

# Devon Learning Disability Health and Social Care Partnership

## CARERS STRATEGY

### 1. Background

Devon County Council has long had a commitment to working together with all Carers to support them in their caring role, and encourage them to become involved in all aspects of developing services for the people they care for, as well as themselves.

In 2001 the government white paper 'Valuing People' was launched, this being the first government strategy specifically for people with learning disabilities for 30 years.

There is a section in 'Valuing People' which sets out the required targets/performance indicators to be achieved by Local Authorities with regard to carers and families. (see page 6)

Devon County Council is developing a Carers Strategy for all types of Carers as a response to the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004, which commenced on 1 April 2005. The Learning Disability Health and Social Care Partnership are committed to working closely with the all carer agenda and, therefore, in setting out a Learning Disability strategy for carers it is imperative that this contributes to/enhances the general Carers Strategy.

Devon recognises the real contribution that family members make to the care of a person with a learning disability, even if that person lives away from the family home, whether in Devon or elsewhere.

**2. Overall Aim** – to enable unpaid Carers to continue contributing to the support of the person with a learning disability at whatever level they are able to, by providing:-

- ◆ Opportunities to become involved in developing services
- ◆ Information about choices for themselves and the person they care for
- ◆ Information about Carer legislation (see page 3)

### 3. Identification

In order to meet the overall aim, it is essential that we know who the carers of people with learning disabilities are. Specific tasks to be completed include developing methods of identifying carers, with particular emphasis on carers over the age of 65 and those from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups.

Identification has always been a difficult area to address with all types of carers. Many families see themselves as looking after a family member with a disability and do not associate themselves with the word 'carer'. Older families particularly, who have been looking after their disabled family member for many years, may never have tried to access any services and, therefore, remain unknown to us. It is only when something happens to the health of the carer in that family, that the statutory agencies may become involved and find that there is a learning disabled adult living within the family. Similarly with families from black and minority ethnic groups, it may not be in their culture to see themselves as carers, but again as families living with a disabled family member.

The 'Carers Link' is a voluntary register of all types of carers. The register is held by 6 Carers Link workers around the county, who are employed in the Voluntary Sector. They all have contact with GP Practices in their areas, a potentially valuable source of carer identification. The Learning Disability Health and Social Care Partnership have agreed, along with other Devon Social Service divisions, to a Devon Carers' register being held by the Carers Link workers. It is essential, therefore, that we work closely with 'Carers Link' in order to assist with the identification of Learning Disability Carers.

Work carried out so far:

- ◆ Distribution of leaflets to eg GP Surgeries, Generic Carer Workers for their newsletters, libraries etc. This met with moderate success.
- ◆ "£200 for 200 Families" project – this only found a few new families, but gave us a lot of information about the families and the people they care for.
- ◆ Care Direct, the DCC contact point for Adult Services, are able to pass on details of the learning disability County Carers Development Worker to carers of people with learning disabilities. Care Direct are also

able to make contact with the County Carers Development Worker on behalf of learning disability carers if requested.

- ◆ The Learning Disability County Carers Forum applied for, and was granted, £60,000 of Carers Grant monies for specific learning disability carer support work. It is anticipated that some of this work will assist with identification.

#### **4. Information**

There are carers who will not choose to become actively involved in partnership working, or be in a position to become actively involved, but all carers should have access to the same information. It is our intention, therefore, to develop an effective information system to fully inform Carers and families of the following:-

- ◆ Their rights under the Carers 'Equal Opportunities' Act 2004
- ◆ Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- ◆ Carers Services and Recognition Act 1995
- ◆ "Caring for Carers" Government Strategy
- ◆ How to take part in the development of services for families of people with learning disabilities
- ◆ Where current support and resources already exist
- ◆ Other appropriate services

Work carried out so far:

- ◆ 2 generic conferences held for Carers and staff to inform them about the Carers 'Equal Opportunities' Act 2004.
- ◆ A Devon Carers Information Pack (containing learning disability information) is available for all families joining Carers Link.
- ◆ KIN (Carers Information Newsletter) for carers and families of people with learning disabilities distributed widely.
- ◆ 2 websites developed for Carers and families of people with learning disabilities:-
  - Carer specific website – [www.carersindevon.org.uk](http://www.carersindevon.org.uk)
  - Learning disability specific website – [www.learningdisabilitydevon.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilitydevon.org.uk)

## 5. Involvement

It is the Learning Disability Health & Social Care Partnership's policy to fully involve Carers and families. In identifying different carers' circumstances and preferences we shall continue to seek to develop different ways of participation such as enabling Carers of people with learning disabilities to take part in the following:-

- ◆ Person Centred Planning
- ◆ Developing quality services for themselves and the people they care for
- ◆ Monitoring Quality of Services
- ◆ Staff training
- ◆ Staff recruitment process
- ◆ Devon County Council Carer policies
- ◆ Learning Disability County Carers Forum
- ◆ Learning Disability Partnership Board and sub-groups
- ◆ Local Joint Investment Planning groups
- ◆ Health Action Initiatives

Work carried out so far:

- ◆ Some training in Person Centred Planning has taken place across the county for carers and staff.
- ◆ Work has taken place with the Voluntary Sector to develop training courses for all carers to enable them to become involved in service development eg 'speaking up' courses, also to take part in carer awareness training for staff.
- ◆ County and Locality carer forums have been developed for all types of carers where involvement in the development of Devon County Council carer policies takes place.
- ◆ A Learning Disability County Carers Forum takes place, which meets 6 times per year. Carers from all areas of Devon are represented on the forum.
- ◆ Carer representatives take part in Learning Disability Partnership Board and sub-groups meetings, as well as local Joint Investment Planning groups.

We shall ensure feedback is given to Carers where policy decisions are made after their involvement in the development of such policies.

## **6. Support:**

### **◆ Short Breaks**

The Learning Disability Health and Social Care Partnership recognise the high value given by carers to the provision of daytime activities and short breaks services as a practical way of supporting carers.

Central to continuing this practical support, we shall seek to develop a range of breaks for carers and their families, suitable for their particular eligible needs and requirements.

Work carried out so far:

- ◆ A survey on short breaks for people with learning disabilities and their family carers was carried out by SWALD, the South West Learning Disability Network, in 2004. Family carers and the people they care for were involved in the survey.

### **◆ Funding**

Raise awareness of funding streams amongst Carers and families, including Direct Payments and Independent Living Fund.  
Develop methods of support to manage funding.

### **◆ Advocacy**

Develop ways of providing advocacy services specifically for Carers.

## **7. Transition**

Ensure transition is a seamless process with clear signposts.  
Ensure clear communication and information throughout.  
Ensure monitoring throughout to enhance quality.

Work carried out so far:

- ◆ A Devon Transition Protocol was written in 2004. This involved carers of people with learning disabilities.

## **8. Performance Indicators**

Performance Indicators are targets set by the Department of Health for Local Authorities.

We shall use these as a way of monitoring how this strategy will meet its aims and objectives. We must, therefore, ensure account is taken of all Performance Indicators for Carers. This must include 2 specific Performance Indicators from 'Valuing People' Objective 4: Supporting Carers. These are:-

- ◆ % of adults with learning disabilities receiving community based services who are receiving short term breaks.
- ◆ % of carers aged 70 or over for whom a plan has been agreed.

## **9. People with Learning Disabilities as Carers**

Develop methods of identification and support where mutual caring takes place in families. Mutual caring situations include:-

- ◆ Older Carers living with their relative with a learning disability
- ◆ People with a learning disability caring for another member of the household with a learning disability

## **10. Next Steps**

- ◆ The Learning Disability Partnership Board Supporting Carers sub-group will develop an Action Plan to enable this Strategy to be implemented.

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