Carers Strategy 2025-2028: Partnership Effectiveness - 12 months' progress report

Committee considering report:	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	29 September 2026
Portfolio Member:	Portfolio Holder: Adult Social Care and Public Health
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	25 August 2026
Report Author:	Hannah Cole

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress achieved over the past 12 months and to highlight the impact of our partnership with organisations including Thames Valley Integrated Care Board, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership, and Voluntary sector partners.

1.2 It demonstrates how our collective efforts have delivered positive outcomes for unpaid carers in West Berkshire, improving support, widening access to services and enhancing the overall experience of those who provide vital care within the community.

2 Recommendations

To review and assess progress on the Carers Strategy following its implementation in June 2025.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Adults: The data recorded shows an increase of 109% in the number of assessments completed, from 139 to 290, for the period of August 2025 to May 2026, compared to the same period the previous year. Of the 290 carers assessments completed since the self-assessment went live 117 have progressed to a support plan, which is a similar proportion to the previous year. This increased activity is reflected in higher expenditure on carers support. Based on financial year data, expenditure

	increased by 31% between 2024/25 to 2025/26, from £519k to £678k. The financial impact will be monitored to ensure the budget is reflective of future activity.			
Human Resource:	Officer time has been required to progress the implementation.			
Legal:	The Local Authority's duties to carers are set out in the Care Act 2014. These include a) Providing and maintaining an information and advice service to help carers (and those they care for) prevent, reduce, or delay the development of longer-term care and support needs, and to support their own wellbeing. b) A statutory entitlement to a carer's assessment and appropriate support. c) Arranging an independent advocate for any carer who would have difficulty participating in their assessment or support planning, where there is no one else available to assist.			
Risk Management:	N/A			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	N/A			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The strategy should deliver improved support to unpaid carers including those with protected characteristics, e.g. disabilities.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The strategy should deliver improved support to unpaid carers including those with protected characteristics, e.g. disabilities.

Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:	X			Social Care needs are closely related to Health needs; the strategy refers to continued joint working with our health partners
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Carers Strategy supports the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategy.
Core Business:	X			The Carers Strategy supports the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategy
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	Over the past 12 months, extensive engagement and consultation have taken place with unpaid carers and with organisations and agencies that support them. The carers' online self-assessment was co-produced in partnership with carers to ensure it reflects their needs and experiences. Emails were sent to over 300 unpaid carers for whom the council holds email addresses, inviting them to review the tool and complete a feedback form about their experience of using it. 11 unpaid carers submitted feedback form. Their comments were incorporated into the final version of the assessment form. For unpaid carers without digital access, letters were sent to 20 carers encouraging them to contact Adult Social Care. A dedicated worker arranged to meet carers at the library, where set drop-in sessions were held to demonstrate the assessment form and gather feedback. Further engagement also took place through online demonstration sessions, where unpaid carers were shown how to use the Carers UK digital resources. Three joint sessions were organised to support carers in understanding and accessing these tools.			

4 Executive Summary

We have continued to make strong progress, particularly in our work to raise awareness of unpaid carers. Through annual campaigns Carers Week in June and Carers Rights Day in November we have successfully reached more people and identified new carers

who were previously unknown to services. This increased visibility has not only supported adult carers but has also led to a noticeable rise in new referrals for young carers, demonstrating broader impact across age groups.

5. Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The report provides a summary of the progress made since the Carers strategy was implemented 12 months ago, highlighting the effectiveness of partnership working with carers, agencies and organisations that support carers.

Background

5.2 The carers strategy is built around six priority areas, and it was formally adopted last year (June 2025). The Carers Strategy Group meets quarterly to monitor progress against the delivery plan. Reviewing the plan is a standing agenda item, allowing the group to track what has been achieved, identify outstanding actions and agree on the steps needed to complete them.

5.3 It is a three-year strategy, and good progress has already been made, with further work planned for the remaining period.

Progress

5.4 The following are examples of progress achieved so far:

- With the launch of the West Berkshire Directory, unpaid carers now have access to a much wider range of information, presented in a clearer and more accessible format. This improved design makes it easier for carers to find the guidance, services, and local support they need.

- Our commitment to providing high-quality information and advice for both adult carers and young carers has also been strengthened through the launch of the Carers UK digital resources and Jointly app, which went live in May this year. West Berkshire now contributes to the annual subscription, ensuring carers have free access to these tools for the next 12 months.

- In August, we went live with the online carers' self-assessment, supported by a dedicated Social Care Practitioner for carers' assessments. Their work has been instrumental in clearing the previous backlog of assessment requests. We are now fully up to date and ensuring that all submitted online assessments are processed in a timely and consistent manner.

- Children and Family Services received funding **f**rom Public Health England in April 2026 to support a three-year programme. This funding will be used to provide activities for young carers, including after-school clubs and school-holiday respite opportunities.

6. Other options considered

We could review/ retract the Strategy, but this would be a retrograde step.

7. Conclusion

The work carried out so far is already making a positive impact on the lives of unpaid carers. It is helping them access the support they need in their caring role while also enabling them to focus more on their own overall wellbeing.

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Carers Strategy 2025-2028 Partnership Effectiveness 12 Months' Progress Report

Appendix B – Carers Strategy Year One Impact Summary

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees or Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: All Wards

Officer details:

Name: Hannah Cole
Job Title: Principal Social Worker for Adults

Tel No: Mobile 07747478728
E-mail: hannah.cole1@westberks.gov.uk