

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 12

**Subject:** Carers Strategy, "Think Carer - building a Carer Friendly City"

**Date of meeting:** Monday 29th June 2026

**Report of:** Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities, Public Health & Adult Social Care

**Lead Officer:** Name: Corporate Director for Homes & Care

**Contact Officer:** Name: Gemma Scambler

**Email:** gemma.scambler@brighton-hove.gov.uk

**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Reason(s) Key:** Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

### For general release

#### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the Carers Strategy 2026-2030, 'Think Carer – Building a Carer Friendly City', continuing the Councils commitment to supporting the vital role family and friend unpaid carers provide within the City. It delivers both a clear message that carers are valued, their needs have been heard, and they will continue to be supported, additionally providing a framework to encourage services and organisations to be 'carer friendly'.

1.2 The Strategy aligns directly with the Council Plan 2023 to 2027, in particular commitments to creating a healthy city that helps people to thrive, by living and ageing well:

- Enabling people to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives
- Providing services to ensure everyone has access to the information, advice and services they need
- Ensuring there is safe, effective, sustainable and high-quality health and care provision in the City

And, most significantly for this Strategy, it supports this commitment for a healthy city:

- Providing joined-up services for unpaid carers to ensure they have access to the information, advice and services they need.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Approve the Carers Strategy, “Think Carer – Building a Carer Friendly City 2026-2030”, draft attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Homes and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Adult Social Care and the Carers Strategy Group, to make minor amendments required to ensure alignment with any relevant new legislation or policies that may come into force during the lifetime of this strategy.

## 3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Family and friend unpaid carers (carers) make up at least 8% (20,804 carers) of the population of Brighton and Hove (Census, 2021), nationally it is estimated at 5.8 million carers, 9% of the population. Caring does not discriminate, a carer can be any age, with the youngest Young Carer registered locally at age 6 years old, and Adult Carers over 90 years old. With many carers supporting more than one person and providing over 50hrs of care a week.
- 3.2 The original Carers strategy – **Think Carer – building a Carer Friendly City** was launched in 2017, this current document is the second refresh continuing to build on the commitment to carers for creating an environment across services and organizations within the City, who wish to promote a commitment to being, or working towards being, ‘carer friendly’, through an agreed framework, developed in consultation with carers and wider stakeholders. Caring is a unique experience, however there are a range of common themes regarding the types of care provided, the amount of care provided; and adverse impact of health inequalities that carers experience.
- 3.3 Through refreshing this Strategy, the aim is to build on the successful structures created through the original work, including the partnership of support services within the commissioned Carers Hub, as requested by carers, and is a successful resource, both in terms of carer satisfaction and contract performance. It is important to acknowledge that there have been delays in refreshing the Strategy, due to a number of issues, however, there have been Better Care Fund Unpaid Carers Plans in place. Much of the Strategy work has continued, including developing new services and opportunities for carers:
  - the recommissioning of the Carers Hub (2025/26), which has provided a consistent ‘local carers offer’, including access to carers assessments; peer support groups; homebased respite to enable carers to attend health related appointments; a range of dedicated projects supporting Young Carers (under 18 years old); and Carers of people with mental health needs; dementia; and life limiting conditions. Plus, support for working carers, and for employers to be ‘carer friendly’. As well as access to the Carers Digital Offer, providing a range of free resources, including the Jointly app, to improve communication between carers sharing care.

- in addition, the Council continues to support the provision of the 'carers card', a unique local discount card for carers who are registered with either the Council, or the Carers Hub, providing discounts for carers, including local social activities; leisure services; and a reduced rate on Brighton and Hove Buses.
- the Council continues to provide the Carers Emergency Back Up Scheme, to enable carers to record a contingency plan, which is held by the Councils 24/7 CareLink service.
- successful pilot within the Royal Sussex County Hospital, to encourage the identification and support for carers within the hospital discharge process.
- promotion of the Carers Centre for Brighton and Hove Carers Champions eLearning, excellent resource for promoting carer awareness.
- continued provision of Carers Personal Budgets (for those with eligible needs under the Care Act 2014), enabling carers to purchase a range of activities and support, which enables them to access a break.

#### 3.4 The Strategy has been shaped by:

- A variety of consultation events and activities with family and friend unpaid carers in the City
- Partnership working through the multi-agency Carers Strategy Group, chaired by Adult Social Care Commissioning, and includes membership from key Community and Voluntary Sector services; Adult Social Care Assessment Services; Public Health; NHS Surrey and Sussex; and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.
- National policy and legislation, including Care Act 2014, and the NHS 10-year Plan 2025.
- Local evidence regarding the impact of caring, and carers experience of support services; assessment services; and health care provision, completed predominately through the Councils engagement contract with Brighton and Hove Carers Centre.
- National research; guidance; best practice for reducing the known health inequalities that carers disproportionately experience.

These are specifically identified within the Strategy, under the four overarching rationales for the refresh: Population and Demographics; Legislation and Policy framework; Health Inequalities; and National and Local research.

3.4 Providing unpaid care, is often through a desire to support those we love, carers 'step up' to the challenges of either a gradual change in someone's needs, or through a sudden change due to a traumatic experience or diagnosis. Carers generally want to care, however caring takes its toll, and therefore services need to support carers to enable them to continue to care.

3.5 There is a moral, financial and often legal necessity to support carers, recently caring has been described as a 'social determinant of health', due to the significant health inequalities experienced by carers, including higher rates of long-term health conditions; increased physical strain; mental health challenges; and financial impact and insecurity. The range of negative impacts on carers, is referred to as the 'carer burden', meaning the multiple compounding issues and intersectionality which affect carers.

- 3.6 The estimated economic contribution of unpaid carers nationally has been placed at £184 billion per year (the equivalent to the total NHS budget). Within Brighton and Hove, national research by Carers UK, has calculated based on the Census data 2021, that locally the economic contribution of carers to the City is £618 million per year.
- 3.7 Caring has an impact on all areas of a carers life, however there is a growing evidence base regarding the impact of juggling caring and working, with a national estimate of 600 carers a day leaving paid employment, due to their caring responsibilities. This has a huge individual impact on carers, including loss of income and pension contributions, managing the increased costs of caring, loss of identity and contact with others, as well as the negative impact on the work force, through reduced tax and national insurance contributions, increasing access to welfare benefits, loss of expertise and experience within the workplace, and cost of recruiting and training replacement staff.
- 3.8 Carers now have a range of rights, which are enshrined in legislation:
- Care Act 2014 – legal parity of esteem for carers; information, advice; carers or joint social care assessments; and carers personal budgets
  - Health and Care Act 2022 – extended the duty of Integrated Care Boards to consult with carers strategically, and for carers to be involved in decisions and planning when discharging patients from hospital
  - Carer’s Leave Act 2024 – employees are entitled to one week’s unpaid leave per year, to take flexibly.
  - Children and Families Act 2014 – Young carers and Parent carers have the right to an assessment of their needs, and support to reduce inappropriate care provision
  - Equality Act 2010 – ensures carers are indirectly protected from discrimination, by association.
- 3.9 The Strategy provides a framework for identifying and supporting unpaid carers, which has been developed through consultation, and includes a local definition of a Carer Friendly City:

‘A ‘carer friendly’ City encourages unpaid carers to speak about their experience and how caring affects them; it recognizes their contribution; ensures they access information, advice and support, that will both assist them with their caring role and enable them to have a life outside of caring. Supporting carers is everyone’s business.

The City needs to Think Carer – reaching out to carers wherever we can by understanding the daily reality of caring, recognizing that they are often under a lot of pressure, and tend to be hidden from view but must be involved in discussions and decisions regarding those they care for.

Through integrated, partnership working we can improve the lives of carers, assisting them to maintain a healthy lifestyle; make informed decisions regarding their caring role; maintain relationships with friends and family; balance work and caring; participate in education; access essential services for both the person they care for and themselves; and reduce the known health inequalities disproportionately experienced by carers through poorer physical and emotional health, and negative financial impact’.

- 3.10 The original Strategy provided the foundations of the Carers Hub and Carers Rights, and this Strategy has continued building those foundations with a further eight priority areas, developed through consultation:
- Carer Engagement (co-production, carers voice, peer support);
  - Carer Awareness (training and support);
  - Carer Pathway (simple pathways);
  - Integrated Services (between NHS and Adult Social Care, and the Carers Hub
  - Carer Registration (identification & carers offer);
  - Data Collection (centralized carers dashboard);
  - Tackling Health Inequalities (equitable access to respite, financial support and flexible working);
  - Carers Services (dedicated information & advice, assessment and support for carers, promoting carers rights and proactive contact)
- 3.11 The framework provided within this strategy is to encourage services to make a 'carers commitment', a document or statement that shows the service or organization actively encourages carers to identify themselves; promotes the rights of carers; and supports them. This process of identifying that the service or organization is 'carer friendly' could include staff completing the eLearning Carer Champion, carer awareness training; offering a discount or incentive for carers with the Carers Card; a clear pathway to the Carers Hub to encourage carers to register for support; or access support for employees who are carers.
- 3.12 Carers will be directly involved in the development of the 'carers commitment' process, and related potential logo/award, through co-production. Additionally, there will be a range of resources held within the Councils website to provide information and support for the completion of 'carers commitment', and to log copies of these for carers to access. To promote a 'carer friendly' City, there will be a range of local campaigns, again developed through co-production, to raise awareness of carers and caring (Think Carer); awareness of the central resource of the Carers Hub (Think Carer = Think Carers Hub); and Prepare to Care, a checklist approach for individuals and families to either discuss the gradually increasing needs of a family member or friend, or to respond to a sudden change, and raise awareness of the support that can be accessed as soon as possible.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 **Option 1** – Approve the strategy (recommended). This provides a commitment to valuing family and friend unpaid carers; provision of support for carers, to tackle the known health inequalities that carers disproportionately face; and raise awareness of carers and caring to promote a carer friendly city.
- 4.2 **Option 2** – Do not approve the strategy. This would potentially risk losing the trust with carers, and services, who have been directly involved in the development of this strategy.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The development of this Strategy has embraced the Councils Community Engagement Framework, engaging with carers through a range of

mechanisms. It directly affects all carers and aims to improve their lives and experience; their views have informed its development; and integral to the development has been the collaboration with organizations funded to represent carers in the City, and wider stakeholders.

- 5.2 The Carers Hub (central support for carers) contract has a commitment to consulting and engaging with carers. Additionally, the Carers Centre (host of the Carers Hub) is part of the Council's Engagement Prospectus contract, and as such have completed a number of research and engagement activities, including Carer Friendly City surveys.
- 5.3 The Carers Centre/Hub has worked in partnership with the Council to facilitate a range of in person events, utilizing the two key national events per year aimed at family and friend unpaid carers: Carers Week (during June); and Carers Rights Day (November). These events included good public transport available; funded taxis offered for those who cannot use public transport; a variety of refreshments; accessible buildings/venues; plus a commitment to provide feedback summaries for all who attended. These events have aimed to involve carers, as well as empower them to inform the Strategy development.
- 5.4 Additionally, there have been related surveys and activities coordinated by the Council, including the Adult Social Care Carers Survey, and the Local Account, both activity results have been presented using the Community Engagement Framework approach of 'We asked, You said, We will do'.
- 5.5 The Strategy document has direct reference to the views of carers and their experience as part of Section 1 (rationale for strategy refresh).

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 The costs associated with the implementation and delivery of the Carers Strategy are jointly funded through the Better Care Fund, which is a section 75 pooled budget with the Integrated Care Board. For 2025/26, the Integrated Care Board contribution to the Supporting unpaid carers workstream was £0.852m and the Council contribution was £0.182m. Any increase to the contract value in future years will need to be within the resources available and agreed by the Integrated Care Board and the Council. Any spend variance at outturn is subject to a risk share as per the section 75 agreement.
- 6.2 The staffing resource required to implement this strategy is projected to be £0.032m and contract spend is forecast to be £0.091m, which is funded within existing budget allocations.

Name of finance officer consulted: Sophie Warburton Date consulted: 21/05/2026

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 There are a number and range of statutory duties and protections in respect of carers that are outlined in paragraph 3.7 of this report that must be adhered to by the Local Authority.

Name of lawyer consulted: Sandra O'Brien Date consulted 22/05/26

## **8. Risk implications**

- 8.1 Key risks identified through the strategy development process include:
- Increasing number of carers seeking support from capacity limited services – mitigated through proportionate assessment processes; regular reviews with the Carers Hub; and an escalation protocol regarding waiting lists.
  - Safeguarding adults (SR13), issues may arise regarding carers disclosing concerns regarding their own safety, and/or the person/people they care for – mitigated by the Carers Hub staff completing regular safeguarding training, and contractual arrangements regarding following the Councils Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 This Carers Strategy 2026-2030 is accompanied by a Draft Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 2). Carers are identified within the Equalities framework as group who experience discrimination, this Strategy aims to tackle this discrimination by raising awareness of carers and encouraging services to complete a Carers Commitment – including addressing any potential discriminatory factors.
- 9.2 The Strategy references the intersectionality of caring, and how this impacts on the health inequalities that carers experience.
- 9.3 The EIA has raised issues concerning ‘hidden carers’ resulting from assumptions made about specific communities, and cultural issues regarding defining the term carer. The Strategy work directly addresses the EIA, including:
- The development with carers of the Carers Commitment template, which will address the Equality Act requirements
  - The Carers Dashboard will collect equality monitoring data, to inform service development
  - The Carer Campaigns will include reaching out to ‘hidden carers’

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 When completing the Sustainability Implications Checklist, it has identified no negative impacts, and 3 positive impacts related to:
- Sustainable Travel and Transport – Consultation events with carers regarding the Carers Strategy have been either on-line (so no travel impact), or at venues chosen specifically to ensure that bus travel is accessible.
  - Sustainable Economy - When choosing venues for supporting consultations with carers regarding the Carers Strategy, consideration has included the use of local businesses (Open Market), to support our local economy.
  - Health, safety, wellbeing and local communities - Again when consulting with carers, we review the health and safety policy of the chosen venues, and the feedback on venues by carers attending is used to inform future events
- 10.2 The key partner is consultation and engaging with carers, is the Carers Centre/Hub, their contract includes sustainability arrangements.

## **11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

- 11.1 The Carers Strategy is central to supporting the improvement of the health and wellbeing of all carers, all ages and all needs. It is accepted, and there is a robust evidence base, that carers disproportionately experience health inequalities, therefore Carers are identified as a specific group within the Core20Plus5, NHS Health Inequalities strategy, and caring is viewed as a wider determinant of health.
- 11.2 This Strategy addresses the known health inequality impacts on carers and aims to mitigate them through the continued commitment to a Carer Friendly City. Support for unpaid carers is a specific objective within the Council Plan, under Living Well, and this Strategy is the vehicle for addressing those issues.

### **Other Implications**

## **12. Procurement implications**

- 12.1 There are no procurement implications related to this report.

## **13. Crime & disorder implications:**

- 13.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

## **14. Conclusion**

- 14.1 The approval of the refreshed Carers Strategy is important to local carers, those who have been directly involved and those who will benefit from it, as it recognizes and values their contribution to our city. It addresses the known health inequalities, providing a framework to improve the lives of carers, the mechanisms within the Strategy will be developed through co-production with carers, empowering them to influence the city to see them, hear them, and support them. Services and organizations within the city will be able to show their support for carers (through Carers Commitment), and what carers can expect from their services, truly supporting the continued development of a Carer Friendly City.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

1. Appendix 1 - Draft Carers Strategy, Think Carer – building a Carer Friendly City
2. Appendix 2 - Draft Carers Strategy Equalities Impact Assessment