



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Carers Action Plan 2018 - 2020

Supporting carers today

One-year on progress review

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Foreword

This progress report demonstrates all the good work done by this Government since the publication of the Carers Action Plan, one year ago, to improve the lives of informal carers. Around 60 percent of us are likely to become carers at some stage in our lives. That's not a career choice, by the way, but a profound change in personal circumstances – something many of us will embrace willingly with love and compassion – but often leads to disadvantage.

Many people providing care do not think of themselves as a carer, because it so easily becomes part of the daily routine – part of living. Perhaps that is why there is such diversity in the nature and intensity of the care and support provided. Caring responsibilities often come to us irrespective of age or background and we respond in our own way to the needs of those we love.

I want to acknowledge and celebrate all the good progress which has been made so far since the publication of the Carers Action Plan. This is a positive step towards helping carers give the care they wish, whilst also looking after their needs. Some of the achievements from the last year which demonstrate the variety of actions include:

- NHS England and the Care Quality Commission launching their quality standards for carer-friendly GP practices,
- The Department of Health and Social Care have funded the Social Care Institute for Excellence to establish some best practice guidance for Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and other commissioners on carers breaks and respite care. This has now been published, and;
- The Government Equalities Office have awarded sixteen grants to organisations to help support those who have taken time out due to caring responsibilities to return to work.

Not forgetting, one of the Carers Action Plan's headline commitments, the Carers Innovation Fund. We wanted to encourage the creation of innovative tools, resources and services that look beyond formal health and care services, involving businesses, charities and local networks in the creation of carer-friendly communities. That is why we increased the Fund from £0.5 million to £5 million!

It's important that commissioners, local authorities and health and social care professionals understand, signpost and link carers to services existing beyond their own offices, clinics and community centres.

This is my vision for the Carers Innovation Fund – projects supporting carers when and where they need it, and I look forward to seeing all the upcoming exciting and innovative projects which will achieve this.

The Carers Action Plan is an excellent starting point towards enhancing support for carers. However, there is still more to be done. As we enter our second year of the Carers Action Plan we must look to build on our success so far and think beyond the Plan and to the years that will follow. The forthcoming social care Green Paper will include a focus on how society supports carers as a vital part of a sustainable health and social care system to ensure that they are properly valued, recognised and supported to provide care in a way that supports their own health and wellbeing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Dinenage', written in a cursive style.

Caroline Dinenage, Minister of State for Care

Introduction

Background

The cross-government [Carers Action Plan](#) was published in June 2018, setting out this Government's commitment to supporting carers through 64 actions across five priorities emerging from the carers' [Call for Evidence](#). The Plan gives visibility to the wide range of work that is planned or already underway across government to support carers to care as they would wish, and to do so in a way that takes account of their own health and wellbeing, access to education, employment and other life chances.

After its launch, the Carers Action Plan received attention from a range of stakeholders and received mostly positive feedback:

"As leaders in social care across the country, ADASS is keen to see carers, who make such a crucial difference to the people they look after, recognised as the vital support that they are, and this action plan is a good next step towards making this happen." - [ADASS](#)

"Thousands of carers shared their experience to inform the development of this Action Plan, reflecting the strength of feeling among carers that much more support is needed. The publication of the Action Plan provides welcome recognition from across government of the need to put in place practical measures now to improve support for carers." - [Carers UK](#)

"It is good to see commitments from the Government to England's diverse range of carers, and we hope it makes a significant difference as we await the long-term changes that we expect the social care green paper to make to the funding carers and local services need." - [Carers Trust](#)

Purpose of this report

Over the year since publication, positive progress has been made towards fulfilling the commitments set out in the Action Plan. This report provides visibility to the work which has been undertaken across government to increase support for carers. This report also highlights the progress that has been made in the delivery of the actions, which are categorised under the following themes, which were determined by the information gathered through the Call for Evidence:

- services and systems that work for carers;
- employment and financial wellbeing;
- supporting young carers;
- recognising and supporting carers in the wider community and society;

building research and evidence to improve outcomes for carers.

To measure the progress of the commitments and demonstrate how the actions translate to help carers in their everyday lives, this report seeks to highlight the extent to which the actions have helped or are progressing to help to:

- increase the number of employers who are aware of caring and the impact this has on their workforce;
- support health and social care professionals to be better at identifying, valuing and working with carers;
- improve access to appropriate support for carers, including respite care and carers breaks;
- improve the evidence base on carers to inform future policy and decisions;
- ensure that the needs of carers are recognised in relevant government strategies such as 'Fuller Working Lives, Improving Lives: the Future of Work, Health and Disability and Loneliness'

The report showcases some of the key commitments from the Action Plan. An update on each of the actions has been published alongside this report.

Through the work to deliver the Action Plan, we have worked with a number of partners, including carers and young and adult carers, to produce a range of tools, including best practice guidance, toolkits, standards, etc. The full list of the resources is included in Annex A.

Carers Action Plan Oversight Group

We are committed to ensuring the delivery of the programme of work on carers within the Action Plan. To do so we have set up a Ministerial Carers Action Plan Oversight Group made up of a wide range of stakeholders including those with lived experience of caring and carers organisations. The group will meet four times over the duration of the Carers Action Plan and will oversee the implementation of the Carers Action Plan by:

Carers Action Plan: Progress Report

- monitoring progress against the 64 commitments within the Carers Action Plan;
- providing challenge and support to government departments, the NHS and local authorities on their contributions to the wider carers agenda;
- reflecting on issues raised by the Carers Action Plan Reference Group (made up of key individual carer stakeholders, experts in the field, and officials from other Government Departments who have actions in the plan and an interest in its success and delivery);
- identifying opportunities and priorities for further work to inform future carer policy;
- helping to support, disseminate and communicate the successes of actions within the plan through the Group's organisations and wider networks.

A full list of membership of the group is attached at Annex B.

Progress on actions

Chapter 1: Services and systems that work for carers

Many carers have regular contact with the health and social care system. The actions in this section focus on upskilling the workforce in both local authorities and the health and social care system to recognise carers. By doing this, health and social care professionals will increasingly listen to carers' views when making care decisions, and more easily recognise carers and give them the support they need.

Action 1.1: Quality standards for GP practices

In the Call for Evidence, carers pointed to the need for services to value and support them in order to help them feel respected and listened to, ensure their views are considered in decision making and that they are proactively identified and given support.

That is why NHS England is working with the Care Quality Commission to develop [quality standards for carer friendly GP practices](#). The markers were published on 11th June and offer a series of practical ideas, developed in partnership with carers, primary care teams and other key stakeholders, that provide a framework for improving how general practice can better identify and support carers.

We expect that the quality markers will make GP practices more aware of the expertise carers have when making decisions for the cared for. In addition, GP practices will have more guidance on how to recognise carers and how to offer carers appropriate support when a carer is identified.

Action 1.12: Sector-led improvement programme

The Care Act 2013 introduced new legal rights for carers, including the right to an assessment and access to support. However, Carers UK's [State of Caring research](#) shows that some practice elements around supporting carers under the Care Act could be improved.

To make sure that carers receive the support they are entitled to, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is working with the Association of Directors for Adult Social Services (ADASS) and Carers UK, to ensure that all local authorities are aware of and are implementing their duties.

Each of the 9 ADASS regions is leading on their own projects to look at areas they have identified as a priority. Carers are directly involved in some of the projects. For example, one of the regions is co-developing their 'whole family approach' with carers.

ADASS regions have already reported the increased profile of carers, their contribution and the duty to carers in the Care Act. As the projects progress, we expect to see good practice shared in-between and across regions with the aim of supporting carers better.

The ADASS Carers Policy Network have published a guide to efficient and effective interventions for implementing the Care Act, and by summer 2020 we expect that key challenges for commissioners when implementing the Care Act will be identified and a series of resources and learning will be developed.

Case Study: implementing the Care Act duties (action 1.12)

Across the country, there are many excellent examples of how local authorities have approached their assessment and eligibility duties, which through this project we want to build on.

In Lincolnshire, the council offers a range of formats for the carer's assessment, so the assessment can be carried out in the most appropriate way for each carer. This mixed methods approach gives carers a choice of a telephone-based or community-based approach (for more complex cases such as young adult carers and end of life carers, carers will always be directed to a face-to-face approach).

Carers enter the service through a call centre but are offered support from the community-based provider who may be better placed to meet their needs.

The benefits of this approach are: we can help a high volume of carers quickly and in a way which is best suited to the carer's needs, and; by offering a telephone-based service carers in all corners of a large rural county, including housebound carers, can receive support easily and cost effectively by avoiding travel costs.

The council works hard to have a consistent approach as part of their mixed methods offer of carers' assessments. Both providers access the same case management database. The quality assurance system also includes six-weekly case review meetings with both providers; regular case led reflective practice sessions; and a single lead practitioner who oversees the quality of all carer assessments and authorises personal budgets.¹

¹ This is practice example is from the second document in the Efficient and Effective Interventions for Implementing the Care Act series – 'First contact, identifying needs and assessment'

Action 1.13: best practice on carer breaks and respite care

Caring for somebody can be extremely demanding and being able to take a break is vital to wellbeing, quality of life and ability to keep caring. Carers UK's 2018 [State of Caring 2018 report](#) states that 33% of respondents who had received a carer's assessment in the last 12 months felt that the need to have a break was not properly considered in the assessment. We hear that carers often turn down breaks because the options that are offered to them are inadequate, inappropriate or otherwise not meeting their needs. It is therefore important that we continue to improve support for carers and to make sure they do not suffer poor health outcomes because of their caring responsibilities.

"A carers break is having some time to yourself, to do your own thing, however long or short. The length of time doesn't matter in my opinion, it's that you've got this time for yourself to do something a bit different from your usual caring role." - [David, Carer](#)

There is substantial variation in practice around carers breaks and it is difficult to find evidence of what constitutes best practice. Therefore, DHSC have funded a project to promote best practice for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and other service providers and commissioners on carer breaks and respite care. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) worked in collaboration with Carers UK on this and have made good progress. [The final version of guidance on best practice](#) had its formal launch during Carers Week and includes [videos of carers emphasising the value of carers breaks](#).

"Taking a break is an essential part of being a carer. I learnt that the hard way in the sense that I started to have issues and difficulties with my health. It will help with your wellbeing, it will just naturally pick up your spirit." - [Mary, Carer](#)

It is too soon to assess the impact of the project. However, it is expected that the guidance will build up commissioners and providers' knowledge and confidence in supporting carers to have a break by highlighting good practice, key issues to consider, and emerging models and resources – such as the use of private sector community resources like unused hotel rooms. SCIE are maximising the opportunity for the guidance to have such an impact by carrying out a thorough communications plan to maximise the awareness of the guidance.

Links with other strategies

In January 2019, NHS England published the [NHS Long Term Plan](#), which details how identification of carers will be improved and how support for them to address their individual health needs will be met. Specific action to achieve this includes introducing best-practice quality markers for primary care that will highlight best practice in carer identification and support.

Chapter 2: Employment and financial wellbeing

Half of working age carers live in a household where nobody is in paid work and almost 30% of carers have seen a drop of £20,000 or more a year in their household income as a result of caring ([Carers UK](#)). This has led to a third of carers cutting back on essentials like food and heating ([Carers UK](#)).

These actions aim to help carers remain in work for as long as they wish by promoting the value of attracting and retaining carers by offering flexible working and additional support in the workplace. By remaining in employment carers will stay financially stable and they will no longer need to cut back on such essentials; as well as gaining the intrinsic sense of value associated with work and contributing to the wider economy.

Action 2.1: Carer Confident benchmarking scheme

One in seven of all workers are juggling work and care and, unfortunately, nearly half a million have given up work over the last two years because of their caring responsibilities ([Carers UK](#)). We want to enable carers to be better able to balance their work and caring responsibilities, if they choose to do so. We know that the top three enablers for carers staying in employment arise from both policy and culture, most notably: having a supportive line manager, flexible working and additional paid care leave of between five and ten days ([Carers UK](#)). Giving up work to care puts carers at risk of financial hardship and time out of work can also cause long-term damage to their careers and pensions.

The [Carer Confident benchmarking scheme](#) is seeking to encourage workplaces to have policies in place and a culture which enables carers to stay in employment.

This scheme for employers was launched by Employers for Carers at the end of January 2019. It has three levels designed to support employers throughout their journey towards building a supportive and inclusive workplace for all staff who are, or who will become, carers.

Employers are being incentivised to join the scheme and develop carer-friendly practices as research has shown that UK companies could save up to £4.8 billion a year in unplanned absences and a further £3.4 billion in improved employee retention by doing so ([Estimates from Centrica plc, published by Carers UK](#)).

The interest so far has been positive with the first 5 employers to engage receiving accreditation at various levels during Carers Week in June 2019 and a further 20 requesting application forms or further information.

Although the scheme is still in its early days it is predicted to have a significant impact. Employers who want to be carer-friendly or broaden the pool of talent they are attracting from, and retaining, will improve or promote their practices to reach the benchmark. This

will result in more carers being able to stay in work if they chose to and will reduce the risk of financial instability.

"We want to make our workplace as inclusive as possible. Being a member of Employers for Carers allows us to understand the impact caring can have. As a growing number of people have caring responsibilities it's important we enable colleagues to do their caring role alongside their work."- Chief Operating Officer and carers' network sponsor, Financial Ombudsman Service

"If we didn't provide the support structure we do, we could lose some of our best people who are duty bound to look after their loved ones. We're proud of our long-term association with Employers for Carers and will continue to see caring as one of the key social issues in our society – one we're committed to tackling head on." - Dave Kirwan, Managing Director, UK Customer Operations, Centrica

Case study: carer-friendly employer (action 2.1)

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), a member of Employers for Carers prides itself on being a carer-friendly organisation. Carers are invaluable at CNWL. Not only do they play a vital role in supporting people who use our services, but many of their staff are carers too and we work hard to make sure that CNWL is a place where those staff feel recognised, valued and supported. CNWL launched its staff carers network in February 2017 which aimed to: develop a support network for staff carers, signpost staff to sources of support, harness CNWL's staff expertise by hosting specialist workshops, promote access to support from CNWL's recovery college and provide advice on relevant policies that will support carers in the workplace e.g. flexible working, annual leave etc.

The network has gone from strength to strength and continues to provide a clear outline for managers and staff alike of how carers' needs can be recognised and supported within CNWL. As part of raising the profile of carers even more, CNWL has taken many initiatives. Central to this is our Trust-wide Carers Council, a representative group of carers who each support a family member using our services. The Council brings together people with caring responsibilities (including staff carers) to help shape the work of the Trust.

Action 2.8: Timewise Flexible Jobs Hub

To further support carers to stay in employment, the [Timewise Foundation](#) launched its Flexible Jobs Hub in April 2018 to break down barriers for carers getting the flexible roles they reported they need. Carers reported that even though they had an average of over 21 years' work experience they often struggled to find suitable jobs that could fit around their caring responsibilities. The Hub offers a job search by flexibility as well as advice on finding a suitable job and case studies of those who have done this. Timewise has engaged with 1162 employers since the launch of the Flexible Job Hub to raise awareness of the benefits of offering flexible working such as attracting untapped talent from groups such as carers.

Timewise have also held events for employers where they have showcased the benefits of implementing flexible hiring for carers and have showcased employers offering good quality flexible jobs on the Hub.

Since its launch, nearly 25,000 carers have visited the Hub and from surveys of applicants who successfully gained a job through Timewise, carers reported that the jobs had a series of positive impacts on them and their families, include a better work-life balance, improvements in wellbeing and self-esteem and better use of their skills and qualifications.

Case Study: flexible working (action 2.8)

Cherylan Martindale's story shows how employers supporting flexible working can help retain talent.

As a mother of two children, Cherylan was attracted to her employer based on their flexible focus. This became even more important when her father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

"When you're supporting your parents through something like Alzheimer's, there's just so much to consider. On a practical level, I had to juggle hospital appointments, memory clinics, solicitors, phone calls and so on. But I also had to support my mum emotionally, as she adjusted to a new and very different reality."

Initially Cherylan managed by using some of her holiday and working into the evenings to catch up on lost time. She soon realised that being a 'hidden carer' wasn't sustainable and spoke to her manager:

"My manager was super empathetic. She simply asked what I needed to make my situation manageable and made it clear that she trusted me to make the right choices in relation to how, when and where I worked, in order to manage my family responsibilities. She knew I would make sure that the critical things got done."

Speaking to her manager meant that when her father's condition seriously deteriorated she was able to spend whole days at the hospital with her mum and flex her work around it.

“If I'd been working elsewhere at that point, I'd have probably ended up resigning. My mum and dad have been there for me all my life, so I wanted to do the same for them. But Ernst & Young were just phenomenal and have made it possible for me to stay and succeed. The support I have received from everyone here has been second to none.”

Action 2.11: returning to work

Often people take a step back or put their careers on hold as they become carers, but then find the route back into employment closed off and doors shut to them, or they lack confidence that their skills are still up to date. The Government has committed £5 million to support 'returners', who are people who have taken time out of employment for caring responsibilities and want to return to paid work. There are currently 1.2 million potential returners in the UK ([Government Equalities Office](#)).

In March 2018, GEO launched a private sector grant fund, which has now awarded in the region of £1.5 million to 16 organisations supporting returners. Funding has been awarded to projects that create new job opportunities, address specific barriers to returners and increase the understanding of how best to support people to gain paid employment.

GEO is also working with partners to deliver public sector returner programmes that target key workforces around the country. They have launched returner programmes for social workers, allied health professionals, police investigators, teachers and prospective civil servants. These programmes are all aiming to raise awareness of returners as a part of the broader workforce, highlighting the expertise that these experienced workers can bring.

GEO is working closely with an external evaluator to understand the value of these interventions and will publish evaluation findings upon programme completion. GEO continues to work with business partners to increase awareness of returner opportunities and best practice on gender equality in the workplace.

Links with other strategies

DWP's [Fuller Working Lives](#) ambition centres on supporting and encouraging employers to focus on the recruitment, retention and retraining of older workers, many of whom are likely to provide informal care. Whilst many people with caring responsibilities can and do balance employment and care, it can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to work. We want to ensure that adult carers can be supported to remain in, and return to, the labour market.

In June 2019, [Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change](#) was published, which sets out the Government's vision to enable everybody to contribute to the country's economy and balance caring responsibilities with a rewarding career.

Chapter 3: Supporting young carers

There are a substantial number of young carers in the UK aged under 18. Estimates vary widely from 195,000 (2011 census) to as many as 700,000 ([Barnardo's 2017](#)). The wide variation in the estimates of numbers of young carers emphasises the challenges of identifying them. We know that more needs to be done to support young carers; 67% of young carers who responded to the Call for Evidence told us they have not received any support. There is evidence that caring responsibilities can have a detrimental impact on the young person's personal, social and educational development; and their health and wellbeing ([Local Government Association](#)).

The actions in this section have been designed to support local services to identify young carers. Through better identification, it is hoped that more will receive the support that they are entitled to.

Action 3.2: Review of best practice in the identification of young carers

Only half of young carers report having someone at school who recognises that they are a carer and helps them, and only 44% of young carers receive the emotional support they need ([Carers Trust](#)).

We know that many young carers miss out on opportunities that their peers partake in; 23% of young carers report that their caring role has, on at least one occasion, stopped them making friends ([Carers Trust](#)). Being identified and receiving increased support will allow more young carers to partake in the same activities as their peers.

Carers Trust worked in partnership with local services to develop train the trainer style resources, to improve the identification and support of young carers. These were delivered at eight regional events, to over 200 people working in health and social care, education, statutory and voluntary sectors. Over 97% felt better able to identify young carers after the training.

Building on this, Carers Trust have undertaken research into what best practice is when identifying young carers and providing access to support. To maximise the opportunity to promote the work and disseminate the findings, the report will be published after the summer holidays in September. The report highlights some of the barriers to identification and evidence-based recommendations as to how best to overcome the barriers to enable better identification.

By increasing the numbers of young carers who are identified, this will mean young carers will be able to get the support they need to minimise the impact of caring on their personal, social and educational development; and their health and wellbeing.

The report has also made a starting contribution to further research that is planned in how to identify young carers from seldom heard groups which DHSC will be continuing to research over the coming year.

Case Study: identifying young carers (action 3.2)

Carers in Bedfordshire have linked up with local primary and secondary schools to create a school network. The purpose is to increase awareness around identification and facilitate referrals between schools and the young carers service. There are 12 schools involved in the network, with the ambition for more schools to join.

The service provides schools with a toolkit that includes an identification sheet advising staff on how to identify a young carer. The toolkit also includes information around the impact of caring, the policy around young carers, Ofsted requirements and the Young Carers in Schools Award. In addition to in-school resources, the service has created an information letter that schools can send to parents. It contains information around the definition of what a young carer is and includes a tick-sheet for parents to fill in. This letter has been used by some schools in their admissions application pack, which results in young carers being identified before joining the school.

Alongside the sharing of resources, a further benefit of the close relationship between schools and carers in Bedfordshire is the sharing of information. With permission from the young carer, the service shares their details with the school, resulting in linked-up support provision.

Carers in Bedfordshire also have direct contact with pupils in the school network. The service delivers assemblies with the aim of raising awareness amongst pupils and teaching staff. The service also works together with schools in the network to train peer mentors. Once trained, peer mentors assist with support and identification of other young carers in the school.

The project has been a success and has led to schools in the local area being more aware about the identification and support of young carers. Because of this, there has been an increase in referrals from local schools in the area and in young carers who were previously unknown to Carers in Bedfordshire self-identifying as young carers.

Action 3.9: positive transitions

Another way in which we have aimed to improve support is by funding a project undertaken by the Children's Society to identify and disseminate best practice to support and enable young adult carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16 and 24.

The Care Act 2014 introduced a duty upon local authorities to conduct a transition assessment if a young carer is considered likely to have a support need by the time they reach the age of 18. However, the Act does not specify an age at which the assessment should be carried out, how it should be conducted or how plans developed during the assessment should be implemented and reviewed. Research carried out by the [Learning and Work Institute](#) suggests that the lack of guidance about assessments results in many being undertaken without young (adult) carers' knowledge, meaning they may not understand their rights or fully articulate their support needs.

Further research has suggested that between the ages of 16-24 young people go through a range of transitions on their journey towards adulthood and independence. For young adult carers, the transitions they go through are often different, disrupted and/or limited as a result of their caring responsibilities ([Becker and Becker](#)). Later research highlighted that poor, limited or disrupted transitions can affect a young adult carer's long-term life chances ([Sempick and Becker](#)). This can result in a young person missing out on opportunities and prevent them from establishing 'a life of their own' alongside their caring responsibilities.

"There needs to be clearer communication between professionals and us as young carers. I thought I had a transition assessment but apparently that was just a young carer's assessment and then I had an assessment last year but that was a carer's assessment 'cos I am over 18 now, so I have no idea what happened to the transition assessment?"- Young adult carer, aged 19 – South East

"Transition assessments should be an ongoing process, not a one-off assessment." - Young adult carer

'I had an assessment, I am unsure if it was a transition assessment or not – but nothing came of it anyway'- Young adult carer

The Children's Society have engaged with young adult carers from across England to understand their experiences and have worked with young adult carers in analysing the data and picking out the key messages to form the basis of the report, resources and briefings. At the end of the project, The Children's Society will have produced case studies of effective practice and guidance for local authorities which will be shared with all local authority carers teams and published on the Children's Society website.

The final report, [Shaping our Future](#), was published in June and highlights that there is a gap in knowledge regarding the rights and duties outlined in legislation relating to the transition assessments for young carers. By engaging with and informing young people and professionals, the project will be able to ensure that local authorities and young carers services are aware of the rights of young carers at a key stage in their lives and to promote the effective implementation of transition assessments and support for young carers.

“The issue of young carers transitions is now added to our action plan and will be considered as part of any young carer review in the future.”

Commissioning officer, East Midlands

"After having what I now know to be a transition assessment my family had a care needs assessment. This meant support was put in place to help me and my family, so I can go to University." Young adult carer

Case study: young adult carer assessment (action 3.9)

It is important to highlight that although there are large gaps in transitional support including transition assessments being carried out, across the country, there are many excellent examples that need to be replicated, such as these below.

In the North West (Liverpool), to increase clarity transition assessments are known as ‘young adult carer’ assessments. These are commissioned by the local authority to the young carers service, who have full involvement in ensuring there is a smooth transition for these young people and believe that it works as a model. The young people stay with the service up to the age of 25 and get lots of support, guidance, information, signposting and encouragement to make sure they are inspired to access all that is available to them.

The ‘young adult carer assessment’ is carried out around age 16 (but can be done as young as 14 depending on the young person) with young people being given a support plan following this which offers 1:1 support. However, young people are aware they can contact the team at any time.

Following this, the plans are reviewed every 6 months to a year, the young person is involved in the review and follow up support is offered. Reviews can be done via telephone or face to face. In Liverpool, there is a holistic approach to transitional support as other teams and organisations such as social care, CAMHS, housing, higher education and further education, job centres, private landlords and advisory services are involved. Together, they try to make sure young people have aspirations and provide the support to make them achievable.

The service benefits greatly from having a commissioner who is a ‘driving force’ and committed to ensuring young carers and young adult carers are appropriately supported.

Young adult carers who have received transition assessments reported just how helpful the transition assessments have been in ensuring they can pursue their future aspirations, and that the assessments cover relevant topics which enables them to progress. Whole family support has also been integrated into this process and following the assessment for the young adult carer further assessments have been carried out for the family.

Chapter 4: Recognising and supporting carers in the wider community and society

Beyond the health and care services, carers need to be supported by the wider community. Businesses and services do not always cater to their caring role as it does not fit in with standard working hours. The actions in this section seek to raise the profile of carers throughout the community and come up with innovative ways to help them participate in society.

Action 4.1: Carers Innovation Fund

There is strong evidence about the range of different needs that carers have and the support they need in relation to their health and wellbeing, employment and other life chances. However, there is no strong and conclusive evidence base about the interventions that best support these needs. It is important that commissioners and carers understand the range of services available and how they can support people in a caring role.

The Call for Evidence also showed there was a desire for carer-led and community-led support and the [Building Carer-Friendly Communities Research](#) reported that three-quarters of carers didn't feel their caring role was understood or valued by their community.

Through the Action Plan, DHSC committed to investing £0.5million to establish the Carers Innovation Fund to identify and promote cost-effective models that look beyond statutory services to develop carer-friendly communities. In recognition of the importance of this work, the budget for the Fund has subsequently been significantly increased to £5million.

"We are delighted to hear that the Innovation Fund has been increased substantially... Innovation is vital to getting support right for carers. Changes in technology and insight offer fantastic opportunities for reaching carers with better support, and earlier in their caring journey." - [Carers UK](#)

The Fund was launched on 12th June 2019 and aims to encourage the development of innovative and creative ways to support carers outside of formal health and care services.

Through the application process, we intend to select a portfolio of 'concept-testing' projects that will receive seed funding to develop creative and innovative models to provide effective support to carers. We expect the projects will be able to demonstrate measurable impacts against the areas in which carers tell us they need additional support, including:

- improving their health and wellbeing;
- increasing their ability to juggle their work and caring responsibilities;
- increasing their ability to take a break from their caring role;
- reducing the loneliness and social isolation experienced by carers.

Action 4.5: Carer Passport Scheme

The majority of carers take years to recognise their role, missing out on crucial financial, practical and emotional support in the meantime ([Carers UK](#)). On a personal level, a lack of practical help can have a huge impact on health and wellbeing, whether causing long-term physical health effects such as back pain, or leading to mental ill health and social isolation and as a result of caring without a supportive network.

The Carer Passport scheme, launched in October 2017, has been designed to address this by helping carers recognise their caring role, connecting them to local support and enabling them receive discounts or local concessions in the community to make life a little easier. In employment Carer Passports provide a straightforward way to discuss and document the flexibility and support a business can give to enable employees to combine caring with work. A Carer Passport is a record which identifies a carer in some way and leads to provision of support, services or other benefits in response. The schemes could be based in hospitals, work places, communities, mental health trusts, schools, colleges and universities.

The use of Carer Passports continues to grow across the country with more and more organisations choosing to adopt this approach to supporting carers. Every week there are requests for information through the [Carer Passport website](#) from organisations looking to set up schemes and the [animations](#) continue to be popular with carers and organisations. Carer Passports have been especially popular with employers and Companies House was one of the latest employers to announce their scheme. Earlier this year, the use of Carer Passports within hospitals was selected as a global innovative carer practice by the International Alliance of Carer Organizations which led to international interest in developing similar schemes in Ireland, Italy, Israel and Australia.

We want to ensure that more carers benefit from this scheme and, therefore, DHSC committed to funding further dissemination and evaluation of the Carer Passport scheme.

In addition, Rupert McNeil, the Government Chief People Officer, announced a [Civil-Service-wide Carer's Passport](#).

Links with other strategies

More than 8 in 10 carers describe themselves as lonely or socially isolated ([Carers UK, 2017](#)). In October 2018, the Government published [the first strategy to tackle loneliness](#), which acknowledged that carers are often left feeling unable to take part in social activities or relationships or look after their own health and wellbeing. As part of the commitment to tackling loneliness and social isolation, the Government also established the Building Connections Fund, which is investing £1.3m to fund a number of projects that will increase support for carers.

Chapter 5: Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for carers

While the Call for Evidence provided us with a wealth of information, it also revealed that there are gaps in our knowledge and evidence base. The actions in this section seek to build and expand on the existing knowledge so that we can ensure we continue to develop policies and interventions that target support for carers appropriately.

Action 5.5: Carers Employment Digital Discovery

At the point of realising a relative or friend has care needs, people have to make a series of decisions about how those needs will be met, and what their role in meeting them will be. This brings with it the question of how associated care needs are to be managed between family members, public services, private services and charities. To assess their options for supporting people with care needs, and make the best choices for themselves, individuals require a good understanding of a highly complex and often unfamiliar system of services and support, and of the longer-term implications of those options. These decisions are often taken at a time of great stress, limited time and heightened emotion characterised by reactive and short-term thinking.

The outcome in many cases is that employment for some or all of the family members can take a back seat, with consequences ranging from going part time or turning down an opportunity for promotion, to giving up work or switching to an alternative form of work. Leaving or reducing participation in work can have profound and enduring negative impacts on a carer's financial, physical and mental wellbeing, as well as broader and social and economic impacts.

The Carers Employment Digital Discovery Project aims to explore if and how we can support people to remain in work by helping them to make more informed decisions from

the earliest stages of their caring journeys. It is jointly funded by DWP, DSHC and GEO, and led by the DWP Behavioural Science team.

The project has been conducted on a behavioural, highly user focussed basis to fully understand the problem. Grounded in qualitative research with people at the early and later stages of the journey, it has tested and explored the emerging issues and findings with a deliberately large and wide-ranging group of external stakeholders from local authorities to condition-specific charities, to employers and carer-support organisations.

The project has gathered insight to help us understand:

- the journeys that working people take from the point that their friend or family member first becomes unwell and starts to need care or when their care needs change;
- the key decisions that they face and their information needs at those decision points;
- the extent to which these needs are met by the currently available online information;
- what changes to the current online information provision might enable it to better meet their needs.

So far, the project has found that a wide range of support services provide information and advice that makes sense given the purpose of each stakeholder, but do not amount to a useable or joined-up roadmap for navigating the system as a whole.

Going forward, we will work with a range of cross-sector stakeholders, including charities, the Money and Pensions Service and the NHS to improve the signposting, clarity and consistency of information carers receive about their rights, entitlements and options to empower them to make the best decisions for them about if and how to combine work and care. We expect to provide further details about the proposals and plans for future action alongside the publication of the project's qualitative research findings in the Autumn.

Next steps

Many of the commitments in the Plan are now underway or have been completed, and a variety of reports and products have been developed. We will work to develop a communications strategy to ensure that the findings from these pieces of work continue to be disseminated and promoted and the recommendations implemented.

There are a few actions which we committed to starting during the 2019/20 financial year. These are moving forward and include:

- a project to support parent carers to navigate the transition from child to adult services as their child approaches the age of 18;
- a project which focuses on young carers from disadvantaged and seldom heard groups, to increase the timely identification of particularly hidden young carers and to support better identification among Black, Asian and minority ethnic families; and,
- the Department of Health and Social Care, in partnership with NHS Digital, will commission survey data on experiences of carers in England (to update on 2009/10 Survey of Carers in Households).

While the Carers Action Plan is an important step in improving support for carers, we recognise that there is still more to do, and we remain committed to continuing to find new ways to support carers.

In addition to the projects that we have already committed to through the Carers Action Plan for 2019-20, we will undertake the following:

- We will explore the potential for a national recognition scheme for young carers to help them gain recognition in the community. It will also look to provide access to discounts that will enable them to be better participate in leisure activities with their peers.
- We will hold a young carers parliament day to raise young carers' profile amongst parliamentarians, and give them a greater understanding of how the political system works;
- We will fund further dissemination of the Carers UK Carer Passport Scheme to help more Carer Passport schemes be set up across the country; to further increase the recognition of carers in the community;
- We will fund further work to promote the Carer Confident benchmarking scheme to further encourage employers to set up carer-friendly working practices.

The Carers Action Plan set out the cross-government commitment to carers over a two-year period, which will conclude in summer 2020. At the end of this period DHSC will produce a concluding report setting out the progress made throughout the two years and how it intends to move forward to continue to ensure carers receive the best support possible.

The forthcoming Social Care Green Paper will also include a focus on how society supports and recognises carers as a vital part of a sustainable health and social care system to ensure that they are properly valued, recognised and supported to provide care in a way that supports their own health and wellbeing.

The Carers Action Plan Ministerial Oversight Group will meet a further three times:

- 14th October 2019
- February 2020
- July 2020

Annex A: Resources

Here are some of the key resources that have been produced as a result of the commitments in the Carers Action Plan:

Action 1.1: NHSE published the [quality markers](#) on 11th June.

Action 1.5: As a part of this action [a review has been undertaken of the role of GPs in dementia care and coordination](#) to assess whether they or other staff groups are best placed to take this role through dialogue with key partners.

Action 1.8: [The Chief Social Worker's Annual Report](#) includes a commitment on re-launching resources for carers. The resources are being reviewed and will be published in June.

Action 1.9: DHSC published [standards for Social Work Practice Supervisors](#) in December 2018 which emphasises the need for Social Workers to engage with carers.

Action 1.12: [Local Gov sector led improvement: Efficient and Effective Interventions](#)

Action 1.13: The [guidance for commissioners and providers of respite and carers breaks](#) has been published. The guidance is accompanied by a [series of films](#) providing advice, information and reassurance to carers.

Action 2.1: The resources and publicity materials for the Carer Confident Benchmarking Scheme are hosted on the [Carer Confident website](#).

It includes:

- [The benefits of Carer Confident](#)
- [FAQs for small employers](#)
- [Criteria for all levels \(Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the benchmark\)](#)
- [Detailed guidelines and criteria for each level](#)
- [How to apply](#)

Action 2.7: NHS England and NHS Improvement have published [‘the role of carers in the NHS workforce and how managers can better support them’](#).

Action 2.8: [The Timewise Foundation Flexible Jobs Hub](#)

Action 2.11:GEO has launched [best practice guidance](#) and a [toolkit](#) to help employers run effective returner programmes. These resources provide employers with guidance on supporting people back to work via returner programmes. This includes information on the real competitive advantage for employers in running such programmes, such as increased diversity, access to a high calibre talent pool, cost effective recruitment and improved retention rates.

Action 2.12: The Government Equalities Office have published:

- [infographic for those who have taken a break from work who are thinking about returning.](#)
- [best practice guidance on returners programmes for employers and;](#)
- [a toolkit to help employers run effective returner programmes for employers.](#)

Action 2.13: The Government Equalities Office have published:

- [the results of their research to understand more about returners;](#)
- [the responses to the call for evidence and;](#)
- [further quantitative analysis of returners.](#)

Action 3.1: [Resources for the 'Train the trainer' model](#)

Action 3.6:The [Learning and Work Institute have produced posters and flyers](#) to inform students who are carers of their eligibility to Carers Allowance.

Action 3.9: [The Children's Society Shaping our Future: Improving Assessment and Support for Young Carers Transition to Adulthood](#) report.

Action 4.1: [The Carers Innovation Fund](#) application process has been launched.

Action 4.5: [Carer Passports](#)

Links to the resources relating to each of the actions are included in the updates provided in the document published alongside this report.

Annex B: Ministerial Carers Action Plan Oversight Group Members

Caroline Dinenage, Minister of State for Care & Chair of Ministerial Carers Action Plan Oversight Group

Rosamond Roughton, Director for Care & Transformation, Department of Health and Social Care

Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK

Giles Meyer, Chief Executive, Carers Trust

Ian Peters, Chair, Employers for Carers

David Croisdale-Appleby, former chair Standing Commission on Carers and Independent Advisory Group for Carers

Anne Longfield OBE, Children's Commissioner for England

Dame Philippa Russell, Sandwich Carer

Charlie Byrne, Young Adult Carer

Alicia Jones, Young Carer

Shazia Hussain, Department for Education, Deputy Director, Child Protection, Safeguarding and Family Law

Helen Martin/Jo Warner Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, joint head(s) of the Individual Rights and Migration Team

Mark Knight, Department of Work and Pensions, Deputy Director, Fuller Working Lives, Ageing Society and State Pensions

Ramona Herdman, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Head of Tackling Loneliness

Elysia McCaffrey, Government Equalities Office, Deputy Director of Gender Policy and Operations

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