Carers (Scotland) Bill

NHS Forth Valley

NHS Forth Valley supports the overall approach and direction of supporting carers in their important role of supporting the individual they care for.

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

Clarification around the arrangements for supporting carers including a new duty for Local Authorities to support carers and the introduction of national eligibility criteria, carers support plan, right of review, access to advice and information and requirement to engage and subsequent publication of local carers strategies.

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

While welcoming the introduction of these new duties, one of the major strengths previously was the focus on a partnership approach with responsibility undertaken by local agencies working in partnership. The proposed legislation places the duty firmly on Local Authorities and this may not sufficiently recognise the important role of partner agencies or the emerging Integration of Adult Health and Social Care Agenda.

The introduction of national eligibility criteria is welcomed, however unless this supported by a consistent approach throughout Scotland there is potential for different interpretation and approaches to be taken locally. The adoption of a defined core set of criteria with the potential for additional flexibility in a local setting would ensure carers had access to a consistent core service throughout Scotland.

Health and Welling Being currently appears within the advice and information section of the Bill, might this be a core element of the overall approach? The importance of carer health and well being and accessing support outwith their caring role could also be recognised within the legislation.

A number of statutory services are governed by the need to meet delivery targets whereas this is not the case for services delivered to carers as currently framed in the Bill. This could result in disjointed delivery of services to carers and the person they care for.

3. Is there anything that you would add to the Bill?

NHS Forth Valley, working with our local partners, developed one of the first Integrated Carers Strategies in Scotland with carers’ views placed firmly at the centre of the agenda. This ongoing approach is reflected in the work we have taken forward in Reshaping Care for Older People and the Integration Fund.
The legislation as currently framed might challenge an integrated approach and the legislation might benefit from ensuring other agencies have a duty to engage and support carers in the delivery of the carers assessment and support plan. Not all carers are in contact or receipt of Local Authority services, with many being in contact with local primary care and community based health service support. While the aim is to deliver fully integrated care provision, this may take some time to achieve therefore the legislation needs to reflect this interim phase.

Carers are seen as having a central role in supporting discharge and admission to hospital and supporting the delivery of care in the community. This important role is not mentioned or recognised in the current draft with the focus for Health Boards being on engaging and consulting carers in service change and not on operational delivery.

4. Is there anything that you would remove from the Bill?

No, we welcome the draft Bill which provides the basis to build on the existing role of carers and recognises and strengthens the role of carers in delivering support in the future.

NHS Forth Valley