



Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Carers' Strategy

Updated February 2020



**Caring is such an important part of life.
It's simply part of being human.**

Introduction

For people living at home who need care and support the family member, friend or neighbours who deliver care can be a lifeline and their roles cannot be underestimated. Carers are central to how adults and children's services are delivered across all our services at Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

Every year, more and more people take on a caring role. The enormous contribution of carers not only makes an invaluable difference to the people they support it is an integral part of our health and social care system. It also needs to be better recognised that this also includes the younger population as many carers are children.

The value and importance of carers is ever-increasing with our ageing population. However, too often carers feel they are on their own, do not feel respected, valued and supported for the huge contribution they make. They feel that what they do is sometimes taken for granted and overlooked, which often takes a toll on their own wellbeing. Not only do carers face emotional challenges but they also have to find their way through the complex health care systems with little formal guidance and direction.

Carers need to be recognised and valued. They need access to information and support to provide the best care they can. Carers need to be helped to balance their caring responsibilities with their own employment and life as well as maintaining their personal health and wellbeing.

There are many young carers who do a fantastic job and we must also work with them and support them better to make sure that their caring responsibilities do not get in the way of their social lives, friendship, education and development.

This is why we at Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Trust have developed our Carers' Strategy and a supporting improvement plan. The strategy describes our commitment, vision and direction for how we can better support carers, whilst the action plan sets out the practical actions we plan to take years to improve how we work with carers.

Every one of us must play our part to help recognise, value and support carers who make an amazing contribution looking after so many people in need of help and support.

Useful facts :

- The population is living longer with illness or disability, and more and more of people are acting as carers
- Every day 6,000 people become carers. Many don't know how or where to get help. It can be frightening and very lonely.
- 70% of carers come into contact with healthcare professionals (yet healthcare professionals only identify 10%)
- There are around 6.5 million carers in the UK – that's 1 in 8 people.

In order to understand the need for the establishment of this strategy we need to establish some understanding of what a “carer” is and what they do.

Who is a carer?

Our definition of a carer is :

- someone who provides unpaid care or support for a partner, parent, child, sibling, family, friend or neighbour who has a disability or long-term health condition they can be of any age.
- This could be someone who has a physical, sensory or learning disability, mental health, substance misuse or due to frailty needs additional support from the carer on a regular basis.
- Carers may not always be recognised for the support that they provide.

Carers may undertake a range of activities, such as:

- providing support with practical tasks
- providing emotional support, supervising someone to keep them safe
- assisting with physical care
- helping with personal care
- sometimes providing financial support
- collecting and administering medication
- helping with identifying signs of relapse and providing support that may help to prevent hospital admission
- helping someone to access services and support
- acting as interpreters where there are language difficulties

What have carers told to us?

In developing this strategy the “voice of the carer” was sought . This is what they told us:



Why do we need a Carers' Strategy?

- It shows our commitment to carers , families , friends , patients and staff to identify and support carers
- Involving carers makes economic sense. The benefits of early intervention and prevention will enable us to maximise the use of limited resources.
- Carer involvement in service design and delivery will also help better direct limited resources.
- It will provide more individualised care for our patients / service users
- There are benefits to our staff in this approach. By supporting staff to better involve the family and carers of patients and service users we are likely to receive positive feedback and reduce incidents of aggression or violence towards staff.

What about our staff who are carers?

If one in eight of the population are carers then this equation should apply to our workforce, with one in eight staff members potentially balancing a caring role and their role within the Trust. The Trust offers a range of support initiatives which seek to enable staff to maintain a positive work-life balance. These include:

- Flexible working
- Additional annual leave
- Special leave policy
- Career break
- Carers discussion board
- Carers Passport
- Insight Advice line for Bridgewater staff
- Occupational Health and the Counselling service
- Livelifewell
- The Health Hub
- Dementia resources
- Financial support for carers
- External resources, including carers support groups

The Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Carers' Strategy recognises the work done to support staff in their caring responsibilities and this document has been developed alongside this work.

So what do we need to do?

Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust wants to use this Carers' Strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of carers and to support a better experience for them. The trust commitments / priority areas are to:

- Treat carers with dignity and compassion
- Respect the role of the carer and recognise their needs and involve them in the planning of care

- Support health and social care professionals to be better at recognising, identifying, valuing and working with carers, including colleagues who are carers
- Increase the number of Bridgewater staff who are aware of the role of carers and the impact this has on our patients, their families and their colleagues
- Develop a Trust wide policy that describes how staff will take into consideration the needs of carers within our local community

How will we do it?

The Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Carers' Strategy is supported by a detailed improvement plan. The improvement plan will be approved and progress against the agreed actions will be monitored through the Service Experience Group.

How will we know we have been successful?

The indicators of success will be:

- Results of patients/ carers satisfaction surveys
- Friends and Family test Results

Where will this be strategy be monitored and reviewed?

The Carers' Strategy implementation plan will be monitored by:

- The Service Experience Group

What documents have been used when developing the Carers' Strategy?

It is imperative that this strategy takes into account national and local policy documents relating to carers. The Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Carers' Strategy is aligned to several local work streams, projects and strategies. These include:

- **Carer Action Plan 2018-2020 Supporting carers today - Department of Health & Social Care (June 2018)**
- **Carers Action Plan 2018- 2020 Supporting carers today – One year on progress review (July 2019)**
- **Commissioning for Carers - NHS (2014)**
- **The hidden costs of caring – Marie Curie (2015)**
- **Valuing Carers 2015 – Carers UK (2015)**
- **Local Carers' Strategies (various)**
- **Patient's Charter - Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**
- **Working with National Voices 2017-18 - National Voices**
- **Bridgewater Staff Zone - Support for Carers (2019)**
<http://nww.bridgewater.nhs.uk/staff-zone/support-for-carers/Pages/default.aspx>
- **Staff Engagement Plan 2020-2023 – Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**
- **Workforce Strategy 2019-2022 – Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**