

Appendix 1 - Background Information

Understanding 'carers'

Carers, also known as informal carers, family carers or unpaid carers, look after an adult in their life who would not be able to manage without their support. Carers may look after an ageing partner, a disabled adult child, support an elderly neighbour or a friend with substance use issues. These carers are not paid for the support that they offer. Not all carers choose to be in a caring role but find that circumstances or expectations force them to fulfil this role. Many people do not identify themselves as a carer as the care they provide seems self-evident and necessary.

While some caring roles are limited to several hours a day or week or for a temporary period of time, other caring roles become all-consuming with carers having to relinquish paid employment or give up their own interests to be able to care for someone else.

Nationally, 6.8 million people provide unpaid care for a disabled, seriously-ill or older loved ones in the UK, saving the state £132 billion a year – close to the cost of a second NHS.¹ According to research done by Carers UK, carers save the economy £132 billion per year, an average of £19,336 per carer. 1 in 7 of the workforce across the UK are juggling caring responsibilities with work. However, the significant demands of caring mean that 600 people give up work every day to care for an older or disabled relative. [Carer's Allowance](#) is the main carer's benefit and is £67.25 for a minimum of 35 hours, the lowest benefit of its kind.

While the support that carers provide on an individual but also national level is high, this can have devastating impacts on them. For instance, 72% of carers responding to Carers UK's *State of Caring 2018 Survey* said they had suffered mental ill health as a result of caring while 61% said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of caring. 8 in 10 people caring for loved ones say they have felt lonely or socially isolated.

It is estimated that that there are 18,700 unpaid carers (9.2% of the population aged over 16) in Islington, based on the 2011 Census. However, with the multiple waves of Covid-19 and lockdowns, this number will have risen significantly since March 2020. Carers UK estimates there are around 13.6 million people caring nationwide through the pandemic.

Care Act 2014

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a statutory obligation to ensure that people who live in their areas:

- receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs
- can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support
- have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from.

The Act gives local authorities a responsibility to assess a carer's needs for support and the impact of caring on the carer. It also considers what a carer wants to achieve in their own day-to-day life while

¹ Statistics taken from Carers UK

also assessing whether the carer is able or willing to carry on caring, whether they work or want to work, and whether they want to study or do more socially.

Despite it being a statutory requirement that carers receive the same level of attention as the cared for or service user, this has not always been the case with the focus often still remaining on the cared for person as the primary service user and client. Investment in, and a focus on, informal carers, ensuring informal carers have opportunities to enhance their wellbeing and can access the right support at the right time in line with the council's priorities and the Adult Social Care Principles.

Supporting carers and preventing carer breakdown also means less people will need access to formal care – whether that be for the carer or for the cared for. This is beneficial on an economic level, but also on a personal level for both, carer and cared for.

Services for Carers

Carers services offer a host of support to meet the multiple and varied needs of carers throughout their caring journey. Usually, the offer consists of a combination of information and advice, peer support and financial support to enable carers to make decisions that benefit their wellbeing.

Islington's Carers Hub is currently run by Age UK Islington who have 3200 carers registered with them and support 1200 carers per year. Core functions of their service include Information & Advice, Support Groups, and a Breaks fund while they also host events, provide carers assessments and training. This contract expires in February 2022.

In addition to the contract with Age UK Islington, in January 2021, after a successful pilot in Camden, a pilot project with an organisation called Mobilise was launched. Mobilise is a tech start up run by carers for carers. Mobilise aims to provide easily accessible and flexible support to unpaid carers using technology. Their offer consists of

- A weekly newsletter by carers for carers
- Virtual cuppas for carers
- An e-support package
- 1-2-1 coaching
- Carers' assessments

The preventative support offered by Mobilise to carers plays a significant role in avoiding carer breakdown, especially as many more people take on new caring responsibilities due to Covid-19. Moreover, the Mobilise approach proved effective at engaging under-represented ethnic groups and young adult carers complementing existing solutions.

Part of Mobilise's success is the result of an untraditional approach and offer. For instance, 56% of engagement with Mobilise happened outside office hours, meeting the needs of carers at a time convenient to them.

The uptake of the out-of-hours support reflects a need amongst carers for flexible and personalised support while Mobilise's ability to efficiently identify carers early and support them online and at scale suggests its value as a complementary offer to councils' existing offline support available to carers.