

Carers Strategy

Carers at the heart of 21st-century families and communities

The National Strategy for Carers was published on 10 June 2008, signed by seven Government departments. In total the Strategy commits £255 million to create additional support for carers. It also sets out medium and long-term plans aimed at transforming the way that society treats carers.

The Vision

The Strategy says that by 2018:

- *carers will be respected as expert care partners and will have access to the integrated and personalised services they need to support them in their caring role;*
- *carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role;*
- *carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role;*
- *carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well and treated with dignity;*
- *children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all the Every Child Matters outcomes.*

Care services

- Training for professionals in local authorities for their day-to-day dealings with carers and decisions about services. It will bring together professionals in their local area to facilitate more joint working.
- Better integration of services through the development of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to share relevant information between agencies and encourage close working between councils, the NHS, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector.
- There will be funding over the next three years for third sector services at a local and national level to support their work with carers.
- In the longer term, consider extending flexibility in the way personal budgets and direct payments can be used.

Information

- There will be funding over the next two years to give carers comprehensive, easy to access and up to date information about services in their local area. This will complement the national website and information helpline for which funding has already been committed.

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- Develop national information and advice on housing and related areas such as care and finance, ensuring it links to the carers' helpline.

Services for carers

- An increase of £150m in the amount of money available for breaks. The money will be allocated to Primary Care Trusts over two years who will be required to work with local authorities to publish joint plans for the provision of breaks. The increase in funding is equivalent to approximately one third of the current Carers Grant.
- Caring with Confidence, a training programme for carers (formally known as the Expert Carers Programme), will begin in August 2008. This will also be available through distance-learning from December 2008.
- Pilots looking at existing provision of breaks and encouraging innovative approaches to break provision and how personal budgets can be used to provide breaks.
- Consider how the relationship between local authorities and third sector and carer-led organisations can be developed to make greater use of their expertise and provide carers with greater choice and control over services. This includes examining how best to use the Carers Grant to benefit carers.
- Work with local authorities to spread good practice around discount cards for leisure and transport.
- In the longer term, explore using a lead professional to help carers access services and ensure early intervention.

Health

- Pilots of annual health checks for carers in a number of PCTs.
- Pilots to provide a training programme for GPs to help them better understand carers' needs. If successful, it may be rolled out nationally.
- Government is considering making projects offering emotional support to carers a priority category for funding.
- Pilots looking at how the NHS can better support carers. They will look at involving carers in diagnosis, care and discharge planning as well as greater support for carers in GP practices and hospitals.

Employers

- An awareness raising campaign to ensure carers and employers are aware that carers have the right to request flexible working.
- Government to work with business to produce a good practice guide for all employers on the benefits of recruiting carers. It will include case studies and focus on the business case for employing carers.

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- Review the definition of carer in the flexible working regulations to consider extending it to the 20% of carers who currently miss out. *These are carers who are not a close relation of the person they care for or do not live with them.*

Getting into work

The Strategy says that Government will try to ensure that all carers who want to work will be able to do so, and commits £38 million of additional funding.

- There will be a Care Partnership Manager in every Jobcentre Plus district.
- Improvements in training for Jobcentre Plus advisers.
- Funding replacement care for carers participating in approved training.
- DWP and Jobcentre Plus will investigate the feasibility of providing return to work support through third sector organisations.
- Government will encourage more flexible learning opportunities to be made available to carers.

Young carers

In total, the Strategy contains measures worth £6m aimed at supporting young carers.

- Action to build effective joined-up support around the family and the person cared for and to shift systems of support towards active prevention.
- An extended programme of training on whole-family working for staff in local services.
- Funding to embed support and guidance for young carers through the Healthy Schools Programme.
- Funding for awareness-raising across schools and other children's settings.
- Research on what sort of project-based support works best for young carers.
- Materials for GPs and hospital discharge teams to build awareness and skills in dealing with young carers.

Information about carers

- Government will develop a carer experience survey for local authorities to undertake on a voluntary basis in 2009-10.
- Review the National Indicator Set to ensure that local authorities capture carers' experiences.
- The question on carers will be included in recommendations for the 2011 Census.

