

**County Durham**  
**Adult Carers Health Needs and Asset**  
**Assessment**

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## Executive summary

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this Health Needs and Asset Assessment (HNAA) is to identify the health needs of adult carers (25+) living in County Durham and to explore the health inequalities experienced by those fulfilling a caring role. Adult carers, age 25+, have been identified as the area of focus for the HNAA. It will not include carers aged 16 – 24 as they receive dedicated support from Family Action's Young Adult Carer's service, specific to their needs.

The HNAA will identify the adult population of carers in County Durham and assess the health needs of those providing unpaid care to family and friends. Any differences in the health needs of those providing care will be considered throughout the assessment to ensure recommendations provide support for adult carers, including those that may not be formally recognised as a carer.

This will lead to the development of recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of adult carers across County Durham. The recommendations will form part of the Ageing Well Partnership Board action plan and for other relevant partnerships to consider / implement.

### **Content of the HNA**

The HNAA focuses on the health and wellbeing of informal adult carers with the aim of understanding how inequalities can be reduced across the target population. A life course approach will be adopted throughout the HNAA to consider the impacts of providing informal care on the target population at different points within their life.

The County Durham Approach to Wellbeing (A2W) will be used as a framework to understand the literature, data and feedback. It will provide rich insight into how adult carers can be better supported by the system and empowered to make decisions which positively impact their health and wellbeing (more information on the A2W can be found in the introduction session of the report).

Carers are rightly recognised as providing a crucial part of the health and social care system, a system without which would struggle to meet the demands of those requiring care. Evidence highlights the impact caring has upon an individual's own health and overall wellbeing. Many report increased stress, anxiety and financial implications (as caring responsibilities can impact on someone's ability to work full time). Also the ability to maintain social connections and prioritise their own needs (Carers UK, 2023).

Recommendations from the HNAA will contribute to the County Durham Ageing Well Partnership and Carers Strategic Partnership plans to ensure the needs of adult carers are considered from a health and wellbeing perspective.

### **Methodology**

The HNAA used existing literature and quantitative data from Durham Insight and Durham County Carers Support service (routine data collected by the service when an individual starts accessing support). This resulted in a range of recommendations

for partners to consider/implement which can be found in the recommendations section of the report.

## Recommendations

Recommendations have been aligned to the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing. This encourages partners to consider the impact of people and places as well as supporting systems to enable improved health and wellbeing of adult carers.

- Recommendations in green – already in development / can be strengthened as a result of the HNA
- Recommendations in grey – new pieces of work to consider

### **Overarching recommendations:**

- Raising awareness of carers across the system / county
- Providing carers with more opportunities to maintain their health and wellbeing
- Reintroduction of Health Checks for Carers
- Encourage carers to register as a carer with their GP
- Improve data sharing across the system to raise the profile of the health needs of carers
- Encourage more organisations to sign up to the Carer Friendly Employer award
- Continue to provide carers with regular opportunities to share their views and experiences to help shape future planning / service provision

## Empowering Adult Carers

### *Working with adult carers to support their development and empowerment*

Recommendation	Who for?	How to implement
Ensure carers are involved in decision making / planning from as early as possible to allow for true coproduction	Whole system Key partners include DCC Public health, AWPB, DCCS Commissioning, VCSE, CDT	Develop a shared understanding of involvement / coproduction with carers to identify opportunities for carers to be involved  Links with County Durham Together to consider opportunities  Explore the possibility of developing a carers coproduction group representative of carers across the county
Raising awareness of informal carers across CD communities  Continue to strengthen countywide communications to adult carers to help identify 'hidden carers'	Public Health Comms DCCS Adult social care   Carers strategic group	Ongoing alignment with the PH annual comms plan  Link with Community Champions  Targeted campaigns to reach those not currently accessing support services – mapping existing uptake from DCCS data base to identify gaps  Carers producing campaigns videos etc to reach others – 'my story' approach to be shared during Carers week ( <i>already progressing through carers strategic oversight group</i> )
Provide carers with more opportunities to maintain / improve their Health and Wellbeing	Public Health to explore within existing commissions  Wellbeing for Life  VCSE	Consider barriers such as travel costs, time, respite etc to enable carers to maximise opportunities  Mapping of support services available specifically for carers to raise awareness and better promote  Consider opportunity to have online recorded sessions for carers to access at their convenience
Empowering carers and increasing sense of feeling valued	Whole system	County wide campaign work  Increase opportunities to celebrate carers across the County  VCS role to support with befriending and bringing carers together

## Being Asset Focused

### Acknowledging the needs of adult carers and the potential of their assets

Recommendation	Who for?	How to implement
Explore how carers are encouraged to register as a carer with a GPs to ensure additional support can be given	Public Health PCN's AWPB	Can this be built into existing process as an automatic question  (the carers strategic oversight group are <i>already exploring this element</i> )
Proactively offer health checks to adult carers as a specific target group	Public health AWPB	Public health to consider as part of wider work as a priority – links to health literacy agenda  Links with wellbeing for life / GP's
Improve use of baseline and follow up data as part of DCCS initial assessment – encourage carers to take ownership of their own health plan (what improvements do they want to focus on initially and signpost / support accordingly)	Public health intelligence team  DCCS  Carers Strategic Oversight Group	Consider current ranking / measurements  Explore how approach used for the HNA (population level data analysis) can be utilised further and shared across the system to inform gaps in HWB support
Raising awareness of the needs of adult carers across CD businesses to encourage them to consider how they can better support	Public health Comms	Through HNA findings – across the DCC workforce  BHAW  DCCS Training Portal & Carer Friendly Employer Scheme
Improve awareness across the system of 'Think Carer' - consider needs of the carer in hospital discharge meetings	Whole system	Standard agenda item on discharge meetings
Consider adopting a life course approach to support available, recognising different needs at different stages of life	Whole system	Commissioning arrangements  Current service delivery review

## Building Resilience

*Helping adult carers build their future resilience – including adult carers in conversations, planning and decision making*

Recommendation	Who for?	How to implement
Access to counselling	Whole system Key partners include public health, AWPB, DCCS, Commissioning	Discuss current counselling support offer available through DCCS, coverage, mapping uptake etc to identify gaps / capacity issues  Explore opportunity for online / recorded support content
Explore how the adult wellbeing service can have a specific focus on supporting the health and wellbeing needs of carers	Public health Wellbeing service DCCS	Link with DCCS to explore current support offer – consider opportunities to upskill / strengthen this offer  Need to further understand impact on resources
Support for carers after their caring role ends – consider opportunity to extend current support of 6 months for those who require it	Whole system  DCCS  Commissioning  Local networks  Durham Community Action	Mapping of other support service  Implementation of optional ongoing support groups for former carers – countywide/ community based  Consider approach to supporting adult carers into volunteering roles if they wish – employee supported volunteer programme / DCA?
Consider how the VCS can further support needs of carers with designated carer support roles / advisor roles within services	Public Health CDT VCS Local Networks	Consider current commissioning arrangements
Explore opportunities to increase respite as an element of carer support  Consider how respite is currently advertised / promoted to carers	Whole system	Consider current commissioning arrangements  Consider demand / capacity across the service
Increasing opportunities / raising awareness of opportunities to support physical health	Public health DCC leisure services DCCS	Explore opportunities to further promote DCC leisure services (free or subsidised gym memberships?)/ VCS to raise profile of carers and promote specific targeted opportunities  Comms work to support this

## Working Better Together

*Working together across sectors / in partnership to ensure greater impact*

Recommendation	Who for?	How to implement
The health needs of adult carers considered in Public Health plan	Public Health	Consider where recommendations sit and how these align to wider programmes of work
Data sharing - improve sharing of routinely collected data which provides an overview of the health and wellbeing needs of adult carers amongst partners	Public Health DCCS PH Intelligence AWPB	Quarterly sharing of routine HWB data to highlight needs and consider gaps within service provision – sharing at carers strategic meeting  Utilise the approach adopted for the HNA for ongoing data analysis and sharing
Continue to strengthen work with the VCS to identify and support carers	Whole system	Sharing findings and recommendations from the HNA process
Encourage more organisations to sign up to the Carer Friendly Employer award	DCCS Public Health Carers strategic oversight group	Mapping of those already signed up, identify gaps and targeted approach based on need  Link with Community champions  Employers for carers resources
Have the HWB needs of adult carers as a standard agenda item on the carers strategic oversight group to keep this as a priority – raises the profile with partners	Carers strategic oversight group	Regular agenda item which is reviewed and considered as a partnership

**Sharing Decision Making*****Designing and developing services and initiatives with adult carers***

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Who for?</b>	<b>How to implement</b>
Advocating for the needs of adult carers across various partnerships / strategic groups	Whole system	Sharing the findings and recommendations from the HNA
Raising awareness of the needs of carers within existing commissioning arrangements	Public Health Commissioning	
Continue to provide carers with regular opportunities to share their views and experiences to shape future planning / service provision	Whole system	Consultation events – plan and resource effective involvement plans/activities  Coproduction  Sharing the findings and recommendations from the HNA to provide carers with opportunities to shape how recommendations are delivered

<b>Doing with, not to</b> <b><i>Making our interventions empowering and centred around adult carers</i></b>		
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Who for?</b>	<b>How to implement</b>
Ask adult carers what service/support they'd like to access to help improve their health and wellbeing and prioritise their views within service planning	DCCS	As part of the initial assessment  During ongoing conversation
Increase amount of HWB training courses offered per year to increase skills and develop a community of practice amongst adult carers as a way of protecting and maintain their own HWB	Public health, DCCS, commissioning, Wellbeing service, VCS	Explore online content / recorded session to increase uptake  To consider within commissioning arrangements
Continuation of Mobilise as a mechanism of reaching carers who don't engage or feel they need 1:1 support from a local provider	Commissioning  Carers strategic group	Regional funding in place through ARF  ADASS leading the work
Roll out of DCCS new website and online support service	DCCS Supporting partners	