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Improvement Plan to Implement the Best Value Review of Support for Carers

Introduction

Carers look after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid.

It is now 4 years since the Government published the National Strategy for Carers. It was aimed at providing Information, Support and Care for local carers. In response to this, and with new funding from central government called the Carers Grant, Buckinghamshire drew up, with a wide range of stakeholders, a three year Action Plan (1999 – 2002) to deliver the intentions of the National Strategy.

In October 2001 Buckinghamshire County Council commissioned a Best Value Review of Support for Carers. In April 2002 the 39 Recommendations of the Review were presented to Cabinet and were wholeheartedly endorsed.

In August the Government announced an extension of, and increase in, the Carers Grant from 2004.

The purpose of this document is to:

- draft an improvement plan for delivering the intended outcomes of the Best Value Review so that a new 5 year Action Plan for carers can be agreed.
- outline how this can be progressed within resource restrictions and against funding criteria that are yet to be made clear beyond 2004
- link the improvement plan with other local and national government plans for carers.

Following consultation on the improvement plan with all partners identified in the Review, the agreed Action Plan/s will be published.




Timescales within the plan indicate that some of the work is already in hand and/ or has already been agreed by partners.

“Carers are the biggest provider of Health and Social Care in the UK, even bigger than the NHS” – Carers UK

Statement of Commitment to Carers

Buckinghamshire County Council is committed to delivering safe and effective social care services, which make a positive difference to the lives of the people who use them.

We acknowledge that this would not be possible without the commitment that carers make to the people they care for, who without their support and help would not be able to manage at home. We recognise our responsibility to support Carers in their role.

-  we value carers' contribution to the health and welfare of people in need
-  we value carers' expertise and skills
-  we recognise carers' needs for a range of practical and emotional supports for themselves and the people they care for.

Our commitment to you as a carer is that we will, regardless of your age, disability, ethnic origin, sexuality or gender:

- Provide up-to-date information about your rights, benefits and entitlements, which is available at the start, during and at the end of your caring role.
- Provide appropriate practical help that promotes your good health through a range of good quality, flexible services.
- Promote co-ordinated services for you that respect your confidentiality, including carer sensitive hospital admission and discharge policies.
- Involve you in the planning and monitoring of services you and the person you care for receive by providing good quality assessment and review procedures.
- Listen and respond to your views about the services you receive and want, for yourself or the person you care for.
- Be clear about what we can and can't provide.
- Help you to get easy access to what we can provide.
- Help to identify other sources of help and advice for you when we can't provide.
- Respect the relationship between you and the person you care for and the personal choices of you both.
- Help people in other organisations to recognise your worth and promote your interests.

Intended Outcomes from the Best Value Review

1. That the County Council clearly recognises and acknowledges the vital importance of carers in the provision of social care in Buckinghamshire.
2. That this importance is recognised in the training of, and procedures adopted by, all County Council employees who have any involvement with carers.
3. That plans are put in place to ensure there is continuing improvement in services that provide carers (including young carers) with the advice and support that they need and that it is made easier for carers to find out where to go to for advice and support.
4. That services that are provided to service users, and that support carers in their caring role (primarily respite care), are provided as creatively and flexibly as possible.
5. That carers and their representatives are more closely involved in decisions that affect the people for whom they care and the support they themselves receive.
6. That a network of integrated and co-ordinated services, involving social care services, education, health organisations, voluntary and private service providers, work in partnership to achieve an agreed strategy for the benefit of carers and that all partners are clear what is expected of them.
7. That all agencies providing services on behalf of the County Council should be appropriately staffed and funded to achieve the levels of service required by the Council to an agreed standard. Their staff (whether paid or volunteers) should be trained to recognise and be fully aware of the needs of carers.

"Carers' needs are relatively modest. They seek the opportunity to have occasional breaks from their caring responsibilities...." – Best Value Review of Support for Carers