is needed I find that in reality no-one is there and everyone is getting on with their own lives.

I need information about work experience and long term support for my son. His independence effects mine

The National Carers Action Plan 2018 - 2020 recognises that “many carers will have little contact with services for carers, and will not be receiving formal support in their caring role. It is therefore vital that partners beyond government work together to raise awareness of caring among the wider population to build carer friendly communities.” Herefordshire’s County plan 2020-2024 seeks to shape the future of Herefordshire and aims to encourage and strengthen the vibrant communities within the county. The plan is underpinned by the themes of;

- Connectivity
- Wellbeing
- Sustainability

Herefordshire’s Talk Community initiative embraces and supports the community in its response to supporting vulnerable residents in the county. This is particularly noteworthy in respect of the COVID pandemic, when communities have worked to ensure that vulnerable residents have what they need to stay safe and well during these difficult times.

Carers feel that their communities do not understand or are not able to adapt to support those in a caring role. With the geography of Herefordshire travel can be difficult and expensive, adding to challenges in participating in communities beyond resident’s immediate geographical location.

I would like to be able to access some of the activities, but they all happen in the week, when it is impossible for me to attend.

When you're caring 24/7 you have not got the energy or inclination to go looking for help, it needs to be offered.

What unpaid Carers need is company with likeminded people over a coffee and cake - or a walk - or some form of company whereby they can escape the person they care for and chat about the problem with someone who is in the same boat.

It would be nice to talk to someone about the person I care for

Over 60% of the respondents to the public survey were working or self-employed carers. A further 14% were engaged in volunteering. Where carers are employees, volunteers or students they need their employer or education providers and colleagues or fellow students or volunteers to understand their caring role and what impact this has on them. Carers have reported feeling worried about telling their employer they are a carer for fear this may lead to dismissal. Also being a working carer can make engaging in community activities that take place during their working or caring hours more restrictive.

Young carers and young adult carers have reported an interest in online communities, particularly through online gaming. As well as shared interest such as football and socialising with friends. Many of the young carers also expressed their school or college work as a priority interest to them.

I do my homework or I will play Xbox with my mates.

Playing games online, Netflix and chatting to friends online. I'm not allowed on it all the time, at weekends I do other stuff.

Priority 4 - Carer wellbeing

Actions;

1. Where health or social care services are aware of a cared for person they should carry out **annual 'check-ins'** for both the person with care needs and also enquire of the wellbeing of anyone who provides them with care or support.
 - Carers will feel that health and social care services are aware of them and are accessible should they require any information or support.
2. Carers will have access to professional information and support that they have confidence in to assist with **contingency planning and crisis support**.
 - Carers are confident that they have plans in place should there be a crisis or they are unable to continue caring.
3. Confidential support will be accessible for carers to express any concerns that they have and access the relevant information or support to **keep them and the person they care for safe**.
 - Access to a single point of information and advice with specialist knowledge and experience of carer needs.
4. Carers will have information on how to access **training** to ensure that they are able to carry out their caring role safely and with dignity for themselves and the person they care for.
 - Carers are able to access an accessible training programme to carry out their caring role safely.
5. Newly transformed **community mental health services** will be able to provide a carer aware and appropriate response to the needs of carers.
 - GPs, social prescribers and mental first aiders in the community will be able to identify the carers needs and refer or signpost appropriately.
 - Carers will have access to early support to help prevent escalation of mental health needs
 - Carers with mental health needs will confirm they have been able to access some appropriate support.

What can I do?

1. As a carer I will seek support with my own health and wellbeing needs, approaching my GP or local sources of support or advice in my community.
2. As a resident of Herefordshire I will offer emotional and / or practical support to those who are carers, for example assisting with meals or an open ear.
3. As someone who requires care or support where I need additional care or support I will seek to access appropriate assessment of my needs.

The issues;

The impact of caring

Carers, young carers and young adult carers report experiencing a negative impact on both their physical and mental wellbeing arising from their caring roles. Physically this is due to exhaustion or from having to move the person they care for. Mentally this is a challenge because of coping with the changes in someone they care for, a change in life style and coping with carrying out their caring role, in addition to day to day requirements such as looking after a home, working or going to school. Where young adult carers and young carers reported poor health, this was mainly associated with mental health such as anxiety, stress, feeling lonely and anger.

Carers are often predominantly interested in the wellbeing of the person or people that they care for, sometimes at the detriment of their own wellbeing. 64% of the respondents to the national "State of Caring 2019" report by Carers UK say that they focus on the care needs of the person they care for, and not on their own needs. It is also common for those providing care and support to not identify themselves as a carer. With the caring role and relationship with the cared for person is of upmost importance to carers, the wellbeing of the person who is cared for is intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of carers.

I still don't consider myself to be a carer, but do find my own mental and physical health is deteriorating due to caring responsibilities.

I wish I was healthier and that I was allowed back on my computer. I was banned because it made me angry and if I'm on it for ages I get moody when dad tells me to get off it. I need to control my mood before I'm allowed on it again.

The occasional contact from professionals would be helpful, to check if we are OK. If we are not well or coping then the person we support will be bound to suffer in some way.

My time revolves in caring for my husband to the best of my ability.

You cannot separate the cared for from the unpaid Carer - if the cared for is actually cared for by society e.g. have care needs that are met, say by the council with a direct payment, this in itself helps the unpaid Carer to have a break - even if they have to be involved in the care package e.g. taking the cared for person to a community farm as there is no transport available.

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought about further challenges and pressures for carers, affecting their own wellbeing due to increase in caring requirements or with additional pressures in other areas of their life, for example due to home schooling, working from home or new working practices.

Young carer feedback has identified an increase in stress for the young carers and others in the home during the COVID 19 pandemic. Schools being shut to in person attendance has meant more support has had to be provided to siblings and usual support from teachers has not been available. Worsening health of the cared for person due to the restrictions in place, including contracting COVID 19, has added pressures and concerns to caring roles and at the same time they have felt they have lost support from some agencies, including GP's and wider family. They have had to increase duties, many carrying out shopping where they have encountered a lack of understanding from other members of the public.

Someone to talk to about my harmful thoughts who would help me through them

There is no escape from the caring role - they are with you much more often - you also have to be organised to arrange things because of Covid.

Safeguarding concerns have been identified through both carer and stakeholder engagement. This is a concern for the cared for, but also for the carer. For example, managing challenging behaviour of a child as they grow and develop.

Where carers do not have confidence in health and social care provision, difficulties that they may face in carrying out their caring role may escalate to crisis point without asking for support or intervention. For example, carers have expressed anxiety about difficulties in caring for a child as they may be placed into care.

Priority 5 - Financial independence for carers

Actions;

1. Provide or enable tailored advice for carers in respect of **employment, training and volunteering opportunities**.
 - Carers are able to access information and advice on employment and training opportunities relevant to their individual needs and circumstances
2. Access to free **Personal Protection Equipment** for carers.
 - Carers have consistent access to required Personal Protection Equipment to carry out their caring role safely.
3. Ensure carers have access to **advice on benefits, taxation, debt and other financial issues**.
 - Local public, voluntary and community sector providers of financial and welfare advice are well signposted and have good knowledge of the position of carers and can advise them affectively.
 - National telephone, online and social media sources of financial advice are well signposted and carers know which service to contact and how.
 - Carers report improved access to financial advice and greater confidence in understanding their financial situation and seeking help when needed.

What can I do?

1. As a carer I will seek education and training or employment opportunities, or I will engage with my education provider or employer about my needs as a carer. I will recognise when I have a financial problem and seek advice on benefits, debt or other financial issues when I need it.
2. As an employer or education provider in Herefordshire I will seek further information to enable me to support carers within my workforce.
3. As a community volunteer, I will be aware that carers may face particular financial issues or pressures and will make sure I can signpost them to the right advice.

The issues;

Employment

All aspects of the engagement and national policy and guidance relating to carers identify a link between financial stability and wellbeing of carers and the person they care for. Carers have identified concern with being able to pay for basic needs such as heating due to their financial circumstances arising from their caring role.

I find it hard with working and making sure I have enough money to live on whilst taking the needs of the person I care for into consideration, if the person I care for has appointments it's sometimes difficult asking an employer for time off too not all employers are understanding.

Information is one thing that is easily accessible today, but resources and money are the things that are really needed.

In the Carers UK “State of Caring 2019” report almost 2 in 5 carers (39%) of carers responding nationally to the survey said they are ‘struggling to make ends meet’.

Helping carers stay in, enter or return to work, education and training is identified in the NICE Guidance and the Care Act 2014 mandate to provide information for carers on work, education and training. By enabling carers to engage in employment or self-employment this will aid their financial independence and add to the local economy which, as identified in the County Plan, “improves quality of life for everyone and also generates the income through Council Tax and business rates that we need as a council to support local services.”

Benefits

For those who are unable to work or whose caring role means that they require a top up to their income access to benefits is important. Whilst locally influence cannot be made on government set benefits, the experience of carers accessing benefits could be improved through raising of awareness of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff of carer specific needs. For example, carer’s feedback has expressed that they are required to attend DWP appointments without the person that they care for, but due to their caring role it is difficult to attend due to difficulty in finding replacement care.

Carers describe how an understanding of their role by employers and others is crucial in enabling them to remain in employment and young carers having positive experiences in school.

Additional costs

In addition to the financial strain of utility bills, some carers have reported the cost of travel as being prohibitive in attending appointments or engaging in social activities. Whilst most carers who responded to the public survey lived with or within 5 minutes of the person they care for, nearly 10% live over 20 minutes away by their normal means of transport.

During the COVID pandemic an additional expense that some carers report as incurring themselves has been for Personal Protection Equipment such as gloves, aprons or masks to enable them to care as safely as possible.

Carers and their Needs; Facts and Figures

National facts and figures highlights

- The 2011 census recorded 6.3 million carers nationally. However, Carers UK estimated that in 2019 this figure is closer to 8.8 million. This estimate relates to a broad definition of caring based on those providing at least one hour of care a week.
- The 2019 GP Patient survey found that 17% of the population in England over the age of 16 are carers.
- Every year over 2.1 million adults become carers and almost as many people find that their caring responsibilities come to an end. Therefore the overall numbers of carers remain reasonably consistent nationally, albeit demographic and geographical patterns will change over time.
- 3 in 5 people will be carers at some point in their lives.
- Nationally the number of people aged 65 years or over who are caring has grown by 43% from 1.4 million in 2011 to potentially over 2 million.
- In 2015 carers' support is valued at £132 billion a year.
- Estimates from Age UK showed a cost of £5.3 billion a year to the economy in lost earnings and tax revenue and additional benefit payments.
- Women make up the majority of carers at 58%, to the 42% who are men..

Local facts and figures highlights

- In the 2011 census nearly 21,000 people in Herefordshire were providing at least an hour of unpaid care a week. This represented around 11% of the population. 7,500 carers are coded on GPs patient lists in Herefordshire. At least 2,000 carers have been known to Herefordshire's adult social care services since 2018.
- 64 carers responded to the Herefordshire public carers survey in 2021;
 - 9 respondents identified as male and 53 as female.
 - The largest number of respondents (46) were aged 25-65. 15 were over the age of 65 and 3 preferred not to answer the question.
- 21 young carers and young adult carers responded to the young carer survey in 2020.
 - 8 identified as male and 13 as female
 - 2 young carers surveyed stated they are under 11 years of age and 19 stated they are between 11 and 17 years old.
 - 17 of the young carers who completed this survey stated they have free school meals.

Action plan

There are a number of actions that key stakeholders can take to improve the lives of carers in Herefordshire. These actions are set out within the priority area and are summarised in the table below.

Each action will have a lead statutory agency, although the action may fall to more than one key stakeholder. Delivery of these actions will be held to account by the Health and Wellbeing Board who will formally review at the end of year two (2023) and end of year four (2025).

The status of each action will be marked as;

- Green – on target to be achieved.
- Amber – some delay or barriers to achieving the action, mitigation in process.
- Red – delivery of action is at risk.

Priority	Headline	Detail	Lead	To be reviewed by	To be completed by	Status
1	Identify carers.	Key stakeholders will proactively seek to identify carers in the process of delivering their normal services. Where a carer is identified they will ensure that they record this and provide relevant information and advice, including signposting WISH.	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.			
	Inclusion of carers in cared for planning, assessment or delivery of care provision.	Where appropriate carers should be included in any cared for planning, assessment or delivery of care provision. Where this is not appropriate this should be clearly explained to the carer, with	Herefordshire Council – Social Care Operations.			

		opportunity for the carer to clearly articulate their thoughts.				
	Employer identification and awareness of carers in the workforce.	As employers, key stakeholders will set out to model good practice to other employers in Herefordshire by proactively seeking to identify carers in their organisation, raise awareness of carers amongst their workforce and seek ways to support carers as a responsible employer.	Wye Valley NHS Trust.			
	Carer engagement and participation.	Key stakeholders will model engagement with carers and how their participation can shape individual and wider service experiences.	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.			
2	Carer specific single point of contact.	Provide a carer specific service to act as a single point of access for information, advice, signposting, contingency planning and outcomes focused support.	Herefordshire Council - Commissioning			
	Clear and easy to find web based content and access to reliable sources.	Clear and easy to find web based content to be available through a single point of access, providing links to further reliable sources of information and advice.	Herefordshire Council – Talk Community			
	Carer aware workforce.	Key stakeholder workforce to be aware ‘carer aware’ and to signpost carers to relevant services or information at all opportunities.	Herefordshire Council – Commissioning			

	Voluntary and community organisations.	Support voluntary and community organisations to develop services for or inclusive of carers by providing information and guidance, including identifying and accessing relevant funding opportunities.	Herefordshire Council – Talk Community			
	Information about key stakeholder services.	Ensure that information about key stakeholder services is available in a timely and accessible format to carers as well as cared for.	Herefordshire Council – Talk Community			
	Assessment and review.	Carer’s needs for social care support are appropriately assessed and reviewed.	Herefordshire Council – Operations.			
3	Carer awareness and inclusion in the community.	To provide community groups and voluntary organisations with opportunities to raise carer awareness and inclusion of carers within their community.	Herefordshire Council – Talk Community			
	Tools to connect carers to one another and support.	Support the creation of diverse and flexible tools to connect carers to one another and support within their physical or virtual communities.	Herefordshire Council – Commissioning			
	Safe online communication and gaming	Ensure suitable awareness of safe online communication and gaming for young people, including young carers.	Herefordshire Council – Early Help Team			

4	Annual 'check-ins' by health and social care.	Where health or social care services are aware of a cared for person they should carry out annual 'check-ins' for both the person with care needs and also enquire of the wellbeing of anyone who provides them with care or support.	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.			
	Contingency planning and crisis support.	Carers will have access to professional information and support that they have confidence in to assist with contingency planning and crisis support.	Herefordshire Council – Commissioning			
	Keeping safe.	Confidential support will be accessible for carers to express any concerns that they have and access the relevant information or support to keep them and the person they care for safe.	Herefordshire Council – Commissioning			
	Training.	Carers will have information on how to access training to ensure that they are able to carry out their caring role safely and with dignity for themselves and the person they care for.	Herefordshire Council – Practice Improvement.			
	Community Mental Health Services.	Newly transformed community mental health services will be able to provide a carer aware and appropriate response to the needs of carers.	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.			

5	Employment, training and volunteering opportunities.	Provide or enable tailored advice for carers in respect of employment, training and volunteering opportunities.	Herefordshire Council – Talk Community			
	PPE	Access to free Personal Protection Equipment for carers.	Herefordshire Council – Commissioning			
	Benefit and financial advice.	Ensure carers have access to advice on benefits, taxation, debt and other financial issues.				

Reference sources

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