

Carers look after family or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability.

The care they provide is unpaid.

## Carers Strategy Document 2004

### *Introduction*

This document succeeds the previous Carers Strategy document developed in response to a national strategy for carers – ‘Caring About Carers’ (1998), which identified a need for carers’ support and placed the onus on Local Authorities to provide a local strategy for delivering the Carers Grant (est. 1999/2000).

As a result of this, the Carers Strategy Group was established, empowering carer input. Their role was to develop and monitor the local delivery of the strategy. The Strategy Group identified the need for Development Workers to drive the process of carers’ support forward.

This new strategy updates the previous strategy (May 2000) and gives a clear local focus for the way forward in Carers Support from Social Services.

### **Current Legislation**

National Assistance Act 1948

Health Services and Public Health Act 1968

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

National Health Services Act 1977

Mental Health Act 1983

Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986

Children's act 1989

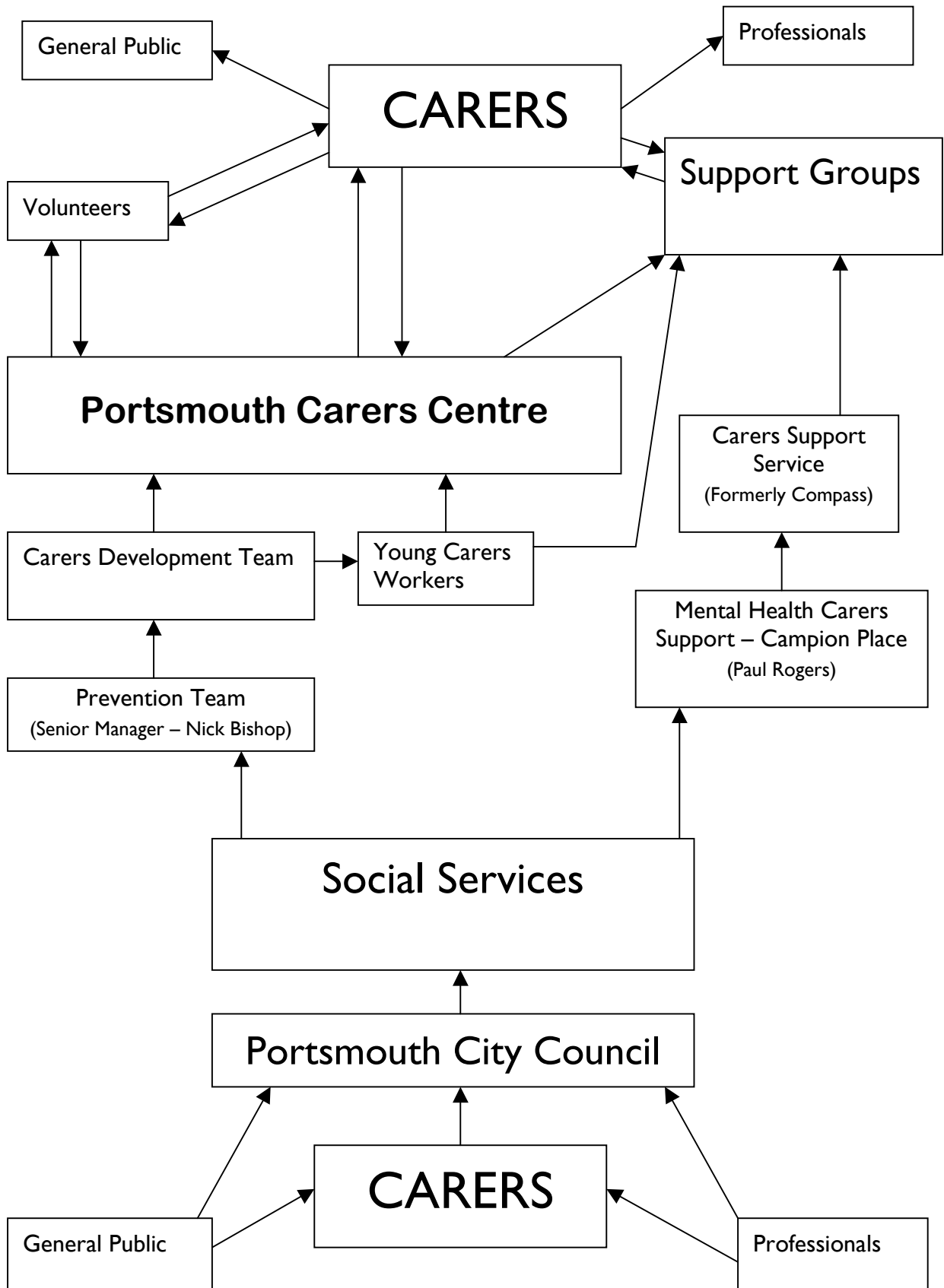
Carers (Recognition & Services) Act 1995

National Carers Strategy, Caring about Carers 1998

Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000

Carers (equal opportunities) Act 2004 (implementation date April 2005)

# Organisational Chart



# **The Strategy**

The Carers' Strategy is delivered according to five key performance standards

1. Information
2. Providing a Break
3. Emotional Support
4. Support to Care and Maintain Carer's Own Health
5. Having a Voice

## **The Five Standards**

### **Information**

Providing information is important to let people realise they are carers and to what they are entitled; local services, support groups and a range of benefits and entitlements, e.g. Council Tax reduction. With between 40 - 60% of disability benefits going unclaimed, and with many carers unaware of their rights to an assessment of their needs, it is estimated that last year as much as £660 million of carers' benefits went unclaimed (figures from Carers UK). To help address this shortfall in benefits uptake and to help carers with all their financial matters, we fund a Carers Outreach Worker, currently based at the Landport Access Point.

Providing information raises awareness in professionals and others about the needs of carers, which leads to greater uptake of and access to services. It also raises awareness in carers about what is available and it empowers and supports them thereby helps to increase their quality of life.

The Carers Centre provides information to Carers, practitioners, schools, and voluntary organisations via a comprehensive information pack, a magazine, newly-developed website, carers information days, publicity and articles in other news media and alternative formats, backed up by library of leaflets, books and brochures. Enabling carers to access computers and the Internet, and access to training provides information for carers. Raising awareness of the availability and variety of breaks, informing carers about current legislation and policies and how they affect them are also primary aims of information provision. Carers need to have information on their legal rights etc. The Carers Centre also disseminates information to local carers' support groups. This may be information about training

opportunities, potential sources of funding, relevant or timely information of interest to Carers.

The Carers Centre will increase its activity in this area. The location of the Carers Centre in shop-front premises allows the development of window displays highlighting current projects and key messages for Carers, like the Leisure Library, Pension Credit and winter warmth campaigns. Future developments will also include a range of targeted information available to minority groups as well as ensuring that strap lines are included on all appropriate publicity. The Carers Centre works with GP surgeries; under their new contract and guidance relating to Carers; health and social workers and develop a range of information aimed at specific professional groups and developing links with other professionals like the link forged with the Tenancy Support service. Continued development of the Carers website and Young Carers website, greater use of news and information media to publicise the Centre, inform carers, advertise alternative breaks etc. are all projects for the future.

## Providing a Break

Carers are eligible for breaks services if they provide, or intend to provide, regular and substantial care to someone who is ill, frail or has a disability, and would be eligible to receive community care services in their own right.

We aim to provide breaks to carers supporting vulnerable people living in Portsmouth. Breaks are provided to be time-off for the carer and not an emergency response to a crisis, nor should it be any other than a positive experience for the carer. 'Being able to go to the dentist should not be regarded as a "break" for the carer.' (National Strategy p.61).

Providing breaks help support the independence of carers. It allows them to have some time of their own, or for them to pursue their own interests, see their own friends or take care of their own needs. A break from caring is invaluable in reducing the psychological and emotional stress faced by many carers. This, in turn, contributes to the prevention of abuse of vulnerable people. Early access to support services and breaks can also help carers continue providing the support they give to vulnerable people/relatives.

Access to breaks is provided by:

- Financial support to local groups
- Accessing external funding as appropriate
- Access to specialist provision
- Financing workers to run and support groups
- Developing short breaks opportunities (e.g. Time Out & Take-a-Break)
- Holiday, residential breaks and low-level respite like cinema tickets & Siva Centre vouchers
- Supporting the Carers Leisure Library
- Direct Payments to allow carers to organise their own breaks
- Planning, developing and monitoring Carers Grant to provide Best Value breaks services
- Advertising alternative breaks

The centre has also been able to recruit volunteers, also carers, giving them the opportunity to have a break from their caring role, develop new skills and enhance existing ones. Key life skills are developed which will aid their caring role and their long-term prospects in returning to the community.

## Emotional Support

Ongoing emotional support to carers is provided by:

- Peer support.  
Enabling access to, and promotion of Carers Support Groups, finding out what people need, and developing new groups.  
Providing information to help groups access funding and training opportunities for group leaders.
- Providing individual support.  
This may be in the form of a 'listening ear' and may include an initial home visit followed by appropriate active-signposting in response to a crisis.
- Promote, support and deliver opportunities for social activity, sometimes in partnership with local groups
- Funding advocacy service for carers.
- Carers Helpline.  
Out-of-hours information and counselling. Currently attending monitoring meetings. Also monitor the development of the new, lottery-funded, 'Listening Ear' by Carers Together, which will provide a service to Portsmouth carers.
- Maintain links to Relatives and Residents Associations
- Supporting the many and varied groups and their leaders.

The future aims of the Carers Centre are to continue, refine and increase our support in these areas.

## **Support to Care and Maintain Carers Own Health**

It has been demonstrated that a third of Carers feel that their own health has deteriorated as a direct result of their caring role.

The Carers Centre will promote the acknowledgement of carers on GP registers by establishing links with GP practices, raising awareness of carers health issues, like back-care needs, and offering training to practices to help them identify carers and offer appropriate health-care advice and services. Further to this, the Carers Centre will continue and refine our links with Portsmouth City PCT, Health Action Plans and the Health Improvement Programme.

We support and promote the healthy lifestyles initiative, providing healthy refreshments at our group meetings and events. We are particularly pro-active in encouraging the uptake of healthy diets for Young Carers through information and activities at the Young Carers' groups.

We promote access to complementary and alternative relaxation techniques and therapies through taster sessions and information provision arranged through carers' days and 'Take-a-Break' sessions. The Carers Centre is pro-active in providing information and support for stress-reducing and/or stress-managing techniques and behaviour. We also provide personal development and training opportunities for carers through the IT training project, 'Time Out' and 'Carers, Carers, Carers' projects, and carers involvement in development and production of the Carers Centre magazine – "Take Care".

The Carers Centre is encouraging PCC Leisure Services to incorporate carers in their leisure and health promoting activities. We will advertise and encourage carer uptake of the PCC Leisure Card. The Carers Centre will, with others, seek that the Portsmouth City Council 'Family Friendly' policy is extended to increase support for carers working for Portsmouth City Council in recognition of the contribution made by carers through their caring role.

The flexible provision of Carers' Services helps to support the health and well-being of carers. Payments can be made for services and items that do not provide a break but do enhance this. E.g. the provision of a washing machine could increase quality of life by alleviating both the physical strain of taking the laundry to the launderette, and the stress of leaving the cared-for person while they do.

## Having a Voice

The initiatives all contribute to encouraging carers to have confidence that their voice can be heard and the aim of the Carers Centre is to ensure that. The sharing of information and experience with other authorities will contribute to the development of best practice service provision. We undertake outreach work to support the carers' collective voice, supporting groups and facilitating the formation of new groups particularly amongst minority populations. Support for and promotion of the Carers Helpline ensures that someone is listening. Increasing carer ownership of "Take Care", the Carers Centre magazine will also develop the voice of the carer.

Giving carers a voice through consultation is a cornerstone of our work. We hold regular consultation sessions with carers on all policies and procedures affecting them, for example, the Charging Policy and Carers Assessments. The principal consultation groups are the Carers Strategy Group and the Older Persons Focus Group. The move towards a Carers Council will increase the voice of carers. The Carers Centre helps facilitate the carers in voicing their thoughts to service planning fora like Partnership Boards, in encouraging peer-group monitoring and involvement in service contract reviews. We also encourage consultation with outside bodies, particularly those undertaking research in health and social policy, and encourage attendance at seminars and conferences.

## *Conclusion*

We are aware that past success can only be maintained and bettered by constant and rigorous measurement against set targets, the principal outcomes of which should be:

- Carers need to feel supported in their caring role.
- Carers should not feel disadvantaged at work.
- Carers should be financially supported as appropriate.
- Carers should have access to appropriate services provided by the relevant agency.

These projected outcomes will be achieved by following the action plans (attached) for the Carers Centre and workers. These Action Plans for the Carers Centre set high but achievable targets for continuing, developing and improving long-term provision of carers support, involving carers in future plans for the Centre and in policy-making. These aims and objectives will be measured by

- annual review,
- departmental contract volume monitoring,
- ongoing feedback from carers, particularly the Carers Strategy Group set up to monitor delivery of the Strategy,
- monitoring numbers of new carers on the Carers Centre database (to show that the Carers Centre is in contact with an increasing proportion of carers in Portsmouth),
- monitoring the numbers of information packs sent out,
- measuring the numbers of Young Carers attending groups,
- measuring numbers of carers accessing short breaks using Carers Special Grant report on spend to Department of Health,
- the number and quality of Carers Assessments undertaken,
- the increased take-up of services by people from minority ethnic communities.

Partnership and good practice have been the cornerstone of success. The Carers Centre is held in the highest regard by Carers and continues to strive for excellence. Partnership working has produced strong roots in the community with Carers taking a significant role in the development and monitoring of services.

**Working towards a better future for Carers.**