

**Tower Hamlets
2016-2019**



Carers Strategy

We care, because you care



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INTRODUCTION

Making it happen for carers

Carers are at the heart of Tower Hamlets' families and communities and we want them to be able to continue to care for family members and friends whilst being able to lead a life outside of caring.

Anyone could be a carer – a 15 year old girl looking after a parent with an alcohol problem, a 45 year old man caring for his partner who has terminal cancer, or an 80-year-old woman looking after her husband who has advanced dementia.

Quite often, carers don't always see

themselves as 'carers' – they may think it is just helping a friend or looking after their loved ones or a relative.

A carer, according to the National Carers Strategy is:

'Someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems'

19,356 people in Tower Hamlets provide some form of unpaid care. 3,326 of those are young carers and young adult carers under the

age of 25. Most people are likely to become a carer at some point in their life.

The Tower Hamlets Carers Strategy which has been in place since 2012 has now been refreshed and updated for the period 2016-2019.

It has been developed in close partnership with professionals in health and social care, voluntary and community groups, with local carer services, the carers forum, and in consultation with local carers, young and adult, themselves.

Over the next three years, we want the

Carers Strategy to deliver the following for carers:

- To make sure that you are recognised as a carer;
- To make sure that you are supported in your carer role, and
- That you feel valued and respected in your role as a carer
- To make sure that you are supported as you transition between Children and Adult services

PRIORITIES

There are 5 clear priorities for working with all carers

- Increasing identification and recognition of carers
- Realising and releasing potential
- A life outside of caring
- Improving the health and wellbeing of carers
- Transitions - providing seamless care between children and adults services

Our aims

For people living in their own home who need care and support - the family friend, family member or neighbour - who delivers that support can be a lifeline. Their role cannot be underestimated. Carers are also central to how adults and children's services are delivered in our borough.

Research (i) carried out shows that more and more people in Tower Hamlets are going to need care in the future because of an ageing population and our particular issues with poor health and deprivation. The

number of carers nationwide continues to grow, so it is essential that we, locally, look at the bigger picture and plan well for the years ahead. We want to make sure we can deal with the coming challenges effectively and meet the needs of our community.

Although caring can be very rewarding – it is also true that it can have a negative impact on carers themselves. Many carers continue to juggle work with their caring responsibilities but too often, the price that has to be paid for caring is to give up work. Carers also report high levels of depression (ii).

We can and will do something about this.

There are specific local issues that we also need to address.

Not all carers are known to us but they may need our support, assistance or information that we can give them about important issues around caring responsibilities.

We also need to make more contact with black and minority ethnic and LGBT carers. Tower Hamlets has one of the most diverse populations in England and we need to provide a broader range of culturally sensitive advice and information.

There are many young carers in Tower Hamlets who do fantastic work and we must support them better to make sure their caring responsibilities do not get in the way of their social lives, friendships, education, and development.

Young carers are the most likely group to miss out on official recognition. This matters because we need to know where they are and who they are in order to offer the help needed.

Priority 1

Increase carer identification

What you have told us

"I've been doing this for 10 years, but I didn't know that I was a carer"

"I'm a carer now, not a wife. I struggle with this."

"Community groups could be doing more outreach to improve identification of carers."

"My school didn't know I was a young carer, this was only recognised when it started to affect my school attendance."

Because people that provide unpaid care for others do not always know that they are carers or identify as a 'carer', they can miss out on the support that is available to them, including, for example, emotional help or financial assistance.

All health and social care partners need to be much more aware of carers and their particular needs - signposting to carers' services should be done as a matter of course.

Health and social care staff should also understand, and show, that they value carers as key partners

in the decisions that need to be made and work together with them to achieve the best results. Carers should feel that their knowledge, expertise and experience is understood and respected by health and social care professionals.

Carers also told us that one of the major frustrations and difficulties was the feeling of being passed from one person to another, often from one agency to another.

Young Carers

It is very important that young carers know of their rights so that we can help where needed.

It is true that carers and families may be scared to ask for help because they fear social services being involved and what impact that will have on their family.

We want to make sure that people understand that our role is to help and support and improve conditions where possible.

As a local authority we have clear responsibility to support the needs of young carers.

We have put training in place for social workers across both adults' and children's social care so that they can identify and

recognise carers needs more easily.

What will we do next?

We will work with our partners across health, education, social care and other services to identify and support more carers.

We will consult more closely with carers recognising their expertise, when making decisions about the care of their loved ones

We will review training opportunities for health and social care professionals in Tower Hamlets to help them identify carers.

We will find more practical and effective ways to identify young carers and offer them an assessment

We will develop a new assessment tool specifically to understand the needs of young carers.

Priority 2

Realising and releasing potential

What you have told us

"I cannot work as my partner needs full time care."

"I know a lot of carers here [carers centre] who have to give up work due to the lack of flexibility and support offered to them by their workplace. They all want to continue working, but without the support and understanding of their employers ... and adequate input from social care and health services to ensure their family member is

safe and being well cared for, this is often not possible."

"Employers, particularly the private sector, do not always understand the dual role of the working carer."

"I'd love to learn new skills (e.g. computer skills) but cannot always find the time to access courses available"

We want to make sure that working carers are supported to work if they want to continue.

Carers have said that flexible working is one of the most important factors in allowing them to juggle paid work, their caring

responsibilities and family life.

To deliver more opportunities for working carers, we will develop a new 'Carers Dignity Charter' produced in partnership with carers in Tower Hamlets. Local employers will be encouraged to have more flexible working options for employees with caring responsibilities that can help them work alongside their caring role.

Young carers

We will make sure that young carers are able to get the help and guidance they need to fulfil their potential in education

and to have the same opportunities as other young people.

Primary and secondary schools in the borough will have Young Carers Champions to make a difference to the young carers that they support.

What will we do next?

We will work with employers so that they know more about the needs of working carers and are able to use their skills.

We will develop a Carers Academy as a specialist source for advice and

information. It will also provide practical training and support on areas that will help carers have a life outside of caring.

We will work more closely with schools so that young carers are able to achieve their full educational potential.

We will work closely with young carers so that they are able to have the same chances at education and employment opportunities as their friends and peers.

Priority 3

A life alongside caring

What you have told us

“I don’t see my friends as much.”

“I need a break for my own wellbeing .. and to help support the rest of my family.”

“Personal budgets and direct payments are great ideas but it’s too much hard work ... we don’t want more paper work”

Support for carers can come from a variety of sources – some informal and coming from friends or family – whereas some support will be more formal and delivered

through health and care services or voluntary agencies.

Support for carers also comes in the form of clear advice, information and support. Easy to use, locally based information is essential to help carers carry out their roles.

Caring can be exhausting work and breaks are essential. Opportunities for short breaks should be available and offered when they are right- and convenient for both the carer and the person being cared for when they are assessed by social care.

Carers can find it hard to get the right information at the right time and it is frustrating and stressful for them, particularly when trying to arrange care and support quickly. Too many carers are coming through to us at the point of crisis. They need to be able to get help and support much earlier in the process.

We have recently redesigned our services so that they focus on what people would like to achieve, be that in training, education or work.

It is really important that all of the different groups are

able to find and use the right support.

That could be a younger person who needs an afterschool club or a parent caring for an older relative who needs a couple of hours off every week to pursue their hobby.

Personal budgets are also available as direct payments for carers so they can decide what they need as they are likely to know best what is required.

Young Carers

Young carers need regular breaks to get them out of the home and away from their caring duties.

Carers can be as young as five years

old and so it is essential that we provide the right type of help, regardless of age.

We will work more closely with the health and voluntary sector and buying in services that will give young carers a break from their caring responsibilities.

What will we do next?

We will find ways to get out into the community and give better advice to carers so that they can avoid crisis situations, so that they can have the right information to make decisions so that they can

manage their lives alongside their caring role.

We will make information available at places that carers use so they are more likely to find out what is available to them. This could be at the GP surgery or at the pharmacist, employers, or school/colleges.

We will look at how we can widen our range of activities for young carers so they have more opportunities to take a break from their caring responsibilities.

Priority 4

Supporting carers to stay healthy

What you have told us

"I have my own physical health problems. Some were conditions which occurred over time, others were as a result of moving and handling my husband."

"My caring role often leaves me feeling tired. I have a lot of anxiety worrying about the future and worrying about finances."

Caring can be rewarding but it can also be emotionally and physically difficult.

Carers of all ages need to be helped and supported to maintain good health, emotionally and physically with services that understand their own specific needs.

Services which provide short breaks, respite care, emergency and crisis response should be available so that carers are able to get well needed breaks.

The Carers Centre service user survey found that half of carers have physical health problems such

as bad backs, bad knees and joint pains. We will develop a Carers Academy, which will include training courses that could help prevent long term harm and injuries to carers.

Young Carers

All GP's, school nurse services and health professionals should routinely record whether a person is a carer or young carer in the health records.

This should mean that they are able to offer a more targeted service that will meet the specific requirements of younger carers.

What will we do next?

We want to help carers be aware of their health needs and know how to take action if their health is suffering.

We will provide carers with training, information and breaks from caring to help them stay healthy and care safely.

We will work with partners from health services to make contact with 'hidden and hard to reach' carers and let them know of the support available to them.

We will find ways to help overcome the problems that carers

have in using health services as a result of their caring duties.

We will work with the school nurse service to find young carers and offer them regular health checks.

Priority 5

Seamless care: support as children become adults

What you have told us

“School have a notice board and an assembly about young carers. I know where I can go if I need help”

“Sometimes, I just can’t get my homework done on time, I wish my school were a bit more understanding.”

“Young carer’s are always helping others. It’s important to make sure that they have a space where they can have time to themselves.”

“Sometimes I just want a bit of time to play on my phone or watch videos on YouTube”

As young carers move from childhood to adulthood, the time of transition can be very uncertain and worrying for both the carer and the cared for person.

The support for this stage needs to be smooth and easy with planning and preparation from an early stage absolutely key to the success of the process.

We will also work with schools and youth services to raise awareness with staff

of young carers needs.

What will we do next?

We will work to make sure that children and adults services work together better to support young carers and parent carers as they move from one service to the other.

We will ensure that plans for transitioning between children and adult services is put in place at the earliest possible stage, ideally by the age of 14. This will mean that their needs are met regardless of their age.

We are currently reviewing the transition

arrangements between children's and adult's services. As part of this review we will ensure the needs of carers are addressed.

Caring for the carers

It's very important that carers' voice are heard in Tower Hamlets and that we listen to what they are telling us.

We know that many carers are happy with the services that are available, but we also know that there are more things that they would like to see improve in Tower Hamlets.

Many local carers - either for generational or cultural reasons – don't use our services. This can lead to situations where the first contact we have is because the family has reached breaking point. We need to get help in place far before the crisis point is reached.

We need to be much better at finding and offering a helping hand to carers if they need it.

Children and young people who are carers deserve the same opportunities as those without caring responsibilities.

They need to be protected from the wrong types of pressures in their lives and that can include caring. We want to make sure young carers are able to be safe, healthy and enjoy their lives.

Delivering these aims will be challenging but we are determined to get there.

ⁱ Carers UK policy briefing

ⁱⁱ 1 Carers UK (2013) State of Caring 2013