

REPORT TO: Health Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 26th November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director – Adult Services and Chief Executive Halton Carers Centre

PORTFOLIO: Adult Social Care

SUBJECT: Report on Activity to support Carers

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Board with information on activities that support carers in the Borough
- 1.2 To provide in-depth information on the work of Halton Carers Centre

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In 2024 a new All Age Carers Strategy has been agreed under the One Halton governance framework and is attached at Appendix 1. This strategy arises from a review of the previous strategy, engagement with carers and the wider partnership and incorporates changes to national guidance where this has occurred.
- 3.2 Halton Borough Council works with partners in the independent, voluntary and statutory sectors to ensure a wide range of factors, engagement and types of provision can be supported.
- 3.3 Local Authorities (LA) in the UK have statutory duties to assess adult carers of adults with eligible social care needs and provide support where eligible. In England these duties are set out in the Care Act 2015. This duty is undertaken by the Adult Social Care Directorate
- 3.4 This report focuses on the work across the Adult Social Care Directorate and its partners to fulfil these duties and have a wider focus on supporting carers
- 3.5 **Carers Assessments**
Carers assessments are undertaken by staff in the Adult Social Care directorate. Assessments are offered when staff identify that someone has a carer(s). Staff also sign post people to the Carers

Centre and other agencies in the borough who may be able to provide support.

- 3.6 An assessment may lead to the provision of a service directly commissioned by the LA; the spot purchase of a service; the provision of a Direct Payment (money) that the carer can use to support them in undertaking their carers role; information on other organisations who can support the carer.

Table 1: Carer Assessment and Reviews Completed

	Assessments	Reviews
2021/22	530	373
2022/23	504	447
2023/24	548	476

- 3.7 **Services**
Respite is a key type of service that enables carers to have a break from their caring role. Respite in residential establishments is organised with the individual, their carer and social work staff. This can enable an individualised approach. Capacity in residential establishments is variable depending on type of establishment and demand.

- 3.8 The council block purchase respite capacity for people with a Learning Disability and / or Autism at the Bredon Respite Centre in Runcorn. Some of this capacity had been utilised for people requiring longer stays but this ceased in 2024 releasing this for further respite. In 2023/24 this was utilised by 26 people. In 2024/25 27 people have accessed this service to date. This provision is under review as part of the wider transformation work in respect of the model of provision for adults with learning disabilities.

- 3.9 The council also block purchase a respite service that can be delivered in people’s own homes. Typically, this supports carers to go out knowing the person they care for is being looked after. This service has capacity to deliver circa 500 hours of support per month. For the first 6 months of 2023/24 this has delivered 2,187 hours of support.

- 3.10 The Alzheimer’s society also provides tailored support to people living with Dementia and their carers

- 3.11 **Direct Payments**
Direct Payments (DP’s) are offered to carers as a flexible way for carers to meet their assessed needs. Funding for this comes through an allocated budget ‘Carers Breaks’ (see 7.0 below)

Table 2: Number of Carer Direct Payments

	No. Carer DP's
2021/22	436
2022/23	456
2023/24	497

There have been 281 carer DP's in the first 6 months of 2024/25

3.12 Carers Break Fund

This is a budget allocation to support carers. This budget is in addition to the commissioned services and funding for the voluntary sector organisations. It is typically used for DP's, respite and one-off resources for carers as part of the assessment and support plan. It should also be noted that some spend that supports carers utilises the Community Care budget in adult social care and is attributed to the person being cared for rather than their carer.

Table 3 shows the allocated budget increases year on year and that spend is recovering from the impact of the pandemic

Table 3: Cares Break Fund Allocation and Spend

Year	Budget (£)	Spend (£)
2019/20	393,600	312,702
2020/21	404,810	264,774
2021/22	412,410	235,911
2022/23	428,070	268,768
2023/24	450,020	345,128
2024/25	474,100	n/a

3.13 Halton Carers Strategy

The Carer's Trust define a carer as:

“A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.”

3.14 Across Halton we know that providing care and support for another person can be extremely rewarding, but it can also be difficult. Carers are recognised in their own right within legislation, and in particular, the Care Act 2014 places a duty on the Council to assess the needs of carers and the impact of their caring role on their wellbeing.

3.15 Acknowledgement of the contribution carers make to the health and care system is made through the One Halton Carers Strategy 2024-2027, and its associated Delivery Plan – attached at Appendix One.

3.16 This strategy was devised on a multi-agency basis, and in working in coproduction with carers to understand their needs and priorities. It supersedes the strategy which ran from 2020 – 2023. Updates on progress made in the period are given in a new version.

3.17 The multi-agency group that devised the current strategy meet on a quarterly basis to discuss developments and opportunities for carers across the borough. They also monitor progress against the Delivery Plan. The group involves representation from Halton Borough Council – both Children’s and Adults services, the Integrated Care Board – Cheshire and Merseyside NHS, Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Alzheimer’s Society, local Department for Work and Pensions/ Job Centre Plus representation, and Halton Carers Centre.

3.18 **Halton Carers Centre**

Halton Carers Centre is a hub of support and activity for carers across the borough. It was opened in 2008, being established following Council consultation across the borough on what support was needed for unpaid carers, which resulted in a preference for provision which was independent from the Council.

3.19 As a network partner to The Carers Trust, Halton Carers Centre adheres to the charity’s national standards. The service works with adult carers as well as young carers to offer to offer a holistic assessment of need and deliver against a core support offer that incorporates:

- Information and advice
- Carers break funding
- Training
- Counselling and emotional support
- Family support and young carers activities
- Support groups and forums
- Provides holistic therapies
- Day trips and events

3.20 Halton Carers Centre has a ‘shop front’ presence in Runcorn at their base in Church Street, and also has an office in St Marie’s in Widnes.

3.21 The Carers Centre is funded through a variety of sources and holds a commission through Better Care Fund, which is a joint funding pot between Halton Borough Council Adults Directorate and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB). The contract for this activity sits with the ICB but is jointly monitored by the Council and the ICB. The work delivered supports the Council’s duties to adult carers under the Care Act 2014.

3.22 Current figures show that Halton Carers Centre have 6,036 carers registered with them (Adult Carers: 4,961, Young Carers: 1,075).

3.23 **Overview of services**

Recent activity:

Ongoing Activities and groups:

- Dementia Carers Support Group – Fortnightly - Runcorn

- (evening to allow working carers to attend)
- Dementia Carers Support Group – Monthly - Widnes.
 - ADHD Carers Group – Monthly - online to enable carers to attend who may struggle to leave the house
 - Carers Coffee group – Monthly - Widnes. General Drop in / Catch up for all Carers. In these groups carers often support each other and share experiences.
 - Carers Coffee group – Monthly - Runcorn. General Drop in / Catch up for all Carers. In these groups carers often support each other and share experiences.
 - Parent Carer Support Group – Monthly - Widnes
 - Parent Carer Support Group – Monthly - Runcorn
 - Young Carers Me Time Group – Fortnightly - Widnes/Runcorn
 - Young Carers R Time Group – Fortnightly - Widnes/Runcorn

Recent additional activities have included:

- Sensory Workshops – delivered in partnership with Shine Therapy. Directed sessions both to professionals and at parents with children with conditions and difficulties including (but not limited to) ASD, ADHD, Sensory processing Disorder and Global Development Delay.
- Additional Dementia Support Group at St Maries – this has been put on following an increased in registrations for carers looking after a loved one with Alzheimer's / Dementia. The support offer has been stepped up to recognise this additional need.
- School Holiday Programme for young carers up to age 18 – Through Children and Families Directorate Holiday Activity Fund, a large range of trips, groups and activities have been offered during the summer to reflect that many young carers lose the support and routine of school over this period and need additional support
- Carers Week – to mark national Carers Week in June 2024 the Centre held a series of events to recognise and celebrate the work of carers in Halton.
- Tourettes Workshop – After listening to carers an unmet local need was identified around carers who look after a loved one with Tourettes. To begin the conversation around increasing awareness of Tourettes in Halton the Centre brought the national charity 'Tourettes Action' in to facilitate workshops with carers and professionals about how Tourettes is diagnosed and affects people's daily lives.

3.24 **Carers Break Funding**

Separate to the Carers Break Fund at 7.0 above, Carers Centre also receive and distribute Carers Break Funding on behalf of the Council.

3.25 This involves a pot of money being made available for carers to manage their individual situations and assessed needs, and funding is usually granted up to a total of £250. During 2023/24 a total of 1,170 grants were issued to carers across the borough totalling the amount of £185, 650. For this year, 2024/25, to date a total of 676 grants have been issued, totalling £111,510 A breakdown of the funding allocation is given at Appendix Two.

Examples of how this funding is used includes:

- Short Breaks
- Pamper days
- Garden work
- Work for decorating
- Cinema trips
- Meals and Theatre breaks
- Laptop, to enable the carer to access services online

3.26 **Partnership working**

Tourettes Action – as outlined in 3.2.3 we were able to bring Tourettes action into Halton to support the unmet need around carers looking after a loved one with Tourettes. Halton Carers Centre are planning further workshops in partnership with Tourettes Action and Children and Families services.

3.27 Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) – Halton Carers Centre are working together with the CAB to formulate a new project supporting carers experiencing debt, poverty and financial difficulties.

3.28 Halton Housing – Halton Carers Centre were approached by Halton Housing to deliver a joint project aimed at carers living in Halton Housing accommodation. This included a Teddy Bears Picnic for young carers and creative workshops for adult carers.

3.29 Outreach – working with other organisations the Carers Centre deliver outreach sessions across the community to increase the visibility of carers and assist other organisations to identify carers in their own settings. This includes taking the Halton Carers Centre information stand to schools, colleges, GP surgeries, hospitals and other third sector organisations.

3.30 Halton Carers Centre represent and advocate for young carers at relevant Halton Borough Council meetings including MAP, Child in Need and Child Protection conferences.

3.31 **Future funding challenges**

Halton Carers Centre, as a charity sector organisation, operates with a continuous level of uncertainty in terms of financial stability. This results primarily from working with short-term and project-based funding through grant applications.

- 3.32 The Council and ICB contract offers £341,866, roughly 63% of the Centre's current annual budget. This is, however, currently offered and issued on an annual basis, according to budgetary restraints across the public sector.
- 3.33 Halton Carers Centre are confident that their funding allows for current activities to the end of March 2025. From there, a shortfall of £79,000 is predicted for the following financial year. For this there is currently a possible £31,000 in pending funding application that are currently being worked on. The rest needs to be identified from other sources, many of which will be emergent nearer to the period.
- 3.34 Halton Carers Centre undertake robust financial planning to be remain aware of their funding position both now and into future years. They are currently investigating all options and strategies to deal with this and understand the continuous cycle of need to ensure the future sustainability of the service.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The delivery of service through Halton Carers Centre aligns to the One Halton Carers Strategy 2024-2027 and associated Delivery Plan.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 N/A

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Halton Borough Council has a statutory duty to support the wellbeing of carers under the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Carers are often in employment. Providing support to the carer role can support employment

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Halton carers centre support all age carers and their families

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Unpaid carers are recognised as being disadvantaged in relation to economic activity and community inclusion.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None identified.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Halton Carers Centre strive to provide a wide range of community-based opportunities to identify and include carers.

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 None identified

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None identified

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None identified.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.