

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Community and Children's Services	29/01/2021
<b>Subject:</b> Support to informal carers	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	2,3 & 4
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	N
<b>If so, how much?</b>	N/A
<b>What is the source of funding?</b>	N/A
<b>Has this funding source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b> Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Zoe Dhami, Strategy Officer, Community and Children's Services	

### Summary

This report updates Members on the support provided to informal carers in the City of London.

A Carers Strategy 2019–2022 was approved by Members and published in 2019, and an action plan was developed. This provides the framework for the development and delivery of services to support carers. As part of this, the City of London Corporation commissions a City Connections Service which includes specific support activities and initiatives to support carers, including young carers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the context for delivery of services and impacted on delivery of the action plan. In light of this, and as part of our current commitment, the action plan will be reviewed and an update presented to Members.

Some issues about the support provided to informal carers has been raised by an informal carer who lives in the City of London. This report also includes this feedback, with a response to each of the points raised.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note this report.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City of London Corporation recognises and values the contributions that informal carers make within families, communities, workplaces and society. Informal carers are those defined as anyone who spends time looking after or helping a friend, family member or neighbour who, because of their health and care needs, would find it difficult to cope without this help. People can be carers regardless of age or whether they themselves identify as a carer.
2. In 2019, a new Carers Strategy 2019–22 was agreed by Members and published. It provides the framework for the design and development of services, support and activities for those caring for someone within the Square Mile, and for carers working for the City Corporation. An accompanying action plan was subsequently developed, and a Carers Strategy Implementation Group was set up.
3. The Care Act 2014 introduced important new rights for carers, giving them similar entitlements to the people for whom they care. Carers now have legal rights to an assessment of their needs by Adult Social Care (ASC), and support where eligible. In 2019/20 the City of London Corporation provided support to 45 carers. These carers will have a support plan with activities and assistance designed to meet agreed outcomes.
4. The City of London Corporation offers a full range of services as part of our universal offer. A comparison of the services provided in the City of London with other neighbouring local authorities can be found in Appendix 2.
5. The City of London Corporation commissions specific support activities and initiatives to support carers through the City Connections Service. This service provides a range of support to anyone who cares for someone in the City of London – they may live elsewhere but care for a City of London resident, and carers do not need to be registered or assessed by the City of London Corporation to access this support. The service also provides support to young carers.
6. The new City Connections service (which started in April 2019) took in the existing Carers Forum, which was previously a monthly meeting but had low attendance. The commission for the new service aimed to provide a wider range of activities and initiatives to support carers in relation to a number of outcomes.
7. Given that the City of London has a small population, a wider more encompassing service tends to offer better value for money and economies of scale which in turn leads to a better range of services than multiple small or restricted groups could. The City Connections Service is commissioned to link with and signpost to a range of other services in the local landscape to help meet outcomes.
8. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Connections Service included:
  - an initial assessment following referral and ongoing support until agreed outcomes have been achieved satisfactorily (these outcomes can include issues such as feeling less isolated or improved mental or physical wellbeing)

- a carers' coffee morning, allowing space for catching up with other carers, and a chance to engage in activities or receive information on a range of available
- more frequent and held online (see below)
- a range of activities for carers such as a shared music session and an activity group.

## **Current Position**

### *Delivery through the pandemic*

9. The pandemic has changed the context in which strategies, action plans and services are delivered.
10. City of London ASC has continued to provide services to carers and those cared for as usual
11. City Connections has also continued to accept referrals for its services and has developed and adapted some of its services to the changing situation in a number of ways, including:
  - supporting carers with emergency planning through postal information sent out in April, and an online session in September, which carers said they found useful
  - conducting regular welfare calls with those known to the carers' service (the frequency and nature of these calls was dependent on the carer's needs)
  - increasing carers' sessions to twice a month (as opposed to previously once a month). These sessions were delivered online and included guest speakers from City of London services and other commissioned services, such as City Advice, to explain how services could continue to be accessed
  - introduction of a new monthly virtual tour session, while continuing with monthly online activities such as meditation and a music-sharing session
  - celebrating Carers' Week in June with a tea party for carers, an online carers gallery and prize draw for carers, in partnership with a corporate partner
  - reintroducing the quarterly Carers Forum in September (currently online) to hear the views and experiences of City of London carers
  - developing flexible responses in provision to adapt to challenges around isolation – for example, posting information to people who would otherwise have had difficulty accessing information
  - engaging with and inviting carers to a range of wider events such as the online carers' festival.
12. Although a Carers Strategy Implementation Group was established and met twice, further meetings were delayed due to the pandemic.

### *Carers' feedback*

13. In September 2020 a report on carer experiences pre and during the pandemic was shared with the City Corporation. This feedback was compiled by an informal carer living and caring within the Square Mile. The report outlined issues in relation to:

- support provided to carers in lockdown, with suggestions on improving support for future lockdowns
  - ways that City of London informal carers supported one another outside of services commissioned by the City Corporation
  - a comparison of equivalent carer services in other London boroughs and Leeds, with the City of London City Connections service.
14. A further response was received from the carer in the City of London in October 2020. This was in response to a survey of residents in relation to the response to the pandemic. A copy of the document can be found in Appendix 3.
  15. A full summary of all the points raised and a response is attached at Appendix 1.
  16. Following an initial response to the carer feedback report, officers are working with City Connections to understand how further support could be given to carers within the remit of the currently commissioned service.
  17. In their learning from their experience over the last year, City Connections have identified:
    - a specific need to support carers in accessing and feeling confident using digital technology. Carers have been made aware that support can be provided to access a digital 'befriending' scheme to assist with digital technology
    - a continued need to host sessions online and raise awareness of other support services to address some of the significant isolation that carers experience
    - a need to continue with the welfare calls to: provide support for wellbeing; and build trusted relationships to be able to identify and refer on to appropriate services as applicable. As pandemic restrictions increased, the service contacted all carers who had recently declined any support, as circumstances may have changed
    - a need for some counselling services to support carers. Although City Connections is not commissioned to deliver this, they are working with ASC and the City Wellbeing Centre to introduce free counselling sessions for City carers.
  18. City Connections have recruited a community engagement officer who started at the beginning of January and will further develop the activities and initiatives for carers in consultation and engagement with them. This officer will also co-produce a range of guides for carers.
  19. In December 2020, ASC spoke with 31 informal carers about the support they receive, their health and wellbeing, experience during the pandemic, and general feedback.
  20. Around 45% (14) responded positively on the service provision; 32% (10) felt the service levels to be reasonable or adequate to their needs; and 22% (7) felt services needed to improve.
  21. Feedback included:
    - positive feedback on the current service, such as the information that is shared, and the contact from ASC

- ways to improve the service, such as how services were delivered during the pandemic (reactive rather than proactive) and the benefits of a carer's card.
22. Understandably in all the responses, there was feedback specific to living under the restrictions of the pandemic, whether in a caring role or not. This report and the response focus just on issues raised specific to informal carers.

#### *Action plan update*

23. An update on the Carers Strategy 2019–22 action plan will be brought to the Community and Children's Services Grand Committee on April 30 2021.
24. A workshop for the Carers Strategy Implementation Group is taking place in February 2021. The outputs of this workshop will be:
- one to two agreed priority actions for each strategy outcome to be delivered by April 2022
  - agreed tasks for each priority action with assigned responsible officer
  - an updated membership for the group, which will include City of London informal carer representation
  - an updated meeting timetable with agreement on new ways of working for the group.
25. The action plan will be revised using input from informal carers at the February workshop, the attached carer response report (Appendix 1), feedback from carers in December 2020, and engagement through other consultations. This includes work being done on updating the City of London Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-24.
26. The revised action plan will set out the necessary deliverables and inputs for the next 12 months, with clear measurables. Whilst the Carers Strategy 2019-22 update report will also show what has been achieved since it was published.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

27. This report is for information only and therefore the relevant implications are as follows:

#### *Strategic implications*

28. The Carers Strategy and action plan directly supports the following three Corporate Priorities:

- 2: People enjoy good health and wellbeing
- 3: People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential
- 4: Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

#### *Equalities implications*

29. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy and as part of the commissioning process for the City Connections Service.

30. The City Connections Service monitors the demographics of its service users and is actively trying to engage with a more diverse range of carers.

## **Conclusion**

31. This report updates Members on the support available to informal carers in the City of London. These services sit within the priorities of the Carers Strategy 2019–2022 and associated action plan.

32. The pandemic has had an impact on delivery of the action plan, and services have had to adapt to the changing context. Therefore, there are plans to review the action plan due to emerging needs, as well as the commitment to review the action plan annually. Carers will be involved in this review and an update will be provided to the Community and Children's Services Committee in 2021.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Carer concerns and responses
- Appendix 2: Carer services comparison table
- Appendix 3: Feedback from City of London informal carer

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