

**Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board**  
**13 April 2022**

<b>Report Topic:</b>	<b>The Joint Carers Strategy 2022-26 - Update</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<p>Justin Haywood, Operational Manager, Commissioning <a href="mailto:Justin_Haywood@sandwell.gov.uk">Justin_Haywood@sandwell.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Beverley Stevens, Commissioning Officer <a href="mailto:Beverley_Stevens@sandwell.gov.uk">Beverley_Stevens@sandwell.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Link to board priorities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. We will help keep people healthier for longer</b> The Strategy covers the improving the health and wellbeing of Sandwell Carers and reducing the risk of crises.</li> <li><b>2. We will help keep people safe and support communities.</b> The Strategy covers helping carers to live well within their local community and address issues before and since the pandemic on carers.</li> <li><b>3. We will work together to join up services.</b> The Strategy is joint between Social Care, Health and the Voluntary Sector and the Action Plan will be delivered together.</li> <li><b>4. We will work closely with local people, partners and providers of services.</b> Strategy involved engagement with hundreds of local Carers and other residents and we have listened to and taken account of their views and will continue to work with them.</li> </ol>
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	A considerable amount of engagement has taken place following feedback from the previous presentations to the Health and Wellbeing Board in June and further update in September 2021 which

	<p>focused on ensuring that the voice of carers was strongly represented in the Strategy document.</p> <p>Now, subject to any last and final comments from stakeholders and partners, the Carers Strategy is at final draft stage and will require endorsement through partners' respective governance channels before being approved by the next Health and Wellbeing Board in June 2022.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<p>That the Health and Wellbeing Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the update of the Sandwell Joint Carers Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026.</li> <li>2. Requests and encourages last and final comments from stakeholders including carers themselves for inclusion in the final report.</li> <li>3. Requests that strategic partners now take the Final Draft Strategy through their respective governance systems.</li> <li>4. Considers the Final Strategy for approval by Health and Wellbeing Board in June 2022.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Key Discussion points:</b></p>	<p>The previous draft of the Joint Carers Strategy was completed and submitted to the Board in June 2021. The Board approved the direction of the Strategy and asked for more evidence of engagement with carers. An extensive amount of work has been done before and since this date to engage with carers in Sandwell.</p> <p>Since the last update in September 2021, the COVID pandemic has increased the numbers of Carers nationally from 9 to 13 million (Carers UK) and with 81% of carers having experienced increased caring duties because of the pandemic. This will have impacted on carers similarly here in Sandwell.</p> <p>Healthwatch Sandwell published a research report on the impact of COVID on Carers in November 2021,</p>

	<p>the results of which has been included in the Strategy.</p> <p>In addition, we have been working with a number of Carer Support Organisations to collate personal 'I Care Statements' from carers, one of which came through in the form of a poem which is featured in the strategy.</p> <p>The final Strategy and Action Plan is hosted online at <a href="http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/carersstrategy">www.sandwell.gov.uk/carersstrategy</a> and we hope fully represents the level of engagement with Carers to date but we must recognise that there is much more to do and this is set out in the proposed action plan.</p> <p>If any Carers want a copy of the Carers Strategy and are unable to access it Online using the link above, they can contact Sandwell Enquiry on 0121 569 2266 and a copy will be sent to them.</p> <p>This is to avoid printing and circulating unnecessary copies of the strategy reducing cost and avoiding wasting paper.</p>
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**Implications (e.g. Financial, Statutory etc)**

**Resources:** The actions identified within the Strategy will either be funded by our partners through existing programme budgets or working with partners in the Voluntary and Community Sector to access external funding.

**Legal & Governance:** There are no statutory implications to have a Strategy, but the Council has legal duties in the Care Act and Children's and Families Act to Carers.

**Risk:** If the Joint Carers Strategy is not approved or implemented, there may need to be a review of carers information, advice, and support service to ensure that there is a good choice of providers in Sandwell.

<p><b>Equality:</b> The Joint Carers Strategy includes a Promise to raise the profile of all carers in Sandwell and ensure underrepresented and seldom heard voices are heard.</p> <p>The Strategy focusses in many places on the need to support carers from a wide range of communities and to ensure the needs of carers from all protected characteristics is represented and addressed.</p> <p>Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out by the lead organisations for any implementation, withdrawal or change to any services as a result of any priorities identified by this strategy as and when required.</p> <p><b>Health &amp; Wellbeing:</b> The Joint Carers Strategy includes a Promise to Support Carers to look after their health and wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Social Value:</b> The Joint Carers Strategy includes a section on local carer support organisations and proposals for developing local carer support – which will support the local voluntary sector. It also includes a promise to support carers to return to or stay in employment or training.</p>	
<p><b>What engagement has or will take place with people, partners and providers?</b></p>	<p>The Strategy was co-produced with young, young adult and adult Carers, and with professionals and key stakeholders in the local community, voluntary sector, and statutory services. The local Healthwatch was also asked to engage with Carers to include those not already accessing services.</p> <p>Over 1000 Carers completed surveys or attended events and discussions about caring and/or the draft Strategy and Action Plan. A suite of documents was developed to support engagement activity, including presentations, surveys in paper and online formats.</p> <p>The Joint Carers Strategy Project Group has ensured that the main feedback from this engagement have been reflected in the final Carers Strategy and Action Plan. There was strong and consistent agreement to the 5 key priorities the Strategy and to the 9 Promises.</p>

Over 100 Carers and residents' feedback on the impact of COVID to the Local Healthwatch, and the main findings are listed in the Carers Strategy.

The main findings from this engagement was that Carers were:

1. Concerned if the proposed actions would be funded and implemented, given closures to services used by cared for people.
2. Concerned about lack of awareness of their role, and felt hidden or undervalued or not listened to by professionals
3. Needed clear and quick access to information, advice, assessment, and support, especially respite and emergency support, to reduce the risk of career tiredness, breakdown.
4. Felt tired, exhausted, and lonely during COVID/lockdown. Carers were particularly worried about impact on cared for or family if they/their cared for person became ill with COVID.
5. Some Carers have given up, or reduced hours in paid jobs to enable them to take on an increased burden of care during the pandemic.

Whilst hopefully COVID19, and its impact on all of our lives, will continue to reduce over time, the lessons and stories heard around isolation, exhaustion and carers feeling undervalued must continue our collective drive to support carers in the future.

	<p>Some examples of the feedback received are listed below:</p> <p>“We need to listen to Carers and not treat us as a tick box exercise. We are individuals and have different needs”</p> <p>“More support for Carers- especially those whose cared for does not meet eligibility criteria so cannot access support”</p> <p>“To improve awareness of Carers and where to get support from”</p> <p>“A lot of people rely on Carers, if they get ill then it puts more pressure on families, NHS and others”</p> <p>“We need support to provide for ourselves in the long term- and work more flexibly”</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p>	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – The Joint Carers Strategy 2022-2026 (draft)</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> – Joint Carers Strategy Presentation</p>

