



Thurrock Council Action Plan for Unpaid Carers Strategy 2023

Introduction

In 2023, Healthwatch Thurrock undertook independent engagement to shape, consult on and review the unpaid carers services on offer in Thurrock. The uptake in engagement was high, of great quality and Thurrock Council were struck by the voices of the unpaid carers and how well the report captured them, so much so that we sought permission to use the report in its entirety as Thurrock Council's Unpaid Carers Strategy.



Following this, Healthwatch Thurrock undertook an action planning event to determine the priorities for unpaid carers locally. This formed the Action Plan and the information set out below is to provide an update to all on where Thurrock Council are at with each action that we agreed with unpaid carers, what still needs to be addressed and keep connected on any new arising issues and good news stories.

Build on what is already working well and is valued by carers.

We have reviewed the training offer available both digitally and face to face. We have updated our online offer and are currently organising in person training.

Improve communication between different support services to avoid carers having to repeat themselves. Ensuring timely follow up following referrals into services. Work with health settings to ensure patient notes reflect carers status. Ability to speak on loved ones' behalf.

We are currently undertaking a project that will integrate health and social care in carers identification, provide seamless data sharing and flag carers across health and social care. We hope for this to improve communication, signposting and accessing services for carers in Thurrock both in health and social care. We almost ready to roll out the ability for Thurrock Carers Services to undertake assessments on our behalf, in direct response to the views you expressed.

Increase staff availability so that carer break allowances, agreed in assessments, can be met. More flexible respite options.

When we first reviewed the sitting service, waiting lists had improved and assessed eligible need was being fully met. We have since done a further review and found that waiting lists are increasing again. We are looking into this, and we plan to continue to undertake regular reviews of this service to ensure that needs are being met.

We also plan to engage with carers around improvements to sitting services and the local offer, of activities, for unpaid carer that can be accessed during a carers break.

Better explanations of carers assessment process.

A review of the written material on carers assessments was carried out. Thurrock Carers Services worked directly with unpaid carers to produce a document that would better explain the process to what is involved and how you could benefit from having one.

Improve availability of information regarding support for carers. Having a central point of access, taking into consideration different digital abilities.

We undertook a review of all information and advice available from Thurrock Council and the Thurrock Carers Service. In response to this, the Thurrock Carers Service has designed new leaflets for information as well as ensuring that all other hard copy information is up to date. We recognise the importance to continually reviewing this information, as is only a true reflection at the time its undertaken.



Provide training workshops to carers to support an improved understanding of the health conditions of their loved ones.

We continue to work hard to enable this to go ahead, whereby you can come together in person or virtually depending on preference, to undergo training on specific conditions. We are hoping this will provide you with a time to connect socially and access peer support.

Training around Lasting Power of Attorney/ Guardianship is also being explored for carers to empower you in making these applications and providing useful training on why and when they are useful to have.

Contingency planning.

We have begun to undertake a project that will allow us to hold contingency plans across our systems, and clear guidelines for local services on how to enact these plans should an emergency arise.

More flexibility in appointment times (health).

We have discussed the need for more flexible appointment times and have been assured by Health that evening and weekend appointments are available for carers. We will however be continuing to work with health services to ensure these are promoted to carers and are used as intended so uptake and awareness is improved. It is important for unpaid carer to identify to the GP, to access these flexible appointments and to receive the support they are entitled to.

In person support within each community, not just Grays.

We are exploring ways in which we can continue to support the Thurrock Carers Service to embed in each locality. There can be many challenges to this however we are committed to locality working and each community being able to access local and relevant support without excessive travel. Integrated locality teams that are made up of both social care and health staff are present and active in each community and the aim is to have a carer support officer, working alongside these teams.

Work with employers to explore how carers can be supported in the workplace and ensure flexible working arrangement to meet the needs of carers that wish to work.

We have begun conversations on how to reach local employers to enable them to support carers in the workplace with the purpose of raising awareness of carers employment rights, their value to an organisation, and offering resource via Carers UK on how to make businesses be carer friendly employers.

Colleagues in Childrens Service are working tirelessly to deliver on actions related to Young Carers and Young Adult Carers, however, should you like specific updates in relation to this please contact cypcommissioning@thurrock.gov.uk

We recognise this is the begin, and welcome all and any feedback that will assist us in shaping and delivery services that are person centred and fit for purpose. If anyone should wish to be involved in ongoing conversations as the 'expert' please reach to Healthwatch Thurrock on admin@healthwatchthurrock.org

We also express a big heartfelt thank you to everyone involved in the shaping of the Carers Strategy and Action Plan so far.



We are committed to ongoing engagement whereby unpaid carers as 'experts, by experience' come together, to shape the services in which they are in receipt of. By continuing to involve unpaid carers throughout all stages of service planning and delivery, and not just when we decide, we can allow for truly collaborative working. This will make sure 'equal value participation' really exists in Thurrock.