

A review the impact of the pandemic on carers across the county, and looking forward

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# Impact on carers of the pandemic – Carers UK survey reported in April 2020:

- ✿ 70% of carers were providing more care during the pandemic:
  - Over a third (35%) of carers provided more care as a result of local services reducing or closing
  - Some carers' paid working arrangements changed so they had more time
- ✿ Carers were, on average, providing 10 additional hours of care a week
- ✿ 69% were providing more help with emotional support, motivation, or keeping an eye/ checking in on the person they care for

# Impact on carers of the pandemic – Carers UK survey:

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- ✿ The majority (55%) of carers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel overwhelmed and I am worried that I’m going to burnout in the coming weeks”
- ✿ 87% of carers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement “I am worried about what will happen to the people I care for if I have to self-isolate or become ill”.

## **Carer Support Wiltshire** also found many carers:

- did not resume receiving respite support due to fears about exposing vulnerable loved ones to Covid
- did not venture away from home until May 2021
- were experiencing mental stress – variety of factors
- young carers and young adult carers were experiencing isolation, and benefited from contact with schools, and support accessing ICT for academic work and peers

## What Carer Support Wiltshire offered carers before lockdown?

- ✿ information, advice, strengths-based work with carers in their communities through Community Connectors
- ✿ Care Act assessments of carers
- ✿ carers cafés, group sessions on topics suggested by carers
- ✿ Carers Café at GWH
- ✿ Talk and support provided by volunteers
- ✿ Support for young carers:
  - via Youth Action Wiltshire – activities
  - aged 16 to 18 during ‘transition’
- ✿ young adult carers – incl. facilitating peer support

## Services before lockdown 2





- ✿ e- and postal newsletters, social media
- ✿ websites incl. for young carers and young adult carers – YACbook
- ✿ Small grants for breaks/respite/pampering sessions
- ✿ Courage to Care service – identifying and supporting carers in the serving military
- ✿ Carer awareness training for hospital staff, links with carers leads
- ✿ GP accreditation scheme re surgeries' support for carers

## Services during lockdown included:

- access to services via phone and Zoom
- volunteers making wellbeing checks, Community Connectors making welfare checks
- linking carers to the Council's Wellbeing Hub
- Carers register (11,200 carers) shared with WC to promote Wellbeing Hub
- ✿ Via WC, access to PPE for carers supporting people not living in their homes
- ✿ new counselling service for carers affected by lockdown
- ✿ online carers cafés and Talk and support provided by volunteers – many furloughed from corporates
- ✿ links with WC schools' staff highlighting that young carers were at risk of isolation

# New Hospital Liaison Service (HLS)\*

From 1 Feb to 30 April 2021, HLS aimed to

-  identify carers early
-  ensure carers had the right information
-  support carers through the discharge process
-  facilitate timely and effective discharge, Care Act assessments and help prevent re-admission

(\*Based on Devon Carers joint funded Hospital Service)



## HLS - data

- ✿ No. of referrals - 58
- ✿ No. of contacts – 497
- ✿ 22% of carers had a health and wellbeing assessment (13/58)
- ✿ 23% of carers went on to have a Care Act Carers Assessment (3/13)
- ✿ Average length of support - 23.9 days
- ✿ No. of readmissions – 2 due to health issues of cared for

## **HLS – benefits included:**

- positive carer identification
- linking identified carers into effective support
- enabling carers to make informed choices about their caring role
- carer-awareness of hospital staff increased
- appropriate and supportive information sharing
- respecting carers as (and supporting them to be) expert partners in care

**(\*Based on Devon Carers joint funded Hospital Service)**




## HLS – successes included:

- ✿ the service's premise was welcomed by ward staff who saw the benefit for carers particularly as they were unable at that time to visit ward areas
- ✿ HLS staff visited wards and outpatient areas, providing opportunities to raise carer awareness with patients and carers
- ✿ awareness of HLS prompted questions in hospital multi – disciplinary meetings around carers and their support requirements.
- ✿ carers could ask questions of HLS staff around discharge that they had not been able to ask of ward/discharge teams
- ✿ consistency to carers in that HLS contact was with the same support worker

## HLS - challenges included:

- ✿ both launching and promoting the HLS during the pandemic
- ✿ the late start meant hospital staff were already under pressure so engaging with a new service was not a priority
- ✿ as Flow Hub staff were home based, close collaborative working was not possible. If addressed this would have significantly increased referrals
- ✿ HLS had not been widely promoted within all acute hospitals and there was a lack of awareness of the purpose of the service
- ✿ getting early access from the start to hospital systems and discharge teams was not possible.
- ✿ as it was short-term, some areas may have felt that engaging with the HLS would not be beneficial.

## HLS – feedback from carers included:

-  *“I felt someone was listening to me and trying to get the answers for me as a carer and not just support my husband as the one in hospital. The Support I received was Brilliant, I tried to make contact but either I couldn’t get an answer or the doctor/ nurse was available at the time of my call. Liaison Service managed to get all the answers I required and relayed them to me so I could fully understand the plan”*
-  *“I didn’t have any understanding of discharge until cared for was placed into care home. I am thankful for someone to talk to and explain what was happening. It’s good to have a chance to speak to people about caring role and cared for”*
-  *“Although the support options did not pan out as hoped, I felt I had been listened to and had somewhere to turn in the event I needed support. Liaison did really well contacting care coordinators and keeping me in the loop”.*

# Carers' experiences, feedback about other CSW services\*

- ✿ 'Early in the pandemic felt abandoned. Couldn't get home deliveries, spent hours hanging on before being cut off.'
- ✿ '... inclusion of evening virtual cafes would be good for some; There's much advantage to be taken now that virtual events/meetings are acceptable. CSW should capitalise on this. The digital divide is a worry. Please make it a priority to help carers with technology by lockdown'
- ✿ 'You've been the only support during Covid that seems to have listened and heard my concerns for my Mum. I know there is nothing you can do to help us with her clinical and mental care but knowing there is someone who at least empathizes with the situation is helpful and supportive.'

\* Survey of 200+carers on CSW carer involvement database in the summer of 2020

## Carers' experiences, feedback about CSW services 2

- ✿ 'I've missed face to face meetings with people. I've had my daughter (severe learning disabilities) at home with me and she's been very needy. I've not been able to take full advantage of the phone call/ listening service. The virtual café would be a waste of time as my daughter would insist on seeing what was going on and would probably talk... a lot!'
- ✿ 'Do not have access to virtual meetings'
- ✿ 'I have not benefited or been disadvantaged'
- ✿ 'Benefited from the telephone help line. Had emails to check how things were going which was great'

## CSW services after lockdown – July 2021 onwards

- ✿ Staff returned to offices, all services resumed with Covid security place for face-to-face activities, retaining virtual and phone access for carers who cannot get out
- ✿ carer awareness training in hospitals resumed but not at previous levels
- ✿ Carers Café at GWH not restarted due to on-going Covid issues



## Carers' views on how they feel now\*

- ✿ 'Confronting my independence and how to work that'
- ✿ 'Good - less commuting means a bit more downtime'
- ✿ 'Glad to be coming out the other end of it, however it has been draining for everyone, particularly I think for us as carers with additional responsibilities'
- ✿ 'Excited for things to get back to normal'
- ✿ 'Exhausted'
- ✿ 'Exciting but scary'

## If still affected by the pandemic, what if anything would help?

- ✿ 'Finding more carer relief and agency support would help'.

\* Discussions led by two carers with nine carers on 30.9.2021

## Challenges and opportunities that emerged for CSW included:

- staff working from home – our ICT worked well during lockdown (what accommodation is needed going forward?)
- accessed Covid-specific funds – e.g. to improve website, for new counselling service, which is being continued
- carer awareness training in acute hospitals more challenging to set up

## Challenges and opportunities that emerged for CSW included:

- forums co-ordinated by WC led to better and wider links with teams across Wiltshire during March 2020-March 2021, e.g. Wellbeing Hub, Communities and Neighbourhoods services, schools, Police, other VCSE services
- Courage to Care paused, carers directed to CSW helpline. Restarted in May 2021, focusing on re-building awareness