

## **Carers Strategy EqIA**

**Jeremy Beake**

**04 August 2014**

This is an Equality Impact Assessment of the **Carers Strategy**. Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The duty to pay 'due regard' is required to be demonstrated in the decision making and the implementation process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed projects that are part of the programme is the means by which we show 'due regard'.

### **1. The Decision**

The strategy has been co-produced through the Carers Strategy Group, Carers Partnership Board and Learning Disability Partnership Board Carers Subgroup. Membership of these groups includes: - carers, service providers, commissioners, social care managers, information officers and local stakeholders.

A local strategy is the starting point on which to develop better services for carers in Milton Keynes. It will be used to develop an action plan and then form a base on which to look at how much progress is being made. The Strategy Group will develop or ensure another body is tasked to develop an implementation plan for the Carers Strategy. The plan will be monitored through the Carers Strategy Group and Carers Partnership Board and by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **2. Methodology**

This assessment will review the strategy. It looks at the advancement of equality of opportunity, how the strategy adversely impacts different people and factors of respect and community relations.

### **3. People affected**

Currently there are approximately 3,000 unpaid carers (2013 number) known to local carers' support services but over 20,000 people in Milton Keynes said that they have a caring role in the 2011 census. unpaid carers.

### **4. The Strategy Assessed**

#### **4.1 The Care Act and the strategy**

4.1.1 One aim of the *Care Act* is to consolidate existing law and modernise the legal framework. Much of this modernisation matches the Council's ambitions for personalised adult care and support, which have been the subject of other assessments in the past.

4.1.2 There are perception changes that will support the advancement of equality of opportunity. The Act will see:

- The Council work as a catalyst for social and community action, often working through different groups working alongside statutory services
- The importance of early intervention work leading to considerable proportion of care needs could be avoided, reduced or delayed as a result
- Carers - which are an equality group as they are people who with association to a protected characteristic – recognised as the first line of prevention, properly identified and offered personalised support.

4.1.3 The changes simplify the legislation in respect of carers' assessments and introduce a new duty on local authorities to meet eligible needs for support.

4.1.4 The government has noted:

“The extra numbers of carer assessments and carer support services that might result directly from these changes to legislation are inevitably uncertain. We believe that our estimates are plausible, but clearly there is a risk that they could prove to be under-estimates or over-estimates. If our estimates prove to be under-estimates, councils may need either to limit the amount of support that they offer to each carer or to change local priorities between support for carers and other services.”

4.1.5 If this is an under-estimation, the Council will need to assess how it limits support and carers and/or which services it prioritises. Due regard should be given to the impact assessment findings on Carer Charging in 2013, which found potential for indirect discrimination.

4.1.6 This assessment will also have to assess how the balance in council charges between the cost of support and the contribution that carers make in terms of value of care and the prevention of the need for long term nursing or residential care.

## **4.2 Information**

4.2.1 This strategy is focused on maintaining the current, underpinning duty on the Council to provide information and advice on care and support services. It involves a modernisation of the terminology and a more detailed explanation of what an information and advice service must cover, leaving sufficient leeway for the Council to vary their services based on the local needs of their population.

4.2.2 Existing Statutory Guidance published in March 2013 makes clear that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Well-Being Strategies must be published, and have specific regard to “what health and social care information the community needs, including how they access it and what support they may need to understand it”.

4.2.3 Information will need to be provided in appropriate formats and in the language required by local people. The strategy should be to provide information that is sufficient for its local population.

## **4.3 Providing a service to carers**

As the Equality Impact Assessment of Carer Charges found, there is scope for indirect discrimination. Service providers should understand that if they set up a procedure where some carers can get a service and other not, when this is influenced by anything other than a clear means testing or measurement, then there is potential for indirect discrimination.

## **4.4 Confidentiality**

A suggested area of consideration is concerns confidentiality.

For example: Carers, particularly those who did not live near to the relative they suspected might be developing dementia, ran into trouble when they try to get information about their relative from a doctor or social worker.

Recognising the carers' role and the important position they hold will be part of giving respect.

## **4.5 Young people**

There is an issue that needs to be resolved with young carers. Obviously burdening young people with a carer role is not something the council will want to happen. However, young carers need to be recognised. Therefore

what is important is that all young carers' 'caring role' is recognised as well as their vulnerability.

**Summary:**

The strategy has been equality impact assessed, and due regard has been taken to the elimination of discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity and fostering of good community relations.

This strategy should ensure that those who provide care to family and friends on an informal basis should receive respect for their role and experience, receive appropriate information and advice, and have their views and needs taken into account.

It is important that the potential for indirect discrimination is avoided and confidentiality issues overcome.