



Meeting: Highland Health and Social Care Committee

Meeting date: 29 June 2022

Title: Carers Programme Update

Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:

Report Author: Ian Thomson

1 Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Discussion
- Decision

This report relates to:

- Government policy/directive
- Legal requirements; and
- Local policy

This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

This report relates to the following Corporate Objective(s)

<p>Clinical and Care Excellence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving health • Innovating our care 	<p>Partners in Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership • Listening and responding • Communicating well
<p>A Great Place to Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by example • Being inclusive • Learning from experience • Improving wellbeing 	<p>Safe and Sustainable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well run

2 Report summary

Committee is asked to consider progress in relation to:

- Implementing the current Highland Carers Strategy (2020-23)
- Developing a new Carers Strategy (2023 -26)
- Deploying available resource appropriately for services to carers
- Supporting the development of a 'carer-led' Carers' Union

Committee is asked to agree Recommendations in relation to:

- Carers programme expenditure 2022-23
- Restructuring governance arrangements
- Linking the planned use of available resource to the development of a new Highland Carers Strategy (2023-26)

2.1 Situation

- Work was underway before the Pandemic to implement a costed carers programme to meet the duties contained within the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.
- Contractual arrangements with our Carers' Centre (Connecting Carers) had been long-standing and the need for updated contractual arrangements was highlighted.
- Committee was informed (February 2020) of plans to realise a new shape of services for carers given the available (but not fully committed) resources available at that point.
- Work to progress the procurement/tendering processes necessary to realise that costed carer programme were put on hold due to competing demands on contracting capacity as a result of the Pandemic.
- The need to provide services for carers, however, has become more acute throughout the course of the Pandemic, and there was understood to be a significant, differential negative impact on carers across the course of the Pandemic.
- The available resource of the carers programme budget has been used reactively and is now fully deployed to respond to carers' needs.
- The available resources have been used to fund new initiatives (initially seven new Carers Projects, and a new Option 1 Short Breaks Scheme), and to increase the resource available to core services (Connecting Carers) to reflect increases in demand and inflation.
- The composition of the Carers Improvement Group (CIG) (there being a preponderance of service providers) and a hiatus in governance arrangements have meant decision-making in respect of reactive expenditure decisions for the carers programme budget have been convoluted.
- Although the offered feedback is that the deployment of available resources has gone some way to mitigating impact of the Pandemic, it is clear that the unmet needs of carers remain significant, and that their ability and willingness to provide care remains as a cornerstone of the care provided to adults and children in need in our communities.

- Work has begun (albeit at a very early stage) to co-produce a new Carers Strategy (2023-26) in ways which seek to much more fully reflect the experience of carers, their priorities and their chosen solutions. Ideally we would seek to have a completed Strategy within the calendar year.
- Independently, work is ongoing to develop a 'carers-led' Carers Union.
- Our aim remains to ensure that carers are fully involved in decision-making – that they able to articulate their priorities, and play a full role in a co-production approach to directing available resource.

2.2 Background

Current Strategy (2020-2023) and Implementation Plan

- The existing Carers Strategy was agreed at the HH&SCC on March 2021
- It covered the aims to
 1. Carers benefit from a full range of information to ensure they can make informed choices about their caring role
 2. Appropriate services are in place for carers which complement the services available to those they care for
 3. Clear pathways are in place so that carers are involved in shaping the services they receive
 4. Carers are identified, and their role is recognised
- It has an associated Implementation Plan [HIGHLAND CARERS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MAY 2022.docx \(live.com\)](#)
- The Implementation plan is a working document and includes a set of updated actions which include the initiatives to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on carers in Highland. These plans incorporate activities which were made possible an uplift in funding to carers from Scottish Government in March 2021.
- Work has progressed well in the areas of:
 - Providing new projects for carers to access which work in a Covid-19 environment
 - The implementation of a new Option 1 Short Breaks Scheme which has provided resources to carers to access breaks of their choice.
 - Supporting the carers centre (Connecting Carers) to cope with increased demand
- Work is behind schedule
 - To find a more robust framework to support carers through the process of hospital discharge of those they care for
- The Carers Services Development Officer work to ensure Implementation Plan up- to-date and it reflects current partnership activity to meet the needs of carers in Highland.

Carers Programme Budget

- A carers programme budget was outlined to Committee in February 2020.

- It included plans to tender for our core services for carers.
- This work was put on hold due to the pressures of the Pandemic.
- Connecting Carers has continued to provide the services to carers that relate to statutory duties in relation to the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016: Adult Carer Support Plans; Information and Advice etc. This arrangement has been made possible through the repeated 'roll-forward' of contractual arrangements since 2011.
- Connecting Carers has received increased resource to reflect significant increases in demand over the period of the Pandemic; this has allowed them the opportunity to employ 3 extra Carers Link Workers. (For example there were 495 Adult Carers Support Plans (ACSP) in place at March 22 – an increase from 255 ACSPs in place at the same point a year before.
- The impact of delaying a tender process has meant, of course, that the cumulative effects of inflation (separate from the pressures caused by increased demand) from 2011 are now impacting on the resource available to the Organisation in real terms; and their ability to meet the terms necessary to maintain their workforce. The proposed programme budget at Table 1 below therefore includes a significant inflationary uplift of £67k.
- Carer Projects – offering a variety of supportive and creative inputs to carers – have been commissioned via a bidding process in August 2020: these have been well evaluated and are continuing.
- A new Option 1 Short Breaks Scheme was introduced in September 2021; this sought to quickly put available resource at the disposal of carers to realise personalised Short Breaks.
- The Option 1 Short Breaks Scheme has been very well evaluated and is understood to be providing good outcomes for carers.
- A proposed programme budget - which will fully commit the resource identified - at this point - as available for adult carers in Highland (£2.068m) is given below:

Projected Spend 2022-23	£000
Carers Centre (Connecting Carers)	614
Carers Projects	255
SDS Option 1 Scheme	909
NHSH Posts	91
Carers Advocacy	176
Support for Carer Involvement	23
Total	2,068

Table 1

Involving Carers

- The current Carers Strategy (2020-23) sought to collect the views carers in its development.

- Significant efforts were made to gather carers' views to shape the final strategy. Surveys and online groups were used to comply with Covid-19 restrictions etc.
- Looking ahead, our aim will be to fully "co-produce" a new Carers Strategy for 2023-23. As above, we would aim to complete this within a calendar year.
- We are currently working with a carer representative, NHS's Community Engagement Manager and Project Manager ASC to look to deploy an "Experience-based, Co-design" approach. The aim/methodology used will be to engage a wide range of carers to develop the new strategy.
- It is recognised that the CIG has lacked a strong carer perspective. Carer representation has been fitful, the carer "co-chair" post has remained unfilled, and there is a possibility that groups of this sort don't lend themselves to carers involvement very well
- The CIG does not appear to have formed the positive working alliances necessary to add significant value to the work already in train.
- The development of a Carers Union in Highland is ongoing. Work is being undertaken to form an independent 'carer-led' organisation to promote the rights of unpaid carers and provide mutual support.
- This model proposed is a ground-breaking one: and its formation could potentially support the articulation of the perspective of carers across the work of Highland's Health and Social Care Partnership.

2.3 Assessment

Developing a new Highland Carers Strategy (2023-26) / Involving Carers

- An "Experienced Based, Co-Design" approach for the development a new strategy is an exciting prospect. This Committee and others have highlighted the need to fully incorporate the perspectives of carers into its development of plans, policies and strategies.
- To ensure that the involvement of carers in strategy development is clearly understood to be meaningful it will therefore be important to ensure that the articulation of their priorities can be effectively responded to.
- Given this, the aim, alongside the development of strategic goals and actions, should be to develop a lasting framework for feeding carers views into decision-making and governance arrangements in the Highland Health and Social Care Partnership.
- Centrally, it will be important that there is a clear link between the development of a new strategic approach and the deployment of the resource available within the carers programme budget.
- The development of an independent, carers-led Carers Union is a significant step: if realised, it should offer benefits both to carers (advice, peer support and mediation etc) and to the Board and decision-makers. The ability to ensure that plans, policies and strategies can benefit from a 'ready route' for consultation, engagement and co-production is potentially very valuable.

Carers Programme Budget

- The Carers Programme Budget has, in part at least, been deployed reactively to meet the needs of carers during the Pandemic

- Original plans for the Budget from 2020 no longer adequately reflect the position carers are now in.
- The breakdown of the carers programme budget cannot necessarily be seen to reflect the priorities that carers themselves have articulated.

2.4 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree:

1. That the proposed carers' programme budget at Table 1 is deployed in its present form until work on the development of a new Carers Strategy is complete.
2. That work to develop a new Highland Carers Strategy (2023-26) incorporates the need to provide direction on the use of the resource available in the carers programme budget.
3. That work to develop a new Highland Carers Strategy (2023-26) incorporates the need to recommend/effect new arrangements to input the perspectives of carers into NHS's governance arrangements.
4. That the CIG is discontinued and that the perspectives and needs of carers are incorporated as part of the strategy development process; and those of service providers are consolidated within existing network meeting arrangements.
5. That the Implementation Plan continues to structure current activity in this field; and is updated by our Carers Services Development Officer on a regular basis.
6. That officers seek to ensure they find an appropriate route to catalyse (support and fund) an independent Carers Union in Highland.

Ian Thomson
Head of Service: Quality Assurance
Adult Social Care
22/06/22