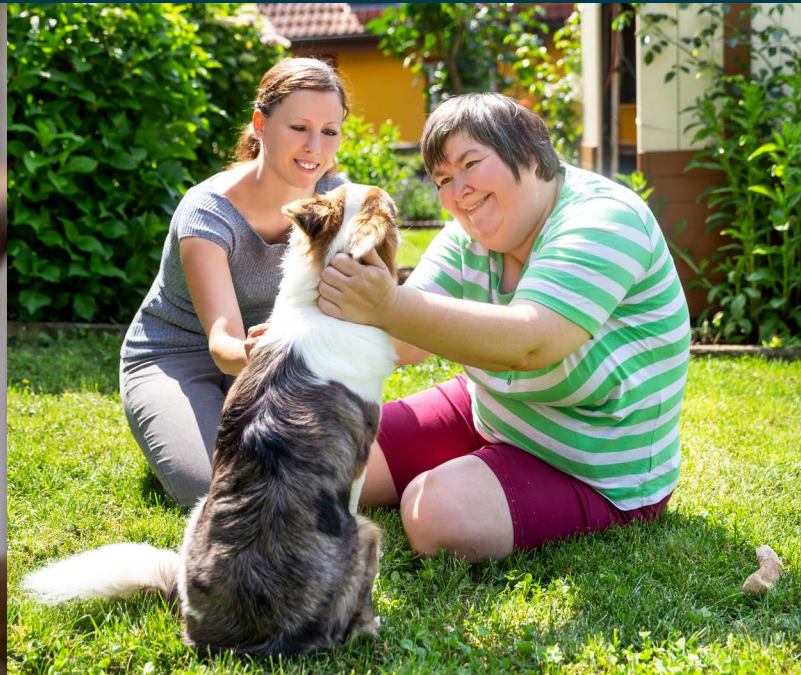




Caring for our Carers

- the next five years



Bracknell Forest All Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029



Executive Summary

Our vision is for all carers living in Bracknell Forest to be recognised and valued in their community, supported in achieving their own aspirations and helped in their caring role.

The work Bracknell-Forest Council (BFC) do for carers is governed by policies and legislation such as The Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014 and the Carers Action Plan 2018-2020: Supporting carers today. This strategy sets out our vision and priorities for carers and young carers over the next five years. It details our approach to successfully achieving our ambition whilst making sure people realise the desired outcomes that are important and personal to them.

The Council values the role of carers and acknowledges that if it was not for carers, the impact on social care would be immeasurable both in terms of staffing and financially.

The number of people who identified as an unpaid carer in the Census of 2021 in Bracknell Forest was 8,770, or 7% of the population:

- There are 2,413 Bracknell-Forest residents aged 5 and over who provide 50 hours or more unpaid care per week.
- There are more carers aged 50-59 than any other group.
- There are more carers aged 5-29 than over 75 years.
- 18-24-year-olds are not connected to services.

Therefore, we must ensure that carers of all ages have access to the support they need when they need it.

After consulting widely with carers, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and health and social care professionals a number of priorities were agreed.

This strategy and priorities have been co-produced with our partners in health, our providers in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and carers.

The summary outlines our key priorities over the next five years and how we aim to achieve these.

Priority 1:

Recognising and supporting carers in the wider community

Why this is a priority: We recognise the value of what carers do in our community and want to support them. We know carers report difficulty in accessing information and advice, especially if they do not have access to the Internet. There is no comprehensive list, which details all carers support, held in one place that is up to date and accessible to all carers. We know some carers are not able to access support groups due to transport issues or mobility issues.

There are 8,770 people who identify as a carer in Bracknell Forest (Census 2021), yet BFC currently works with 1,164; ethnic minorities are underrepresented. Many people who are in a caring role do not recognise themselves as being a carer. They have no contact with services until they are in crisis. By making this a priority we will ensure that carers can access the information and advice that they need that will help them in their caring role and reach more carers in our community.

Actions:

- To undertake an audit of current services and a review of what information is currently available on the BFC website.
- To refresh BFC Carers page on our website which will include a directory of carers services.
- To develop an offer for carers, which is available in print as well as online.
- To ensure Equality of Opportunity is considered within the services we deliver and commission.
- To explore solutions to transport/mobility issues which prevent carers accessing support.
- To work collaboratively with the VCS in developing their substantial volunteer resources that could potentially provide befriending, disseminate information directly to carers.
- To consider different approaches to reaching out to minority groups
- To explore options to increase our reach into the community.

Priority 2:

Services and Support that works for carers

Why this is a priority: Recreation and being able to socialise with friends and family is important for carers. Carers value short breaks/sitting services or assistive technology which enable them to socialise or pursue their own interests, but this isn't universally available. We know carers groups are valued but a gap is physical activities/sport that carers can do with/without cared for. Respite is available but needs to be easier to source to give carers and their families a break.

50% of carers have own health needs, yet they have no contingency plans, and GP appointments are difficult to access when you have caring responsibilities. Carers can feel overwhelmed, there are expectations that people possess the skills set necessary to care for someone.

Many carers reported that they do not feel listened to, when the cared for is in crisis the needs of the carer are often ignored; there is no crisis team for carers. Carers do not feel included in decision making that will impact them. There is no parent/carer assessment or support for parent/carers when the child transitions to adult services. Working collaboratively with partners we know we can improve the lives of our carers by ensuring the right support is available at the right time.

Actions:

- To ensure leisure/recreation opportunities are available for all carers.
- To explore how volunteers can help carers reduce barriers so that carers have more access to social activities.
- To develop an assistive technology strategy which includes how AT can be used to support carers.
- To undertake a review of respite/short breaks.
- To work with G.P.'s/ PCN leads in the recognition and providing pathways to carers support, including access to appointments.
- To ensure carers have appropriate contingency plans in place.
- To review education/training available for carers
- To work in partnership with the VCS to develop learning and training opportunities for carers.
- To make sure the carers voice is heard and considered when looking at the new target operating model for social care.
- To raise awareness that parent/carers are entitled to an assessment of their needs.
- To focus on the challenges highlighted by the carer when undertaking a needs assessment e.g., carers that look after more than one individual have this reflected in any needs assessment.

Priority 3:

Employment and Financial wellbeing

Why this is a priority: There are over 7,700 working age carers in Bracknell Forest. The 50-59 age ranges have the highest number of carers overall. 37% of staff at BFC identify as a carer. The majority of carers in Bracknell Forest are female, caring can have an impact on their career as well as the amount of pension that they receive when they retire as caring often means women have to work part time, therefore their NI contributions may not entitle them to a full state pension. Working carers struggle to take time off work to take their cared for to health appointments, they juggle working and caring. The Carers Leave Act 2023 which entitles all carers to 1-week additional unpaid leave, may support carers to stay in work.

General support groups for carers operate during daytime (working) hours, and even some specialist support only offer online support groups in the evenings, which excludes those without access to the Internet. Working carers who must leave employment to care, face low-income levels. The cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on carers who have to run specialist electrical equipment, keep the heating on etc. in order to maintain the health and wellbeing of the person they care for. We want to promote financial equality and ensure nobody is disenfranchised because of being a carer, and support carers who wish to stay in work.

Actions:

- To work collaboratively with carers and our partners in the VCS to explore how carers can be supported to remain in employment.
- To work with our partners in the VCS to ensure there is the right support at the right time for working carers.
- To work with the VCS to help carers maximise their income through benefits/ grants that may be available to them.
- To work with SE ADASS carers network and the VCS in supporting campaigns on paid leave for carers and promoting carers rights.
- To work with G. P's/PCN leads and the ICB Carers Steering group to explore how the NHS can more effectively accommodate working carers to look after their own health and wellbeing as established by the NHS Memorandum for carers¹.

¹ NHS (2016) Commitment to Carers -improving health and wellbeing NHS England » Commitment to Carers – improving carer health and wellbeing

Priority 4:

Supporting Young Carers

Why this is a priority: There are more carers in Bracknell Forest aged between 5 and 29 years old than there are carers aged 75+, yet there is very little on offer. Local authorities are required to undertake a young carers assessment on any child which is identified in a caring role. For the assessment to be meaningful there must be an offer of support. Young carers are often not identified until the family is in crisis. There are minimal referrals from Adult and Children's Social Care and the VCS. Schools identify young carers but do not consistently follow up with an assessment. Young carers workers are not able to access MOSIAC so are unaware if young carers referred to them are on a Child Protection Plan or Child In Need plan (which some are).

Young carers feel alone with no support, they often find it difficult to articulate their needs or access information and advice. Many are from low-income families, some from families with no driver, and can be excluded from activities during school holidays (or outside school) due to prohibitive logistic and financial costs. Young carers often have their own health and wellbeing needs e.g., mental health issues. Some young carers reported not having breakfast before school as the focus is primarily on the needs of the people/children being cared for in the family.

There is a statutory duty on all local authorities to undertake a transition assessment prior to a young carers 18th birthday. There is no transition pathway for young carers in Bracknell Forest and there are no appropriate services for them to transition to. We want all young carers to be able to live safe and well and achieve their full potential.

Actions:

- To develop an offer for young carers
- To make information and advice accessible
- Mandatory training on recognising and assessing young carers across BFC social care teams (including recognition of siblings of children with a Learning Disability)
- To create a pathway between children's social care, adult social care and early help to ensure young carer workers have access to relevant information.
- To explore offering training on recognising and assessing young carers to schools, colleges, and the VCS (needs to be seen as part of safeguarding)
- To ensure safeguarding is at the heart of our work with young carers and no young carer will provide inappropriate care. BFC will always provide care to prevent that from happening.
- To identify methods of best practice for proactively engaging with young carers
- To review how current resources are best deployed.
- To explore options with schools for drop-in sessions/space to talk, that support education & learning
- To ensure young carers can access education and are not compromised because of caring responsibilities.
- To reduce barriers to engaging in holiday activities
- To work with our partners in health to improve young carers mental health and wellbeing.
- To develop a robust transitions pathway
- To develop a transitions assessment ensuring safeguarding is at the heart and it reflects the child's wishes and aspirations.

Priority 5:

Supporting Young Adult Carers

Why this is a priority: In the absence of a robust transition pathway, we have negligible contact with young carers after their 18th birthday. 30 young carers turned 18 in 2022, we heard from one young adult carer in the 18-24 age range in our survey. When young carers are approaching adulthood, their details are passed to Elevate (who work with young people who are NEET) and our adult carers service who will offer support to those young adult carers supporting another adult (not a child e.g., sibling).

There are no age-appropriate support groups for young adult carers in Bracknell Forest. Whilst in comparison any carer aged between 18-29 is identified as a 'young adult carer' by our partners in health and offered support which is accessible and appropriate for this age group. By making this a priority we will ensure that young adult carers receive the support they need to make informed decisions about their future and their caring role.

Actions:

- To develop provision for young adult carers aged between 18-29
- To explore examples of best practice how we can engage this group.
- To ensure young carers who transition are recorded and keep records of young carers that turn 18.

If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please call 01344 352000 or email: customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.