



Report to Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee on Carers Support in Buckinghamshire 2022

Date: Thursday 24th March 2022

Title: Carers Update

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1. Introduction

A carer is anyone, including children and adults who look 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.

There are three key pieces of legislation that underpin the statutory responsibilities placed on local authorities and Health in regard to carers, the Care Act 2014, Children's and families Act 2014 and most recently People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care white paper 2021. The Care Act requires that all adult carers are entitled to receive an assessment of their care needs, this can be undertaken by either the local authority or a commissioned delegated assessor. The Local Authority are also required to make sure that carers have access to information, advice, and guidance to support them in their role and ensure that carers maintain their health and wellbeing. In Buckinghamshire the social work team within Adult Social Care and Oxford Mental Health complete statutory carers assessments for Adults, whilst Children's services complete Children in need assessments for young carers. Commissioners contract Carers Bucks to deliver information, advice, and guidance alongside a number of carers services. This contract value £815,000 per year, £543,000 is funded via the BCF (Better Care) to provide support to Young and Adult Carers and £272,000 is provide by children's services for young carers.

In 2018 the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) completed an enquiry into carers support and building on the Care Act 2014 developed a two-year action plan setting out actions to ensure that unpaid carers had access to information and support to balance their caring responsibilities with their own employment and to maintain their personal health and wellbeing. Whilst the Carers Action Plan proposed a number of changes to the support that was offered to carers, the pandemic delayed the wider review of carers. Post pandemic the DHSC have renewed the commitment to support unpaid carers and outline requirements for Local Authorities to review their offer. Where carers are eligible for formal support from

the local authority or health services, the white paper outlined the need for carers to be offered choice, control, and independence and should focus on the following outcomes:

- ✓ I am supported to provide care as I wish and do so in a way that considers my own access to education, employment, health, and wellbeing.
- ✓ I have a life outside of caring and I am able to remain connected to the people who matter to me.
- ✓ I know my needs are equally recognised and my goals and aspirations are respected and fulfilled.
- ✓ I have the right information and advice to be able to make informed decisions.
- ✓ I have access to appropriate support, that suits my needs including respite care and carers breaks.

2. [HASC Inquiry Background](#)

On the 30th October 2018, the HASC Select Committee invited a number of internal Council officers including HR, Commissioning, Adult Social Care, Children's services and colleagues from Health services and Carers Bucks to attend a full day HASC Inquiry into carers support in Buckinghamshire. The five themes the Inquiry Group wanted to explore were Communities, Health, Voice of Carers, Education and Employment and the scope of the inquiry was to:

- Gain a greater understanding and recognition about the numbers of carers in Buckinghamshire (child, young adult, and adult).
- Gain a greater understanding about carers needs and the support they currently receive from across the whole system – health, social care, local communities, and schools (if child and young adult carers).
- Explore the current transition arrangements for children and young carers as they enter adulthood.
- Review the Council's current arrangements for employees who are carers.
- Help shape and inform the Carer Assessment internal review.
- Identify areas of improvements across the system and raise the profile of carers.

Following the meeting the Inquiry Group produced a full report detailing their key findings and areas of recommendations for making improvements. Officers were invited to a Committee meeting in March 2019 to provide an update on the progress with implementing the recommendations. During this meeting, each recommendation was given a RAG status by the committee members and it was confirmed that all actions had been successfully completed. A full copy of the HASC Inquiry and Action Update are included as appendix 2 and 3 respectively.

Following the previous HASC inquiry a large piece of work was undertaken by Adults Social Care to understand and recognise the role played by unpaid carers and review the way that the service offers support to this group.

3. [Main content of report](#)

The contents of this report will provide HASC Committee Members with details of how the system identifies and supports young and adult carers, how it meets its statutory obligations and what the Council's offer to its staff who are carers. This will be focused on the following four areas:

- Social Care

- Carers Bucks
- Education
- Buckinghamshire Council Human Resources.

3.1 Social Care

3.1.1 Better Lives

All Social Care services in Buckinghamshire are assessed and offered in line with the Better Lives approach, this vision for social care within Buckinghamshire focuses on strength's-based conversations and assessments where both the Carer and Social Care Worker explore positive outcomes for the Carer with a focus on improving wellbeing as well as supporting the Carer in their role.

Assessment conversations follow a three-tier model, case studies have been included in appendix 4.

- Conversation 1 – At this stage carers are invited to community cafes to discuss their caring role and the social worker is able to assess what support is required. If the need is low level such as sign posting to another voluntary or community organisation who could offer practical or support with emotional health. Information and advice will also be easily available and accessible which will in turn help people to lead independent and fulfilled lives. The social worker will follow up the look to follow up with the carers and if the need remains, they will complete a conversation 2.
- Conversation 2 – Carers who present with a higher level of need will be referred to carers Bucks and any other appropriate agencies or VCS organisation who can offer information, advice and guidance, practical support such as peer sessions, training or access to small grant funds.
- Conversation 3 – Carers will be offered a full assessment of needs resulting in a detailed care plan detailing the outcomes that they wish to achieve and the support that is available. The outcome may include a review of the cared for persons needs to ensure that the carer is able to protect their health and wellbeing or the carer may receive a direct payment to meet their needs.

3.1.2 Feedback on carers assessments

Following a review of social work practise and responding to comments received from the carers community engagement group, the Quality standards and performance team completed a full review of the carers assessment process with a refreshed **My Carers Assessment forms** – '[Supporting you](#)'¹ & '[Improving Wellbeing](#)'² launched in September 2019.

3.1.3 Internal Audit Review and Improvement

As part of the Quality Assurance Framework, Adult Social Care annually commission a number of external independent audits to undertake a deep dive of particular themed areas. In February 2021 an external auditor was commissioned to undertake a carers Thematic review including a review of 70 carers assessments.

Outcome of Carers Thematic review.

The review focused on the following areas:

- The process of how a carer's assessment is initiated,

¹ '[Supporting you](#)'

² '[Improving Wellbeing](#)'

- Where services or options provided are strength-base and outcome focused
- The quality of information and advice provided?
- Evidence of partnership working.

From undertaking the deep dive, we identified the following opportunities for improvement and took action to address the areas identified:

- There was no-online availability for a Carer to self-refer.
What we did: Implement in March 2021 a new digital platform to enable Carers to undertake and complete an on-line self-assessment.
- Carers Assessments lacked detailed and basic information about the wellbeing of the carers.
What we did: As part of the implementation of the new social care case management system, LAS; the carer's pathway was redesigned to support best practice in areas of assessment, care planning and reviews.
- There was a lack of quality carers advice and information available.
What we did: We Redesigned the Care Advice Bucks website, so it is clear what information and advice is available to carers. This was co-designed with the Adults Social Care Service User forum and this has representation from several carers that received support from the council.
- The review identified that there was seldom a carers contingency plan e.g. in the event of a Carer going into hospital who could support the cared for person during this time.
What we did: A carers contingency plan was built into the new social care case management system. The monthly audits have highlighted an improvement in this area and work will continue as part of the Carers Transformation to establish a more effective way for carer's contingency plans to be shared across relevant agencies.

Following this to ensure consistency of practise, Adult Social Care changed its approach to internal audit to ensure audits of carers assessment became part of the planned tabletable that managers use to audit practice and highlight areas for improvement on an ongoing basis.

Through ongoing audit, some further learning has been identified which is more about how all partners work together across health and social care and the voluntary sector to ensure carers receive the right support at the right time. We also need to be more strength-based in our approach and take a more holistic approach to carer's wellbeing that is across the whole year as opposed to one off payments for a weekend break. The monthly audit cycle are also provided evidence where things are working well too. Some assessments show good practice around the carers eligible needs being clearly documented within the assessment and professional analysis being clear and concise.

3.2 Commissioned Service - Carers Bucks

The carers support service contract commenced on the 1st March 2019, the service was redesigned to deliver an All Age Integrated Service to young and adult carers within Buckinghamshire. The contract requires the service provider to work with other community and voluntary community sector (VCS) partners to promote

a strength based whole family approach to service delivery. The transformation of integrated care within Buckinghamshire brings better sharing of information across commissioning teams, social work teams, hospital, and community teams to include carers and their needs within provisions alongside those of the 'cared for'. The Service is divided into three key areas for delivery

3.2.1 Young Carers – 5 – 18

The aims of this service is to provide support to young carers and work with partner agencies, to ensure that there is minimal negative impact on children and young people from undertaking a caring role and that they are able to have a positive childhood where they can reach their potential. To support young carers, Carers Bucks works with partner agencies to ensure that across schools and services (such as GPs) there are conditions where young carers feel safe, secure, and confident enough to identify themselves and talk about the challenges they're facing.

3.2.2 Young Adult Carers 18 – 25

The service supports young adult carers who support family members including people who are caring for those with complex needs and multiple factors contributing to their situation e.g. mental health, learning disabilities, drug, or alcohol dependency etc. Carers who are transitioning from a young carers service should be supported as they 'step down' from potentially receiving intensive 1 to 1 support or specialist service for children and who are making the transition into adult services.

The young adult carer services support and motivate individuals to consider and make plans for the future by working with the carer to identify their goals and how they would like to go about achieving them. Worker offer personal life skills development opportunities and work with young adult carers to help them plan for the next phase of their caring journey.

3.2.3 Adult Carers 18+

The revised carers support service commissioned in 2019 was developed with a vision that services and support for carers was more localised, increasing the number of support groups available within a person's community and encouragement was given towards support workers being attached to particular PCN's. This restructure of the service was underway during 2019 and Carers Bucks developed essential relationships with health colleagues, local community groups and health and social care colleagues. However, during the pandemic Carers Bucks reprioritised their service delivery towards identifying vulnerable carers specifically targeting carers who provide care for someone with dementia, carers who were receiving additional support via the resilience service and young carers who were no longer able to access support through schools. Following the initial period of lockdown during the first week of July 2020, Carers Bucks adjusted their offer from face to face groups to delivering virtual support groups for adult carers via Zoom, and they continued offering support services to carers who contact them through the usual referral routes. Many of the calls they received related to the Covid pandemic, new carers registering following government guidance, or carers in crisis seeking emotional or practical support.

As part of their recovery plan, in 2021 Carers Bucks engaged with their user groups and identified that people were experiencing "Zoom-fatigue" and in response Carers Bucks offered outdoors sessions where possible. When developing future plan around their service offer they have consulted with adult carers via a survey,

asking what they would like future support groups to look like and they will use the feedback from that in planning the delivery of learning and information sessions going forward.

Investors in GP Award

Since 2019 Carers Bucks have continued to support carers via primary health environments further developing their investors in GP award, working with surgeries across the County. The award requires that all staff are trained in recognising the needs of carers and that flexibility is offered where possible to promote carer wellbeing. Since 2020, 7 surgeries have gained the award, moving forward Carers Bucks would like to approach this as a system rather than focusing on individual practises as this can be ineffective with the capacity allocated to this scheme.

3.3 Education

A **young carer** is defined as a child under 18 years of age, whose life is significantly affected because of the need to care for a family member who is ill, has a disability or mental illness or is affected by substance abuse (including alcohol) or other debilitating illness.

Carers Bucks work with a number of schools across Buckinghamshire to offer young carers support. This process starts with the school agreeing to an initial meeting where the school's worker explains how school's groups operate within Bucks.

Step 1: A carers support champion is identified from school's staff

Step 2: The carers champion receives support from Carers Bucks to start a support group, including training and promoting the group

Step 3: The group becomes self-operating with ongoing advice and guidance from Carers Bucks.

During the second wave of the Covid pandemic Carers Bucks noted that a number of schools were not accepting external agencies in line with government advice to limit potential cross contamination and that they noted that were a large number of changes to staff impacting in their ability to engage with schools.

In September to October 2021 the young carers support service offered targeted support groups within schools, the targeted group offers young carers the opportunity to more about their caring role and to seek practical support from the other group's members. To compliment this new offer the services has also been operating young carer drop-in sessions within schools, these are individual sessions of 20 minutes that take place on a one-to-one basis.

In January 2022 the young carers service sent out requests to all schools in Bucks offering renewed support and trying to reach new contacts that were not familiar with the offer. 10 new schools that had not engaged with carers bucks responded and are now in discussions to develop a support for carers programme within their school.

3.4 Human Resources & Equalities

In September 2020, the Council set up a Carers Staff Network (alongside three other equalities-based networks) which meet quarterly, normally via Teams.

The purpose of this network is:

- To provide a forum to exchange and promote good practice
- To recommend actions to the Equality Steering Group
- To provide a mechanism to voice opinions relating to carers for staff
- Have an open membership policy and encourage representatives from all departments
- Provide a voice for carers by offering a source of consultation on issues relating to council policies and practices
- To develop networking opportunities for staff within the council
- Work closely with the other staff networks to jointly address issues that are of common interest
- Provide a safe and confidential environment for staff to meet with others and an opportunity to discuss issues that they may be facing.

Carers Bucks are invited to the staff network meetings to provide additional support and resources to those that attend. The group is co-chaired by the Senior Policy Officer (equalities specialist) and a staff/peer representative, who also report into the overarching Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group about the network and any concerns staff may have raised.

Over the last year, HR have delivered a virtual manager training session (run by Carers Bucks) as well as a staff led training/tea-break session on Carers rights (on Carers Rights Day). They have developed a webpage of support for staff, including documents such as 'Carers Leave Explained' which looks at the different legacy leave arrangements and what staff are entitled to, a directory to support staff who live out of county on where their local services are provided, and how to seek support in an emergency. Internal comms campaigns including staff blogs have also raised the profile of carers in the workplace and our numbers within the staff network have tripled as a result.

To develop support for carers that is tailored to meet the needs of the workforce, a staff survey was completed where staff were asked to detail their caring responsibilities so that the organisation could better understand the make-up of carers within our workforce. The work of the Carers Network feeds into the wider Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (owned by the Steering group and reportable to CMT) which is due to be refreshed for May 2022. Within this document is an action to develop a toolkit for staff and managers to help further raise awareness of carers/caring and ensure appropriate support is provided to staff carers as and when needed.

4 Next steps and review

4.1 Carers Transformation project.

Our overall direction, in line with government policy, is to work in ways which give people real control and choice over how they are supported. We want to focus on the things that mean the most to carers that make the biggest difference, and are confident that if we do this, we will move towards achieving better outcomes and better lives for the carers. In order to plan future services, a transformation programme has been approved by the Adults Health and Wellbeing Board to review and improve carers support in Buckinghamshire.

The role out of our Carers transformation programme has been impeded by as a direct result of the impact COVID pandemic and Omicron surge. We now need to respond to the immense commitment shown by

carers, by committing ourselves to taking forward the priorities and actions in making a real impact on the lives of local carers in areas of:

- Assisting Carers to carry on caring if they want to.
- Getting good quality information and advice when they need it.
- Being recognised, feeling respected and heard as carers and partners in care and experts in the needs of the person they care for.
- Having a life outside of and after caring, including working or volunteering if they want to & being able to fully access their local community and local services.
- Staying mentally & physically fit, healthy and being safe
- Accessing full benefit entitlements and financial advice.
- Receiving consistent joined up services

Our approach with this transformational programme is underpinned through a co-design and co-production principle in engaging with carers and partner agencies such as Carers Bucks.

- A whole systems approach to community offer of information and advice and broader community support options.
- A whole systems approach to identifying who a carer is in Buckinghamshire.
- Delivering a strength-based model of practice.
- Developing a carer's co-production model.
- Implementing a range of innovative technology.
- Emergency Planning.
- Commissioning approach and Contracting model to deliver a whole system approach including young carers.

4.2 Delivery Method:

We recognise that more work needs to be done to understand what life looks like for all carers and design services to meet this reality. Our cross-cutting approach will ensure that Carers are at the heart of this transformation and captured through the following five work streams.

- Carers and Community
- A quality approach
- Systems and Processes
- Workforce
- Policy, governance, and framework

Appendix 1 Carers Data in Bucks

Table 1 – Comparative data year on year number of carers registered with Carers Bucks

Total Registered Carers 2019 - 2022

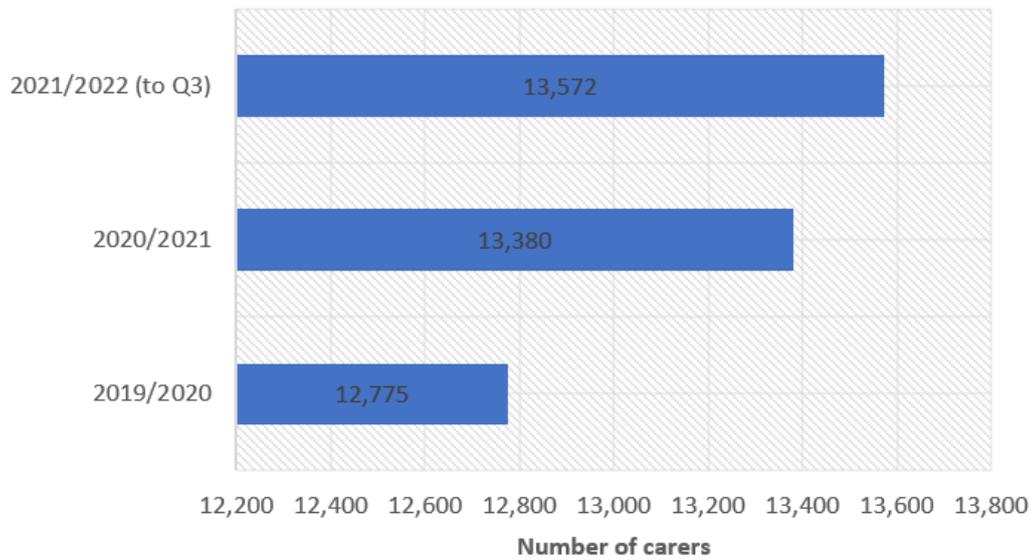
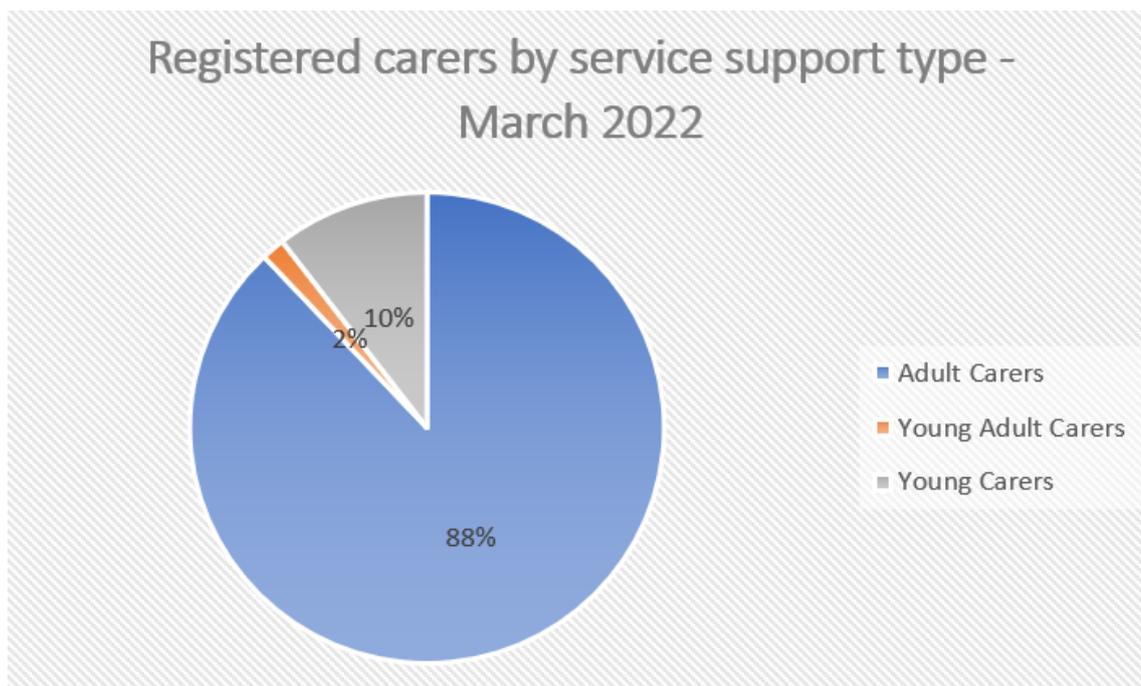
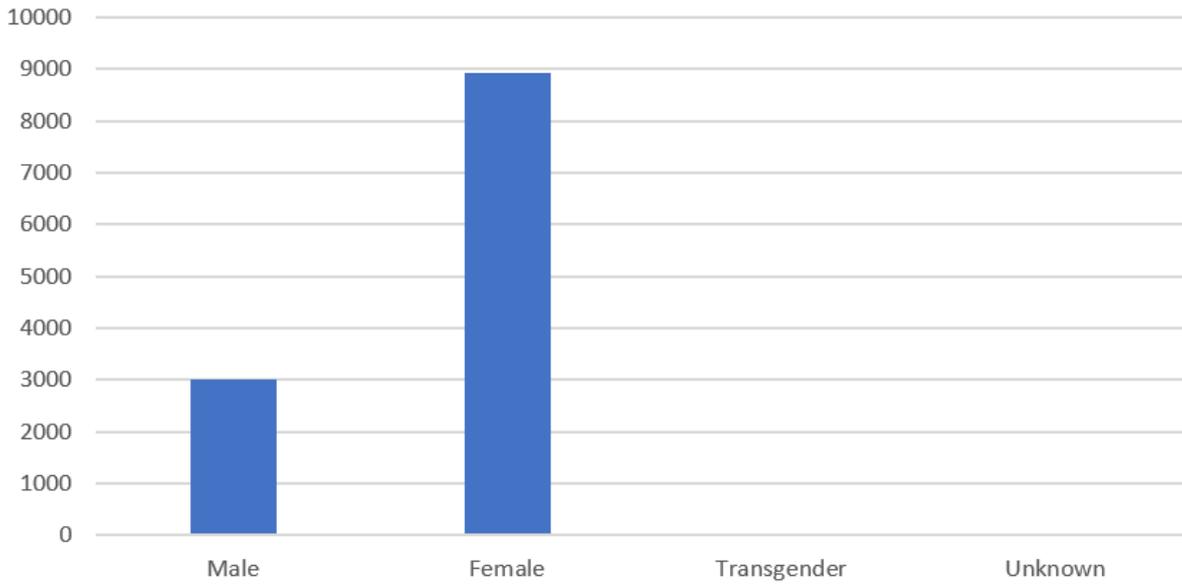


Table 2: Number of carers accessing services with Carers Bucks March 2022

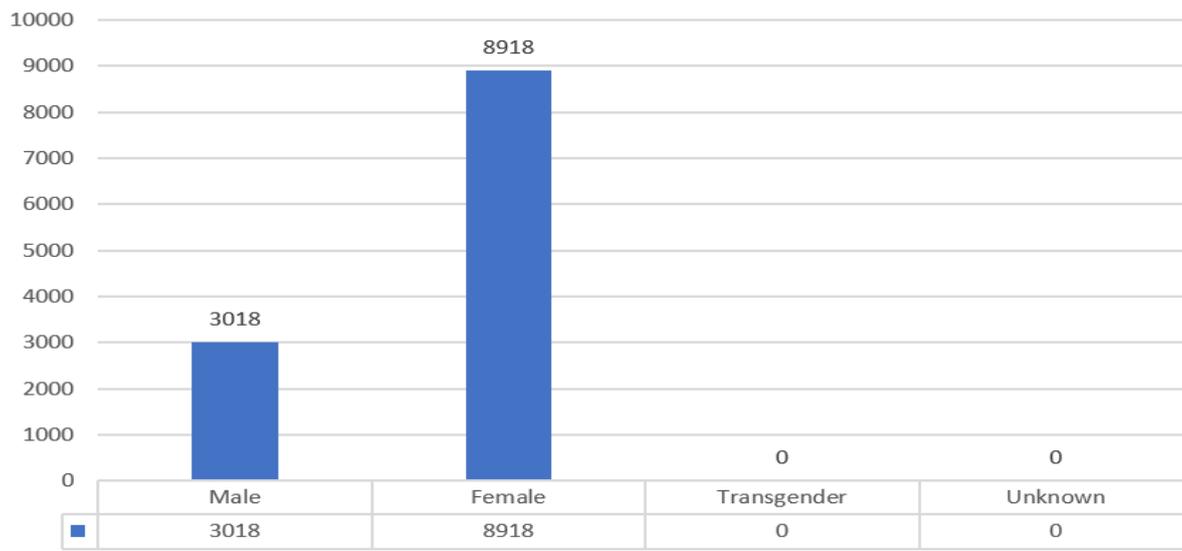


Adult Carers demographic information March 2022

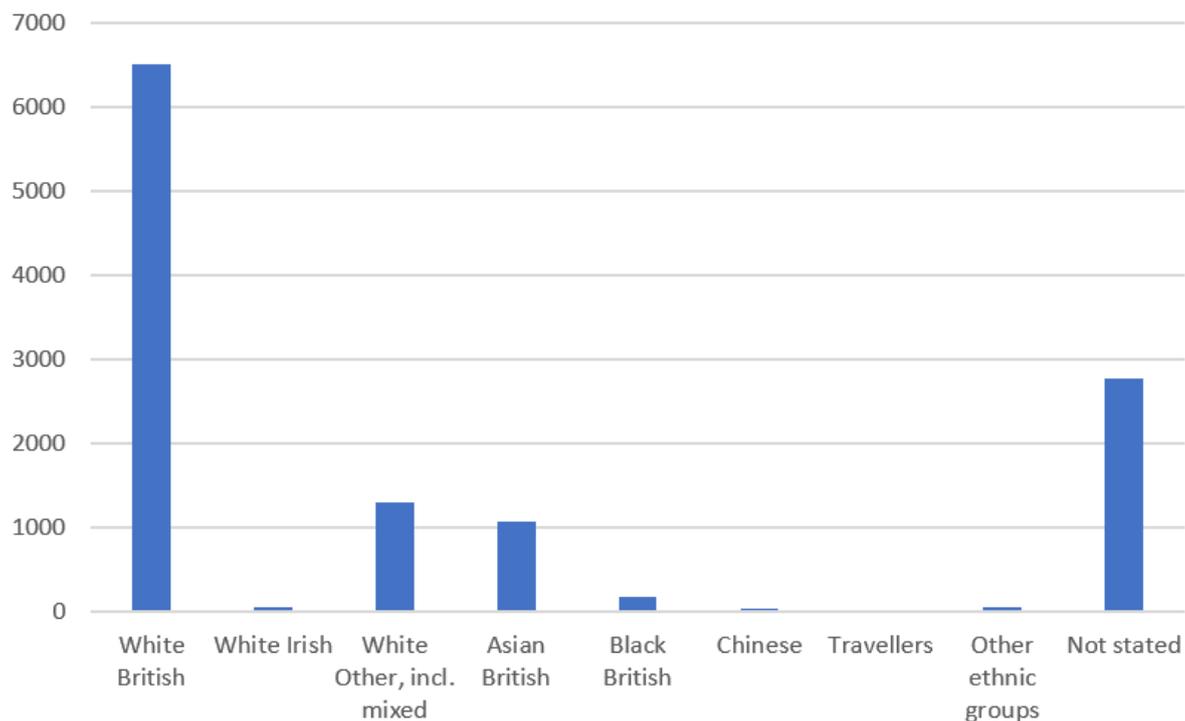
Sex of Adult Carers - March 2022



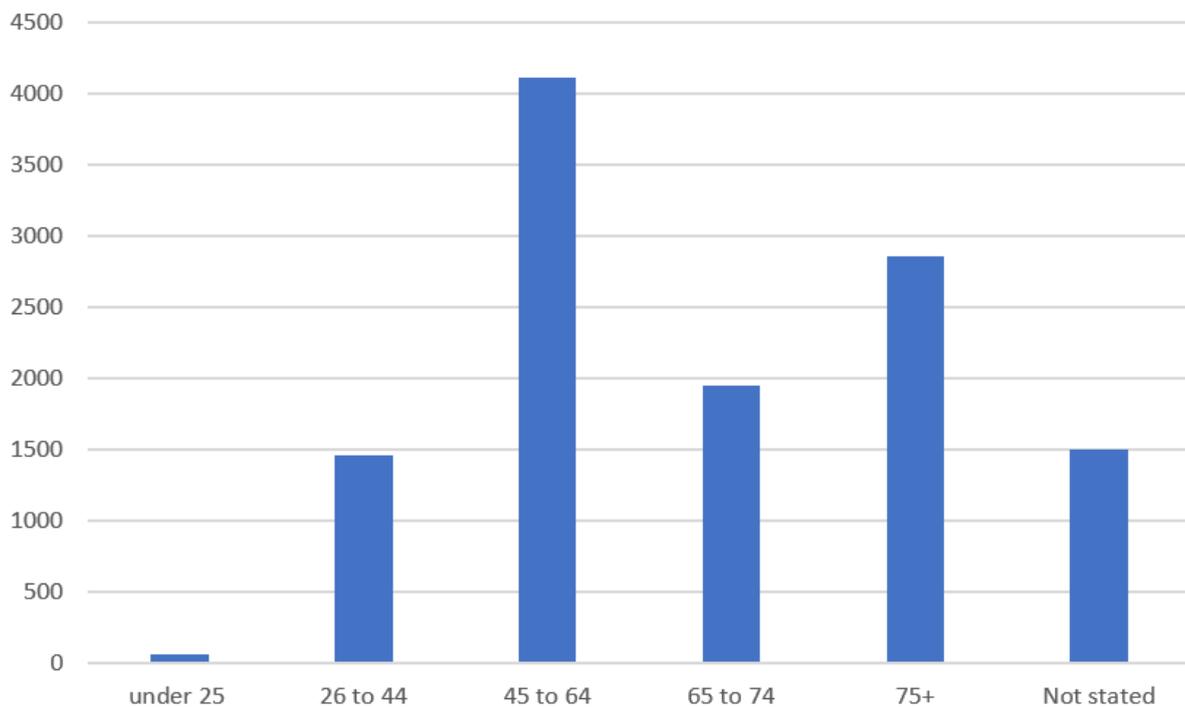
Gender of Carers - March 2022



Ethnicity of Adult Carers - March 2022



Adult Carers Ages - March 2022



Appendix 2 : HASC Report 2019



FINAL REPORT -
Support for Carers.pp

Appendix 3 : HASC Reporting 2020



6 month
recommendation mor

Appendix 4: Case Studies

Case Study - Adult Carers
<i>What happened?</i>
<p>Miss AA aged 25 referred herself as a carer for her mother. She said she was a working carer, working nights at the hospital but was caring for her mother. Mrs A has a range of physical health conditions where she is restricted to the bed or chair if no one else is around.</p> <p>Carer said she was finding it difficult to manage work and her mothers care. Carer said she was not aware on any benefits available and wanted to know about how she could apply for a Blue Badge. She also wanted to know about support for her mother.</p>
<i>What was the outcome?</i>
<p>I let the carer speak about all her issues within the caring role and spoke about the benefits her mother would be entitled to. I emailed her the link to PIP and after discussing her mother's mobility I also sent her the link to applying for a Blue Badge online.</p> <p>In regards to her mother's mobility I told her to speak to the GP about the most recent falls her mother had had and the tingling sensation in her mother's hands, I offered to refer her mother for an OT assessment and the carer was grateful and gave me permission to do this.</p> <p>I spoke about how important it was to look after our own mental health and offered to send the link to Buckinghamshire MIND where the carer would find useful tools when experiencing anxiety.</p> <p>I emailed the carer a link to our website as I felt she would benefit from joining in some of the workshops running and also emailed her the Care Services Directory so she understood the care system within Bucks</p> <p>I will continue to support the carer and have advised her I will be calling her back after 6 weeks.</p> <p>Carer was very grateful for all advice given and thanked stating Carers Bucks was a fantastic service and a lifeline for carers in her situation</p>
<i>How did this support the individual / service / partnership outcomes?</i>
<p>The carer was able to find solutions to many issues within her caring role and was given all information to understand care and carer services within Bucks.</p>

Case Study - Young Adult Carers (YAC)

<i>What happened?</i>
<p>YAC in full time education caring for Mother with clinical depression PTSD and Alcohol addiction. YAC has also suffered with her own mental: struggles in college with attendance and managing workload.</p>
<i>Outcome:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckinghamshire Family Information Service have supported the family in providing advice signposting to relevant organisations around parent's addictions. • One recovery and social care have been involved towards engaging parent with attending group settings around substance abuse. • College have extended their YAC's counselling sessions to run into the new year to enable the YAC to continue to have a safe place to talk to a professional around

managing her emotions and providing some coping mechanisms for when there is a crisis at home.

- YAC continues to see father spending every other weekend at father's house. This has helped YAC to have some time away from home where she can relax and seek support from extended members of the family.
- Social care is due to close their support with the family in the next 3 weeks

How did this support the individual / service / partnership outcomes?

Work Undertaken by: Social care, Bucks MIND and healthy living centre, One recovery Bucks , 1to1 support from YAC SW in college, Adult mental health team and FIS

Able to identify need of carer working with team around the family to structure and engage the family providing therapeutic work from one recovery and supporting parent to continue implement tools provided. Carer has been developing skills to learn triggers and identify those early warning signs where she can seek help and be able to have a safe discussion around any safeguarding issues arising.