Carers First

St Peter's MSE ICS Consultation

March 2024

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Carers First is currently commissioned by Essex County Council to provide an information/advice/guidance service to unpaid carers aged 18+ across the county

From April 2024 , a new service has been commissioned , within which Carers First will continue to support adult carers across the Mid and South Essex localities.

Since April 2018 , we have worked with over 5500 carers within the MSE ICS footprint

A carer is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid. (NHS)

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Public Health England March 2021

The report 'Caring as a Social Determinant of Health' indicated that those with a caring role are twice as likely as non-carers within the general population to experience poor health outcomes , being a carer is in itself a health inequality

Currently , there are over 400,000 carers nationally aged 85+

By 2030 it is estimated that 1.8 million carers in the UK will be aged 65+

PHE acknowledged there were gaps in data on carer outcomes and more research was needed to fully understand how NHS decision making could better support unpaid carers

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Carers UK

Each year , Carers UK carries out a State of Caring survey amongst its individual members

From this it compiles a series of Impact Reports with the Impact on Health Report released in November 2023

Figures included;

82% felt their caring role had impacted on one or more aspects of their own health

44% had put off their own health appointments, treatments and procedures due to worry about their caring role

42% felt they needed more support from the NHS to sustain their caring role

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Local considerations for proposal from a carer viewpoint

Carers frequently report difficulties accessing public transport from rural areas such as Braintree and Maldon Districts(both of which have older than average populations , when measured against national and regional averages).The proposed IMC and Stroke Rehabilitation bed moves to Brentwood will make such journeys impossible in some cases, from both a financial and practical perspective.

Whilst visits might not be deemed to be clinically necessary , we know that many carers visit frequently for a variety of reasons including
Support with everyday tasks such as meal assistance
Re assurance and companionship for patients , often with cognitive/sensory impairments
Liaison with health/care staff , often with legal authority for decision making such as Lasting Power of Attorney for Health

Younger carers(under state pension age) in receipt of Carers Allowance have often reduced or given up work , making financial pressures particularly acute during a Cost of Living Crisis and impacting on their disposable income for increased travel costs

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Local Considerations

We have already noted poorer health outcomes for carers who do not prioritise their own health needs above the care needs of the person(s) they are supporting

Moving the outpatients offer currently at St Peter's to other locations, is likely to impede carer access to these services even more.
Current barriers include
Transport(though St Peter's is more central than some potential options)
Rurality
Lack of respite options – carers are often understandably unwilling or unable to take the person they support to health environments and options for respite are severely limited by cost , market availability and the preference of respite providers for regular bookings

MSE ICS could look to mitigate any changes by committing to more carer friendly processes and ensuring NHS partners do likewise by utilizing national quality standards and recommendations around increased identification and support for unpaid carers in its localities

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