

Think Carer Strategy

2024 - 2029

The Priorities in brief

A plan to co-ordinate and improve support for carers who live or work in Stockport or who care for a Stockport resident



Foreword

From the Co-Chair of Stockport Carers Partnership, Mark Hilton

This new Think Carer Strategy is an important step towards re-focusing attention on carers in Stockport and how to support them to do the thing they are dedicated to - enabling their family member, friend or neighbour to live independently and safely with the best possible quality of life. Many carers do this willingly and without asking for help, sometimes to the detriment of their own health or financial wellbeing. The priorities reflect what carers said at the very beginning of the process and have been tested out with local carers groups and individual carers, resulting in a clear mandate for improvement. Delivering the strategy in the next five years may be challenging as there is a lot to do, but if partners and professionals respond to this call to action, I am certain that we will rise to the challenge together and improve the experiences of Stockport carers.

From the Director of Signpost Stockport for Carers, Julia Hewer

As a specialist support service, committed to helping carers, I particularly welcome this strategy and the emphasis it places on stronger communication and collaboration between professionals, the voluntary and community sector, and of course carers themselves. It is especially pleasing that carers of all different ages and with varying caring roles have been at the heart of shaping the 4 priorities. Signpost will be continuing this dialogue with carers and involving them in judging the success of the strategy through a new Carers Network. Along with the Carers Partnership, the Network will improve the voice and visibility of carers in Stockport. The immediate next step for the Carers Partnership is to secure commitment from organisations to join the Partnership itself and to help shape and deliver the action plan collaboratively. Together these new developments have real potential to secure sustained improvements in the recognition and support for carers in Stockport.

From the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS), Sarah Dillon

Carers are a key policy area for the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and this new strategy for Stockport mirrors national priorities and ambitions to deliver services and support for carers that assists them in their caring role, as well as in their lives outside of caring. Working more efficiently as partners, improving the way we communicate, understanding the experiences of carers and valuing their expertise and being clearer as professionals about our duty of care to carers is the key to delivering the ambitions captured in this strategy. Some of the strongest messages from the consultation with carers are about the need to make improvements in the availability of health and social care information and advice and the co-ordination of care by professionals and organisations. Getting this right for carers will mean that health and social care will be better for all Stockport citizens and patients.

Introduction to the strategy

The Think Carer Strategy is a plan for Stockport as a place and a community. The intention is that it will become the focus for work to improve recognition of and support for carers in Stockport over the next 5 years and will help to guide services across the NHS, adult social care as well as charities, the education sector, employers and many other local services. The success of the strategy will be judged by the extent to which progress is made against the four priorities and how local organisations and partners collaborate to achieve tangible change. This document provides a brief look at the four priorities arrived at following consultation with carers. An Executive Summary and full analysis are also available.



The development of the strategy also marks a change in how organisations which already support carers will be able to collaborate more readily and influence change across Stockport.

A new Carers Partnership made up of Stockport carers, organisations and partners has been formed and will oversee the implementation and delivery of the strategy. The Partnership is co-chaired by a local carer.

Alongside this, a Carers Network is being developed. This is a forum for carers to meet, offer peer support and share experiences. Over time the ambition is that the Network will also become a regular opportunity for carers to give feedback about the experiences of caring and suggestions for service improvement.

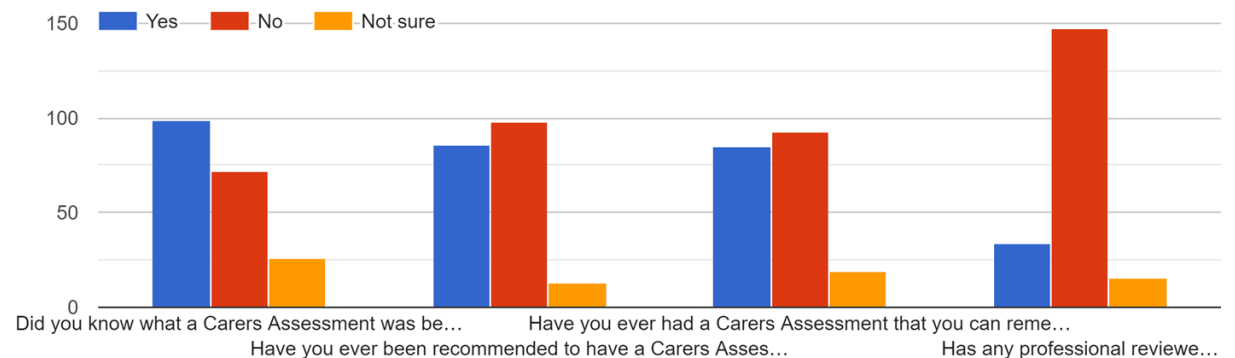
The Network and the Partnership will strengthen the voice of carers and give them stronger representation.

Priority 1. Increased attention to and support for the health and wellbeing of carers - including respite care, emotional support and counselling, financial and benefits advice, advocacy for carers, carers assessment, GP health checks for carers



This priority is primarily about improving the physical, emotional and financial wellbeing of carers in pragmatic ways. However, it is also about taking action to reduce the 'assumption of care'. 75% of carers responding to the survey had never been asked by a professional if they were still able to cope with caring (column four below). Carers assessment can be a helpful vehicle for discussing this.

Finally, can you please help us to understand more about your knowledge and experience of Carers Assessment. This is a conversation about the help you might need as a carer and your wellbeing.



Priority 1 improvement focus

Develop the respite offer

This includes:

Developing a clear and flexible formal and informal respite offer, which is capable of meeting different types of need for respite and which has the capacity to meet local demand. This should also include advice and guidance for people who wish to self-fund respite

Carers Assessment

This includes:

Raising professional and carer awareness of carers assessment
Reviewing the implementation of carers assessment and consistency of the approach
Consider a fair system for prioritising carers assessments and reviews, based on need

Health-checks for carers

This includes:

Consideration of how to introduce and implement a primary-care led carer health-check, covering physical and mental health
Broader guidance for professional health and social care employees about routine 'making every contact count' wellbeing check-ins with carers

Solutions to carer isolation

This includes:

Working with carers to develop meaningful, practical solutions to loneliness and social isolation e.g. befriending
Specifically considering carers who cannot leave the person they care for, or working carers whose time outside of work/caring is very limited

Self and mutual help

This includes:

Considering how to maximise carer lived experience and expertise (including former carers) to expand peer support to potentially include informal advocacy and self-care/coping advice
Review if peer support for carers of someone with a substance dependency can be developed locally

Priority 2. Better identification of carers and caring responsibilities by professionals - carers of all ages want health and social care professionals to notice that they are carers, recognise their knowledge and expertise, involve them in discussions that affect them and acknowledge the responsibilities they carry



A common experience reported by both young and adult carers is that their caring role is often overlooked, which can also become a barrier to getting vital help and support at an early stage of caring.

This priority promotes the idea that all health and social care professionals share equal responsibility to identify, involve and support carers, listening and offering empathy and compassion.

However, the professional's role is also instrumental in avoiding care situations becoming risky for both the carer and cared for adult and assisting with contingency planning e.g. when the carer can no longer cope with the intensity or type of care required, when care involves clinical activities, such as giving injections or following precise or time-critical instructions or making judgements about when a situation becomes urgent, or when care may not be age-appropriate.

Priority 2 improvement focus

Early identification

This includes:

Identifying natural points of care/contact with carers that create routine opportunities for early carer identification - in health, care, work and education

Promote the value of early carer identification across professionals, organisations and carers

Address misconceptions about care and caring e.g. caring roles do not end when the person with care needs lives in residential care or supported living

Carer pathways

This includes:

Research how other localities have developed a carer pathway (a single pathway or individual agency pathways)

Develop and implement a workable approach in Stockport which is aimed at enabling easy navigation of services and high-quality support to carers when it is really needed

Learn from positive carer experiences of cancer care and dementia diagnosis

Consultation with carers about care arrangements

This includes:

Health and social care providers considering the culture change and training needed to ensure that carers are listened to, involved in and/or consulted in discussions about the person they care for, as 'experts by experience'

Being clear and consistent about this approach especially when cared-for adults have a mental health diagnosis or conditions affecting learning or cognition

Safe and sustainable care

This includes:

Develop guidance and learning opportunities to emphasise and promote better understanding amongst professionals about their Duty of Care to the carer

This should emphasise use of professional judgement to manage risks in the care scenario and provide clear advice and support to carers to enable them to manage these risks - if they feel able to

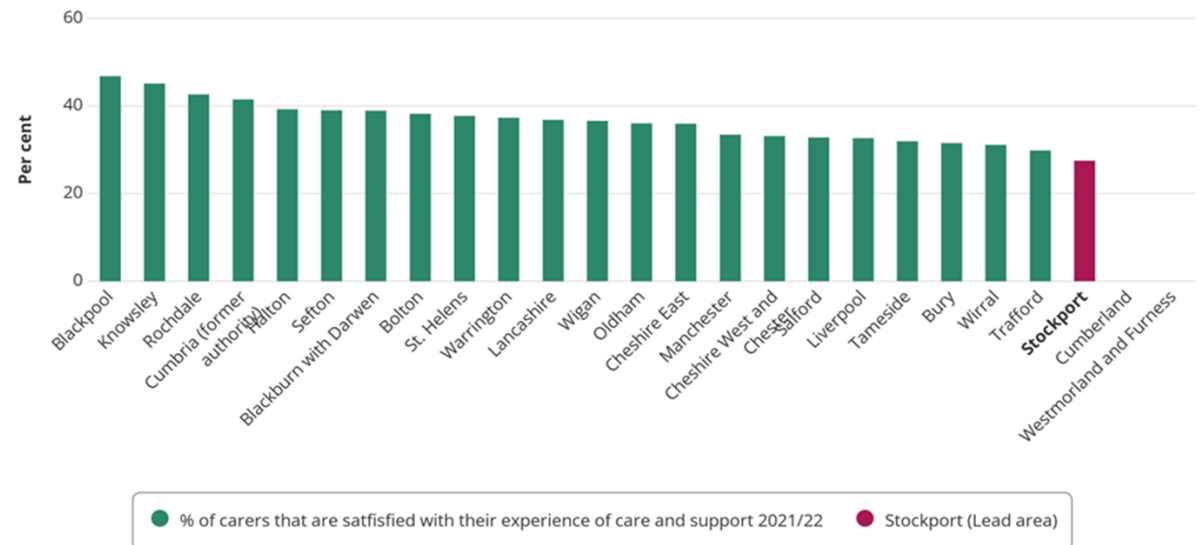
Develop wider use of contingency planning

Priority 3. Better information, advice and co-ordination of support when it really matters - improved co-ordination between services and high-quality information, especially at points of change and transition in caring such as at diagnosis, on discharge from hospital, preparing for adulthood, choosing care or planning for the future



The emphasis of this priority is to achieve a fundamental shift in carer experiences of the health, social care and wider support system in Stockport, with an emphasis on improvements in information and advice and co-ordination of care by professionals and organisations.

Proportion of carers that are satisfied with their experience of care and support (2021/22) for North West (ADASS Region From 2018/19)



Priority 3 improvement focus

Easy to access information

This includes:

A one-stop-shop for information about caring, plus health and care services - in both digital and non-digital formats

Developing local condition-specific information for carers early in the care journey

Relevant, practical information for families funding their own care and support

Improving care transitions

This includes:

Providing situation-specific advisory information, designed for carers, at key transitions in care e.g. diagnosis, discharge, changes in social care assessment/review, preparing for adulthood, changes in mental health stability

Continuity for young carers into adulthood

This includes:

Learning from good practice from other areas how a smooth transition in support is achieved for young carers as they become young adult carers

Implement a local transitional process for young carers who are likely to continue to care into adulthood

Professional co-ordination of care

This includes:

Health and social care providers reviewing the current arrangements for co-ordinating care within and across different services and organisations

Making tangible changes in practice that avoid burdening carers with the task of joining-up care themselves

Transparent financial information

This includes:

Improving the visibility of carer-specific financial and benefits information and expert advice

Clarity around financial assessment for state-funded social care

Transparency around health-funded support such as Continuing Healthcare

Priority 4. Support for carers in everyday life such as work, education and leisure - enabling carers of all ages to have full lives outside of caring by respecting and supporting caring with sympathetic policies and approaches



The focus of this priority is to create organisations and environments in Stockport that openly acknowledge and are supportive of carers and caring roles - or are 'carer-friendly' in their policies and practices. During the consultation process, carers perceived that it has become easier to receive support and flexibility in the workplace, and employers are more aware of caring roles, but there is still variability for working carers based on the survey results. Young carers would appear to experience similar inconsistencies, particularly in education.

The broader objective is to promote inclusivity for carers and the people they care for, in all walks of life, recognising where and how carers may experience specific inequalities and barriers to support, and how to mitigate this.

Priority 4 improvement focus

Employers and working carers

This includes:

Building on the progress that has been made around employer recognition and support for working carers with the local business community

Continuing to promote positive working carer employer practices and understand barriers to support in the workplace

Encourage carers to self-disclose their caring roles in the workplace

Education sector support for carers

This includes:

Collaborating to improve the knowledge, awareness and consistency of support for young carers in Stockport schools and colleges

Taking steps to bridge the gaps around identification of young carers

Investigating options to advocate for Stockport carers in higher education where necessary

Carer-friendly environments

This includes:

Statutory agencies and services, and services commissioned using public money in Stockport, developing and implementing a carer-friendly policy which is published

Continuing existing efforts to promote carer-friendly policies and practices in social, cultural and leisure provision across Stockport

Giving-up work to care

This includes:

Addressing the gap in information and support for carers who are considering a necessary decision to give-up work to care full-time, which helps them to consider the implications in the round

Consider how existing education or employment services can support carers who wish to return to work

Awareness of inequalities

This includes:

How to make support more available to working carers, outside of traditional working hours

Understand how digital exclusion affects carers

Consider how the needs of carers in lesser-heard groups may vary e.g. BME carers, LGBTQ+ carers, carers living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, carers of someone with a substance dependency

Next steps



The full strategy and the four priorities presented in this document will undergo a series of further discussions with stakeholders and partners in Stockport during early 2024. It is hoped that they will be adopted and supported by organisations across the health, care, education, cultural and leisure sectors serving Stockport residents.

The new Carers Partnership will develop an action plan that can deliver against the priorities in the medium-term and help to bring partners together to collaborate and drive improvement.