

## **New carers strategy now out for folk to have their say**

A new Carers Strategy for Aberdeen is now out for public consultation.

Integration Joint Board members have approved plans to give the public the chance to have their say on the draft document in a consultation period lasting until 31 December 2022.

The views of carers and other stakeholders will be fully taken on board. The strategy and action plan will then be updated to take account of opinions and suggestions expressed and the final draft will then go back before the IJB at the end of January for approval.

The new three-year strategy maps out how Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership will support unpaid carers in their vital roles in helping family and friends.

Full information on the draft strategy and the consultation document is available at <https://www.aberdeencityhscp.scot/our-news/draft-aberdeencity-carer-strategy-consultation/>. Special on-line and in-person consultation events across the city are also listed.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on local authorities and health boards to prepare and publish a local Carers Strategy covering adults and young carers aged under 18.

The existing strategy, 'A Life Alongside Caring', will be replaced early next year by the new version.

An 'unpaid carer' is defined as someone who helps to support another individual or individuals in their daily lives. The term excludes paid carers and volunteers working with organisations, foster carers, and parents of dependent children apart from those with additional care and support needs.

It is estimated that there are potentially up to 24,500 people in Aberdeen providing thousands of hours of unpaid care to loved-ones each week. They play a crucial role within the health and social care system and the IJB made a commitment in its Strategic Plan, published earlier this year, to deliver better support to unpaid carers.

The public consultation on the new strategy aims to reach out to as many of those carers as possible so that their needs can be taken into account in the final document.

The draft strategy states: "The unpaid caring role is often a journey, with support only being sought when a crisis point is reached. Whilst we are mindful that each caring role is individual, we are committed to increasing awareness of the support available to unpaid carers and encouraging more of them to come forward."

The Scottish Health and Care Experience Survey indicated a drop in satisfaction of carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role in Aberdeen, from 34% in 2019/20 to 32% in 2021/22. While higher than the national average of 30% in 2021/22, this shows that two-thirds of carers in the city do not feel supported in their role.

The draft strategy aims to be informative and forward thinking. It provides an overview of some of the support available and the areas where there is a need for further improvement.

The document outlines four strategic priorities:

- identifying as a carer and the first steps to support
- accessing advice and support
- supporting future planning, decision-making and wider carer involvement, and
- community support and services for carers.

The draft strategy also includes an action plan, which will be updated through the three-year life of the document. There will also be a special focus, during the consultation period and beyond, on carers from minority ethnic communities, young carers' particular needs, carers who do not engage with services at the moment, people who do not currently recognise themselves as carers, emergency care needs when carers cannot fulfil their roles, the mental health support often needed by carers, and the requirements of carers with disabilities.

The annual budget for unpaid carers in Aberdeen is currently £2.537million.

IJB chair Luan Grugeon said: "The public consultation period will allow people to give us their views. We will listen closely to all the feedback and update the document in line with what people tell us.

"This will be a live document, with positive action and improvement at its heart. We will act decisively and monitor our progress closely, with clear goals to be achieved in year one and beyond. Carers and those they care for are among the most vulnerable people in the city and they deserve the best support and advice that we can possibly provide."

**ENDS**