Carers (Scotland) Bill

A joint response from NHS Fife, Fife Council, Carers and Partner Agencies

1. Do you support the Bill?

General feedback is in support of the Bill. In principle, it is felt that consideration needs to be given to the notion of universal provision for Carers Support Plans as Local Authorities have finite resources to provide assessment/support to individuals. Current provision is targeted at those with the greatest need & risk. To support this, considerable extra funding is likely to be necessary to implement the proposal.

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

The Bill further strengthens the responsibilities and duties in respect of Carers. However, there is a need to ensure this does not set unrealistic expectations.

It was considered that the provisions as set out place a duty on Local Authorities rather than a “power” which is a positive step. Carers Support Plans appear to be more positive than Carers Assessments.

Further benefits are the inclusion of short breaks and the recognition of Young Carers.

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

The Bill needs to focus on outcomes not inputs.

The definition of ' regular & substantial' care needs to be clarified as this terminology could be open to interpretation. This needs to be linked to eligibility criteria to ensure that resources are targeted at those with the highest need/risk.

It was felt that national, rather than local eligibility criteria is highlighted to include Carers who’s relatives are in supported accommodation.

It is important that carers are seen as equal partners in care planning, including admission and discharges and that choice, flexibility and control over the types of short breaks are available.

Further, the rights of Welfare Guardians needs to be full recognised by all professionals.

4. Is there anything you would add to the Bill?

More emphasis on the role of the NHS and the Local Authority regarding responsibilities and accountability to fulfil their duty towards Carers is
required. There is a need to ensure that reference to Carers Support Plan focuses on those with highest need/risk.

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

It is important that unrealistic expectations are not raised, particularly in relation to the provision/promotion of short breaks being linked to eligibility criteria.

The requirement for local authorities to establish and maintain an information and advise service for Carers would appear to duplicate the work already carried out by successful third sector agencies, e.g. Carers and Young Carers Centres.

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