

# Carers Information Strategy 2006-08

Community Services – Adult Social Care

Plymouth City Council



## Introduction

It has long been recognised that those services providing support to the most vulnerable people in society frequently do so alongside family members, friends and neighbours, who act as unpaid carers. Without them the statutory and voluntary sector services would be overwhelmed. It is therefore vital that all those who work in this area recognise carers and the huge contribution they make towards ensuring that those they care for can continue to remain at home. We must also ensure that we support the carers to be able to continue to provide this care.

Some people become carers gradually, perhaps as a parent ages, but for others this can happen suddenly as a result of an event such as the birth of a disabled child or a partner suffering a stroke. People can become a carer at any age, and taking on the responsibilities of caring is likely to have a major effect on that person's life. All too often carers become isolated and fail to recognise their own needs. Many adult carers give up work in order to care for someone, families with a child with a disability may find the lives of all their children affected, and young carers can struggle to maintain their education and their social life. Many such carers do not realise that there are services that may be able to support them. Helping people to recognise they are carers, and providing easily accessible and readily understandable information to them at a time when they need it should be a priority for many agencies.

In Plymouth it was recognised some time ago that many carers may be reluctant to identify themselves to a statutory agency. It was agreed that easy access to a voluntary sector partner who could provide basic information to carers could provide a complementary and preventative service for carers. Plymouth City Council and Plymouth teaching Primary Care Trust therefore commissioned Plymouth Guild to set up the existing Carers Service. A great deal of good work has been done by all three organisations to recognise carers and meet their needs.

Although there is an increasing awareness of carers in the city and a number of sources of information available to them, we still want to reach more carers. The 2001 census demonstrated that there are over 8,000 people in Plymouth who each provide more than 20 hours of unpaid care to someone. There are also approximately 2000 disabled children in the city. From national statistics we know that in 2001 there were at least 175,000 carers under 18 years of age, but in Plymouth at this time we know and are supporting few of them. At present there are approximately 1,200 carers on the database held by the Carers Service. This number has been rising steadily, but there are still large numbers of carers who are not aware of the services that may be able to support them.

The practice guidance to the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 advises Local Authorities to produce a Carers Information Strategy to address this issue. A working group consisting of both carers and practitioners from a wide range of agencies was set up to look broadly at how best we can provide and distribute the information that carers need.

## The aims of the Carers Information Strategy

### Overall aim:

To ensure that anyone whose life is affected by caring for someone has access to appropriate, accurate and easy to understand information about their rights and the services available to support them.

### Specific aims:

- To give people the information necessary to enable them to identify themselves as carers
- To give practitioners the information necessary for them to identify someone as a carer
- Once identified, for a carer to be given information that explains their rights, what services may be available to support them and how to contact those services.

To meet these aims there are a number of steps that need to be taken by Plymouth City Council, by itself as the lead authority for carers, and by working with a wide variety of partners in other settings. A considerable amount of work has already been done, but a more systematic approach to communicating with carers is vital if greater numbers of carers are to be identified.

### Areas of work:

1. The provision of accurate, up-to-date, consistent and easily understandable information for carers about their rights and what support may be available to them.
2. The distribution of information as widely as possible so that carers have easy access to it at a time when they need it.
3. Partnership working with other organisations to ensure that a wide range of agencies
  - Are aware of carers rights
  - Are able to pass on information to carers and signpost them to other sources of help
  - Support carers to come forward for carers assessments.
4. The development of campaigns to target “hidden” and hard to reach carers
5. Monitoring and review of work to ensure that the steps taken to provide information are effective.

## Areas of work explained

### 1. The provision of accurate, up-to-date, consistent and easily understandable information

#### **Plymouth City Council aims to provide:**

- Accurate and easily understandable information for adult carers of adults about their rights and what support may be available to them
- To ensure consistency, the Carers Development Manager will be responsible for the development of this information, working alongside a Communications Officer/Carers
- The proposed new Integrated Children's Disability Service will have its own information service where parent carers will be able to access the relevant information.
- Any material published by Plymouth City Council will be reviewed annually in order to ensure that it remains current.

Although it is recognised that there is a need for information in other formats in order for it to be accessible to some individuals, research shows that blanket translation of material is an ineffective way of reaching carers. Specific use of other formats will therefore be managed as part of the campaigns to reach "hidden" and hard to reach carers.

The current contract to provide a Carers Service in the voluntary sector is now coming to an end, but Plymouth City Council remains committed to partnerships with the voluntary sector and values the role of other organisations in providing information to carers. A new three year contract is therefore to be developed and a number of organisations are tendering to provide this service. A key part of the service will be to provide a broad range of information for carers. The service provider will be expected to:

- Work in partnership with Plymouth City Council and other agencies in order to ensure accurate, up to date and accessible information about carers, their rights and statutory, voluntary and independent sector organisations who work to support carers and those they care for
- Review this information annually to ensure it remains up to date
- Maintain a database of those carers who choose to put their names forward, so that regular information can be provided to them about their rights and support available.

In addition to this service, Plymouth City Council's Children's Service has commissioned a specialist service for young carers from The Zone. This, too, is a three year contract and aims to identify and offer individual support to carers between 8 and 18, helping them to integrate into existing services in their local communities. As part of this service the provider will:

- Work in partnership with Plymouth City Council and other agencies in order to ensure accurate, up to date and accessible information is available to young carers and those who may come across them
- Review this information annually to ensure it remains up to date.

As well as this specific carers contract, there are a number of different organisations in Plymouth that both work with carers and provide information to them. They will obviously remain responsible for the information that their organisation develops, but will ensure that it provides basic information about a carer's right to a carers assessment.

As a result of the development of a Carers Information Strategy, a variety of organisations have come together to discuss ways of promoting carers issues. All concerned have agreed that there is value to be gained from continuing these meetings and coming together twice yearly to ensure that the strategy is being followed and that the various actions are demonstrably effective. Such meetings will form a Carers Information Network, with additional agencies invited to join as identified by the original partners.

## 2. To distribute information as widely as possible for carers

With the development of appropriate information by Plymouth City Council, the Carers Service the other agencies who work with carers, it is essential to ensure that the information provided across the board is distributed widely so that carers have easy access to it.

### **Plymouth City Council is committed to:**

- Developing a regular distribution network for its published information. This network will include a wide variety of both in-house services and points of contact, and a broad range of sites and agencies across the city (See appendix 1).
- This network will be reviewed twice yearly at Carers Information Network meetings, with the intention of adding other appropriate sources to it, as they are identified.

Key sites for the distribution of information to carers are healthcare providers. The PCT and acute hospital trust are therefore vital partners in ensuring that basic information is available to carers.

Plymouth City Council will:

- Work with health providers both directly and through our partners in the voluntary sector to ensure that appropriate information is available in a wide number of locations.
- Locations will be reviewed twice yearly at Carers Information Network meetings, with the intention of adding other appropriate sources to it, as they are identified (see appendix 2).

A significant element of the contract for a Carers Service in the voluntary sector will continue to focus on the provision of information to carers. As well as the development of comprehensive general information, and information about carers assessments, the carers service will be expected to:

- Develop detailed plans to distribute information widely. As part of their role, and building on the work already done in this area by Plymouth Guild, they will develop links with a range of other organisations and service providers to ensure that information is accessible to carers who are unknown to Social Care.

The young carers service will:

- Develop specific plans to distribute information for and about young carers widely, including building partnerships with local schools.

Plymouth City Council, the Carers Service and The Zone will all work in partnership with the PCT to ensure that strong links are developed with G.P.s and other Primary Health Services so that Health professionals are clear as to what services exist for carers and how they can access them.

Other organisations who form part of the Carers Information Network will, where appropriate, take advantage of publicity campaigns run by themselves to promote carers issues and signpost carers for carers assessments and support.

It is clear, however, that carers will only notice leaflets about their rights and potential sources of support if they are aware that they are a carer. As such there is a need to plan more pro-active methods of drawing attention to carers and their responsibilities in order to enable people to self-identify. Both Plymouth City Council and the organisation running the Carers Service, will work to develop active campaigns to highlight carers, their issues and those services that may be able to support them.

Plymouth City Council commits to:

- Run at least four carers news stories per year, and to seek interest from a variety of media in order to spread coverage as widely as possible
- Have Carers Team representation at a minimum of four public events within the city per year
- Submit articles about carers assessments and their benefits to carers to at least four newsletters per year.

The Carers Service commits to:

- Run at least four carers news stories per year, and to seek interest from a variety of media in order to spread coverage as widely as possible
- To use national carers events such as Carers Week and Carers Rights Day to publicise carers issues and promote carers assessments.

### 3. To work with others to ensure that a wide range of organisations are aware of carers rights

At present Plymouth City Council runs monthly Carers Awareness training days in partnership with the PCT and the Carers Service. These will continue to be offered to a wide variety of practitioners across health organisations, social care and voluntary and independent organisations over the next three years. In this way there will be increasing numbers of practitioners who are aware of carers issues, their rights and the services that may be able to support them.

In some instances carers have cited the issue of patient confidentiality as one that has led to them being excluded from information about the person they care for. Plymouth City Council and the PCT are in the process of addressing this issue so that both carers and those professionals who work with the person they care for are aware of the role of confidentiality in care and are clear as to when information can be shared with carers.

#### **To hold and pass on relevant information**

As a result of regular Carers Awareness training sessions, growing numbers of practitioners across a wide variety of organisations will hold basic information for carers and be able to signpost them to appropriate services in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The passing on of specific personal information about carers will, of course, be subject to relevant data protection legislation and guidelines

#### **To support carers to come forward for carers assessments**

As a result of regular Carers Awareness training sessions, growing numbers of practitioners across a wide variety of organisations will understand what is involved in a carers assessment and the potential benefits to carers. They will therefore encourage carers to request these, and where necessary support them to do so.

## 4. To develop particular campaigns to target “hidden” and hard to reach carers

As the statistical evidence shows, there are a large numbers of “hidden” and hard to reach carers within the city. These may include young carers, carers from BME communities and carers of those with drug or alcohol problems, amongst others. Identifying these carers and ensuring that they have access to appropriate information in an accessible format is extremely difficult. However, they may often be the carers who are most in need to help and support, and it is essential that we develop effective ways of reaching them.

Plymouth City Council commits to:

- Developing one targeted campaign every six months to try to identify one group of hidden carers.
- This campaign will be determined in consultation with other appropriate agencies and the results fed back to the Carers Information Network.

The Carers Support Service will similarly work to:

- Identify two groups of hidden carers per year and develop specific plans to increase the numbers of these carers known to their service so that appropriate information can be given to them.

## 5. Monitor work to ensure that our efforts are effective

The Carers Information Network and any other organisations that it becomes clear are key in the provision of information to carers, will meet twice yearly to monitor progress. One indication of success will be rising numbers of carers on the database of Plymouth Carers Support Service and the rising numbers of carers assessments carried out by the Social Care teams.

Plymouth City Council has committed to undertake increasing numbers of carers assessments:

The sources of referrals for these will be monitored and fed back to the network

For those carers who request a carers assessment for themselves, a record will be made of where they heard about their entitlement to this.

The Carers Service will:

Continue to record the source of referral of carers known to them

For self-referral they will record where the carer received the information about them

Other individual organisations will monitor the success of any means of providing information they use.

## **Appendix 1: agreed recipients for Plymouth City Council carers information leaflets and posters**

- Reception sites in Plymouth City Council buildings
- Libraries
- Age Concern
- Plymouth Highbury Trust
- PRSU
- Befriending Consortium
- DIAC
- Parent Partnership
- Care and Repair
- Alzheimers Society
- Stroke Association
- Headway
- Plymouth City Council contractors who work with vulnerable adults
- The Zone
- Plymouth and District Racial Equality Council (Ann Wilkinson)
- Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership
- MIND
- Scope.

## **Appendix 2:**

- GP surgeries
- Derriford Hospital
- Mount Gould Hospital
- Local Care Centre
- Plympton Hospital
- Cumberland Centre
- Eye Infirmary
- Pharmacies
- PALS.

## **Other sources that will be investigated and asked to display information leaflets and/or posters containing information for carers:**

- Supermarkets
- Post Offices
- Charity shops
- Churches.

To request further copies of this leaflet, please call: 01752 307329

You can also see this information on Plymouth City Council's website under the adult social care section by logging onto the address below:

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Plymouth City Council  
Civic Centre  
Plymouth PL1 2AA

Tel 01752 308686  
Fax 01752 308715  
Email [communications@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:communications@plymouth.gov.uk)  
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