

Support for Unpaid Carers

Feeding back to you

Why we consulted

Gateshead Council and Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group are working together to review the services we can give to you and other 'informal carers' in Gateshead. An informal carer is anyone, such as a family member, friend or neighbour who is giving regular, ongoing help to someone else, without payment for the care they give.

We want to understand how we can support you and how we can develop carers' services in the future.

When we consulted

1st December 2016 – 20th January 2017

How we consulted

The survey was made available on the council's on-line consultation system. Paper copies of the survey were available on request.

In addition to the survey, we have been supported by an independent organisation called Involve North East, who engaged with carers to find out about their role. This meant we could capture those carers who had not had the opportunity, or were not in a position to complete the on-line survey.

We also gathered views from carers and professionals at a public event focussing on carers, and met with district nurses, Commissioned Providers of Carers' Services and care managers from Gateshead Council, who are responsible for assessing the needs of carers.

Feedback

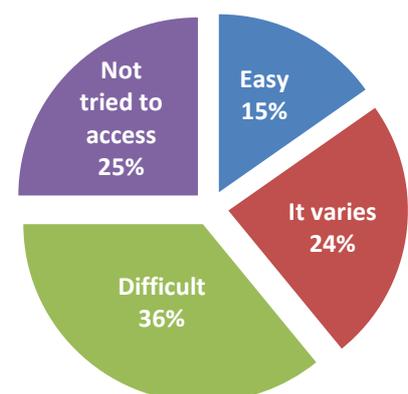
Accessing information and advice

We asked carers to tell us how easy or difficult it is to access information and advice about support, services or benefits for themselves as a carer.

Those who find it easy tend to be those who are already in contact with support services - either through a social worker or voluntary sector organisation. Those who find this a difficult task felt it was because they didn't know what is available or who to go to for help. Some people also didn't really want to ask for help, feeling they should be able to cope with caring.

One carer admitted to being good at finding information, but actually getting the support offered was another matter. This was much the same for some others who felt the level of difficulty or ease varied, depending on what you're looking for. Some felt lack of time was an issue, services not always being joined up and information not in one place.

How easy is it to access information and advice



About being a carer

We asked carers to tell us how their caring role impacts on their overall health and wellbeing and overall 90% of carers who completed the survey said that their general health is affected in some way by their caring role.

Carers explained their social life and family life is greatly affected, as caring becomes a way of life which impacts on maintaining relationships or maintaining employment and the financial impact this brings with it. Less income when giving up work or reducing working hours also contributes to stress and worry. Carers also commented on how their physical health is affected by their role.

Top 3 health and wellbeing issues affecting carers as a result of their caring role:

76%	Family life
63%	Social life
61%	Mental health

Accessing support

We asked carers if there was anything which prevented them accessing support for themselves or the person they care for. Over half felt there were barriers to getting support.

When asked if anything prevented them from accessing support for the person they care for or for themselves as a carer, 68% who had tried to access support said that there was. Many felt they lacked support from family and friends for a variety of reasons including the complexities of the cared for person's condition, physical distance, their own commitments or lack of understanding. Carers were also unsure what support is available, or whether they would be entitled to any help, as well as not knowing where to look or having the time to look.

What helps?

We asked carers to tell us if they receive support which actually helps them in their caring role.

Just under half of carers said their current support helped them, this was mainly due to packages of care being in place to support the needs of the cared for person, or respite care being provided. This allowed the carer to continue working or have a break from their caring role.

Having an understanding family, carer organisations' hosting coffee mornings and support groups, a youth club and deaf café were also mentioned as supporting carers' roles.

What else would be useful?

We asked carers to tell us if there is anything they don't currently get which would be of benefit to them in their caring role – almost two thirds (63%) said yes.

What else would benefit your caring role?

- Breaks from caring role
- Better support across health and adult care
- Someone to listen
- If employers were more understanding
- Financial support / advice

They told us that breaks, improved support across adult social care and health services, someone to listen to them when they feel no-one cares, training sessions about health conditions and training for managers who support staff with caring roles, would all help.

Financial support and advice is also important to carers. Carers want fairer access to benefits, help with transport costs and money to support them during retirement, when this is brought on as a result of caring.

What could be improved?

Information was the main thing carers asked for. Carers mentioned the need for one point of contact and information and advice at the time a diagnosis is made - not just leaving the carer to get by.

Help should be easily available and information packs should detail what is available. A step by step guide would support carers to know what to expect and where to turn when conditions change as well as regular meetings so carers can share with professionals how services are meeting their obligations and how they are performing.

Carers also felt improvements to caring support and training would benefit them. Professionals should be trained on specific conditions such as Autism, to better understand the specific needs of the cared for person and give better support to the carer. Good quality care and more day care opportunities for people with dementia as well as communication between services would also help carers.

Next Steps

We've looked at all of the information we've gathered, we've listened to what carers have told us and we've identified four key service aims, which we feel are important to support carers in Gateshead. The proposed four key aims are shown below:

Keep you informed

- ◆ Make sure information is easy to access in a variety of formats which helps you find what you need when you need it.



Help you look after your health and wellbeing

- ◆ It is important that we support all carers to look after and maintain their own health needs.
- ◆ We want our services to work with all carers to understand what they do, understand the impacts on the carer and determine what support could help them in their caring role.
- ◆ We want to help carers to develop and learn new skills to maintain independence and build confidence.
- ◆ We want to support carers to look after their own physical health, emotional health, mental health and general wellbeing.
- ◆ We want to work with health and social care professionals to improve how we look after carers.
- ◆ We want to share information with carers about what services can help them.
- ◆ We want to work with schools and colleges to inform them on how they can support our young and young adult carers.



Offer you a break from caring

- ◆ Support you to access some quality time for yourself away from your caring role.



Help others to understand the needs of informal carers

- ◆ We want our services to raise awareness about how valuable and important carers are to Gateshead.
- ◆ We need to inform professionals, organisations, employers and the people of Gateshead on carers and how they can be supported.
- ◆ We want our services to work with carers to develop a Carer Friendly Gateshead.



The service aims will be agreed following consultation with potential service providers in June to August 2017. This gives the people and organisations that support carers a chance to share their experience, their knowledge and their views.

We will look to publish a specification in November 2017 with a view to commissioning the support for unpaid carers service from July 2018.