

12 September 2007

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## **Local Government contribution to National Review of Carers Strategy - Decisions and Actions Required**

### **Decisions**

1. To receive a presentation from Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK, who will give members more background on the challenges facing carers today.

### **Actions Required**

2. To agree recommendations for local government representatives to feed into the national consultation/review process and for the Board to decide whether they want to have continuing input as the revised strategy takes shape

**Action by:** LGA Secretariat

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## Local Government contribution to revised National Carer Strategy

### Summary

1. A New Deal for Carers was announced in the Health White Paper *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*. Gordon Brown announced the review of the 1999 Carer Strategy in February 2007 and he stated that it is to be a far-reaching review involving a full consultation. Central Government has set up a programme of work to deliver a revised strategy in spring 2008. This paper gives further background and asks for support and additional suggestions for a local government response.

### Background

2. The 1999 Carer Strategy was an important step in recognising the value of family and informal carers within our society. It recognised their contribution and offered information, support and care to carers, including special provision to help carers in employment and young carers. It recognised that a break from their responsibility is essential to enable carers to continue caring.
3. It enabled local authorities to provide services direct to carers and to provide services to support the educational and general development of children with additional caring burdens, encouraged more carer support services, and required local authorities (and the NHS) to involve carers. It introduced the Carers Grant, initially to enhance and diversify the provision of breaks for carers. In 2007–8 the Carers Grant is a specific grant to English councils with social services responsibilities, totalling £185m.
4. Since 1999 there has been a significant increase in the knowledge and evidence about what carers themselves most value. The 2001 census revealed that there are nearly 6 million people providing unpaid care to disabled, vulnerable and older people, though this is generally considered to be an underestimate, given that many people with caring responsibilities do not identify themselves as ‘carers’. When asked what would improve their lives, carers usually comment on a combination of more information, time and money.
5. Local government has a key leadership role in improving outcomes for carers:
  - It has a responsibility for the well-being of its citizens and so can shape wider support for carers, beyond health and social care
  - It can ensure the representation of carers and their issues at all levels of involvement in service development and delivery
  - It already has experience of moving to personalised models of support with more choice and control for service users,
  - It already has experience of working with the third sector and user-led organisations to provide locally responsive services

### **Feedback to national review:**

6. To take the review forward Ministers have established an interdepartmental group chaired by David Behan, which acts as a project board for the review. It also includes the 3 principal carer representative organisations – Carers UK, Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads, to ensure that the review reflects what really matters to carers. In addition it includes Local Government (represented by Caroline Marsh, Director of Adult Social Services, Manchester) to reflect the fact that local government will be the main deliverers of the whole strategy at a local level.
7. The work has been divided into 4 key themes – employment, income, health and social care, and equalities. Each of these has to take into account cross cutting themes, such as recognition, social inclusion and service configuration. Anne McDonald is on the health and social care task force and Trish O’Flynn on the equalities task force. There is local government representation on each of the taskforces. In addition there has been a web-based and face-to-face consultation exercise, aimed at carers, those for whom they care and the professionals who support them.
8. The conclusions from the Board’s discussion can therefore be fed into the review at many points. There will be continuing opportunities for the Board to look at developing proposals and advise further.

### **Context**

9. In forming the response to the Review, members may want to consider the overall outcomes for carers that should be achieved when considering recommendations for the revised strategy. Discussion with various stakeholders suggest the following aspirations, though Board members may wish to agree others:
  - Carers as people with status and value, leading their own lives, having the same opportunities as others for education, employment, leisure, social networks and friendships. Equalities issues addressed throughout the strategy.
  - Carers as people in their own right with their own identity – not simply seeing carers as a resource.
  - Social inclusion for carers, recognising that carers can be excluded by their caring role
  - Carers able to access individualised services/support, with control over the services they receive, which focus on their well-being and which are easily accessible.

## **Possible LGA response**

10. It is proposed that the LGA provide more detailed suggestions for local government leadership in the following areas:
  - Commissioning of a range of responsive services for carers, involving carers in the development, design and evaluation of services, both at a local and individual level.
  - Consideration of the needs of carers within the joint strategic needs assessment with health partners and across all parts of the community plan.
  - Support recommendations from benefits officers for a more streamlined and consistent approach to carers' benefits (eg current anomalies over loss of carers allowance at 65 years, cliff edge of losing all carers allowance once earning £87 per week)
  - Development of a personalised information service, which can address the individual and local needs of the carer, alongside the national helpline.
  - Develop incentives at a local level which ensure good quality support for carers in all localities.

## **Implications for Wales**

11. This is yet to be fully established. Some of the issues, which the strategy will cover such as benefits, are not devolved, while others are devolved, such as health. Welsh colleagues are involved throughout the governance structure of the review.

## **Financial/Resource Implications**

12. The review is looking ahead over the next decade. Any recommendations in the final revised strategy will need to be fully costed and funded.

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