Carers (Scotland) Bill

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

1. Do you support The Bill?

- The Bill places an emphasis on the need to improve mechanisms for supporting carers and this concept is welcomed.

- However, the extension of the current duty on carrying-out assessments to include cases where the cared-for person is not eligible for community care services is concerning. The anticipated increase in demand will place significant pressure on Social Work services. The Scottish Government may have underestimated this and not allocated sufficient resources to address this demand.

- Moving away from the critical and substantial threshold to assessments not being determined by eligibility criteria does not correlate with the requirements to manage decreasing levels of resources. There is also the danger of creating unrealistic levels of expectation.

- This change also has to be considered in the context of the regulations about waiving of charges to carers and the resulting loss of income to Councils.

- The use of the term ‘adult carer support plan’ rather than assessment will imply, inappropriately in some cases, that services or supports are required. This may also create unrealistic expectations as there is a distinction between an ‘assessment’ and a ‘plan’ (which assumes support is required).

2. What do you feel would be the benefits of the provisions set out in the Bill?

- The Bill places a greater recognition on the importance of the role of carers. It will also increase the current relatively low level number of carers’ assessments being undertaken. There will be improved ‘intelligence’ in relation to:
  - The numbers of unpaid carers
  - The types and level of support provided by carers
  - Develops greater potential to identifying gaps in services

- Carers will be better supported to maintain their caring role and will be more involved in decisions affecting their lives and the people for whom they care.

3. How do you feel the Bill could be amended or strengthened?

- The definition of a carer should not be as expansive and should continue to reflect the provision of substantial and regular care.
• The issue of the ‘responsible authority’ being that where the carer lives rather than the cared-for person is problematic. There is the potential for one Council to make decisions which impact on another’s expenditure. This is not in keeping with flexible, local decision making and accountability.

• The Bill proposes a duty to apply local eligibility criteria for supports for carers but also establishes a ministerial power to regulate for national eligibility criteria. There is a lack of clarity about this particularly in how thresholds are applied. Further consideration of this issue is required.

4. Is there anything that you would add to The Bill?

• With the implementation of Health and Social Care Partnerships there should be reference to the role of health professionals identifying and sign-posting carers

• Consideration should be given to the inclusion of carers in hospital discharge planning

5. Is there anything you would remove from The Bill?

• Ministerial powers in relation to the identification of outcomes for carers and procedures for undertaking reviews and determining the frequency of these will create an excessive level of legislation. The prescription of outcomes by the Scottish Government goes against the principles of the self-directed support agenda because the identification of outcomes should be person-centred, collaborative and empowering. These measures will severely restrict flexibility. In addition, there is the potential to create unrealistic expectations by prescribing outcomes on a general basis

• The proposal for the Young Carer Statement to remain in place after the young person turns 18 years (until an Adult Carer Support Plan is created) will create difficulties. This needs to be seen in the context of children’s legislation and in wider transition planning. A defined timescale for cessation of the Young Carer Statement may be more appropriate

• The duty to involve carers in service planning is not necessary as it is already in place within the self-directed support and Health and Social Care integration agendas

• The above is the case in relation to the proposal for duties to establish and maintain information and advice services for carers.

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