

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee
Review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will contribute to the following Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028 priorities:

- *Priority 2: Healthy & Resilient Communities:* We recognise the invaluable role that carers play to support their loved ones in communities, and we will ensure they receive the support they need to maintain their own independence and wellbeing.

The Carers Support Service has also had some initial involvement with the transitions programme as part of the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) *Powering Our Future* (POF) initiative.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

The Care Act 2014 gave carers the same legal right to assessment and support as the person they care for. The most recent Census 2021 found that there were 5.8 million unpaid carers in the UK (an estimate of over 20,000 of those living within Stockton-on-Tees), with 1.7 million of these people providing 50 or more hours of care per week.

In 2019, Carers UK revealed that one in seven people within employment were also in a significant caring role, and that 2.6 million had quit their job to care. This created a significant cost to the UK economy from both the loss to the labour market, the cost of recruiting and training, and the impact on benefits claims. Elsewhere, it has been reported that carers were more than twice as likely to suffer from poor physical and mental health (as well as financial hardship) than their non-caring counterparts, with one third of people in a caring role report feeling often or always lonely ([Carers UK: State of Caring 2024](#)).

Carers play a substantial and vital role in meeting social care needs. The cost of replacement care locally for Stockton-on-Tees has previously been estimated to be around £464 million annually ([Stockton JSNA: Carers](#)). From an early intervention and prevention perspective,

addressing the needs of carers enables SBC to delay or possibly avert the need for complex and costly social care interventions, and by sustaining carers within their caring role, the stability of local adult health and social care services is supported. Identifying and providing support to these individuals is not just mandated by the Care Act 2014 but a sound economic and socially responsible decision (which may also prevent carers themselves needing services in their own right). By providing information, advice and support to carers we are able to ensure they promote their own wellbeing, prevent carer breakdown, and establish resilient communities.

The local Adult Carers Support Service was brought in-house to SBC in January 2018 and works with adults who are providing informal care and support for adults across the Borough. Since then, the service has developed significantly, with over 5,000 referrals during this time. As of June 2025, it was working with 3,200 unpaid carers within Stockton-on-Tees, offering ongoing advice, information and support alongside statutory carers assessments, support planning, carers personal budgets, and time-out support. SBC are also supporting nearly 2,000 carers with a direct payment which amounts to a projected spend of £550,000 for this provision in this financial year.

Whilst this offer is considered to be effective, it would be of benefit for the service to be scrutinised to provide assurance around its current delivery. It is also hoped that this review will help highlight any gaps in the service and, in turn, help shape future developments for local provision.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What support does the local Adult Carers Support Service offer / provide? How is it resourced (funded and staffed) and what does it cost per annum (including changes over time)? How did the pre-2018 arrangements differ from the current offer (what prompted it being brought in-house)?

How is the service promoted and how do individuals access it? Are there any restrictions (e.g. is it time-limited) and have there been any reports of barriers in receiving help?

How many individuals does the service support and what types of support do individuals receive? How has this changed over time, and what are the predicted future demands on the service (i.e. is it sustainable)?

How does the 'Time Out' service work?

How does the Council and its partners identify individuals who may be eligible for support? Is this effective / consistent?

Is feedback on the service sought from carers – if so, how / how often? What are those receiving support saying about their experience of the service and what plans are in place to develop the offer further?

What are the benefits to being a registered carer? How are these being promoted across the Borough?

What considerations are given to young carers transitioning into the adult carers service? How is this managed, communicated and promoted?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet, carers (existing and potentially new) and service-users.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:	
5 months (report to Cabinet in February 2026)	
What information do we need?	
Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):	
• SBC Adults, Health & Wellbeing: Self-Assessment (for CQC inspection undertaken in 2024) • SBC Support for Carers: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/support-for-carers • SBC Adult Carers Service – Specification • SBC Adult Carers Service – Team Structure	
Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?
SBC Adults, Health & Wellbeing	➤ Overview of existing support service offer and how this has changed over time (inc. costs) ➤ Promotion of service (inc. Carers' Hub) ➤ Service capacity / usage; feedback received ➤ Young carers transitioning into adult service
NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board	➤ Strategic oversight of support for adult carers
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	➤ Identifying carers and signposting to support ➤ Patient and Carer Experience Council (PCEC)
Carers consultation and feedback mechanisms	➤ Views on current offer / areas for improvement
Eastern Ravens	➤ Young carers transitioning into adult services
Care Quality Commission (CQC)	➤ Final report following inspection of SBC adult social care services
Mobilise	➤ Identifying carers from hard-to-reach areas
Other Local Authorities	➤ Initiatives to support carers
How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)	
Committee meetings, reports, research, case studies, site visits (TBC).	
How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?	
Committee meetings, information submissions.	

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Carers: Recognising carers and the contribution they make to society is important for raising their profile and identifying better ways of helping them to help others. Historically the needs of carers have been overlooked. Whilst this situation is improving, many carers remain socially excluded, suffer from caring-related ill-health and, once they have ceased caring, find themselves in a difficult economic position, often with little or no pension provision. This can lead to the carers needing to access health and social care services for themselves and may impair their ability to continue providing care to the cared for person.

Note: Carers will be acknowledged within the refreshed SBC Adult Social Care Strategy.

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

- Primary: To understand the impact of the carers service on promoting the wellbeing and needs of unpaid carers. Identifying where the service is reaching its objective and where future focus needs to be concentrated to improve service delivery and satisfaction for carers
- Secondary: To understand and identify where partnership working can be improved to promote the rights and needs of carers, ensuring they are being treated as expert partners and identified for support when required.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	May 2025	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	01.07.25	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	22.07.25	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence		23.09.25 21.10.25 18.11.25	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	16.12.25	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	January 2026	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	20.01.26	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	[17.03.26]	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet / Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	12.02.26	Cabinet / Approving Body