

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**12 MARCH 2026**

**REPORT OF ADULT  
SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH  
SELECT COMMITTEE**

**CABINET DECISION**

**Health and Adult Social Care – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Pauline Beall**

## **Scrutiny Review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service**

### **Summary**

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service.

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s) / Decision(s)**

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025-2026. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) In terms of general Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service development, SBC should:
  - a) Ensure measures are put in place as part of the review of the Council's 'front door' to strengthen identification of carers and the promotion of the local support offer (including the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service).
  - b) Ascertain and consider the findings from the London School of Economics and Political Science (Care Policy and Evaluation Centre) research project on what support combinations help improve carers' lives and what works to facilitate availability of and access to this support.
  - c) Consider ways to increase the response rate for its annual carers consultation survey.

- 2) Regarding the partnership with Mobilise (the UKs digital platform for unpaid carers), SBC should:
  - a) Develop its own in-house digital support offer for local carers to build on / complement the services available through this external provider.
  - b) Ensure it has the necessary quality and performance controls in place (including the need to report on measurable targets) to monitor the effectiveness of this arrangement.
  - c) Seek to understand any separate arrangements that Council's outside the North East have with Mobilise and whether these enhance the offer to carers more than the ongoing partnership with the 10 North East Local Authorities.
- 3) In relation to the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service 'Time Out' element, SBC should:
  - a) Complete an internal review of the booking system to identify ways of creating more flexibility for carers when requested a break from their caring role.
  - b) Consider whether it would be appropriate to introduce a standing / means-tested charge for the service to broaden this for more carers going forward, enabling greater sustainability of its provision and importance (as identified via the LGA Peer Assurance Challenge of SBC Adult Social Care in July 2024).
- 4) Promotion of the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service offer to young carers should be strengthened so they are more informed about the support available to them when they reach 18.
- 5) Consideration should be given to the ways in which the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service can build on what appeals to young carers when they approach / reach 18 so they are more compelled to seek support in their caring role when they become young adults.
- 6) The new carers awareness e-learning module be rolled out to SBC staff, Members and external partners.
- 7) SBC further considers how the local support offer for carers can be promoted within the wider health system (including general practices and community settings).
- 8) SBC provides a response to the Committee on the carer-related commentary included within the Care Quality Commission (CQC) final report on SBC adult social care (published in October 2025).

## Detail

1. 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, with 1.7 million of these people providing 50 or more hours of care per week ([Key facts and figures | Carers UK](#)).

2. Carers play a substantial and vital role in meeting social care needs, with the cost of replacement care locally for Stockton-on-Tees having previously been estimated to be around £464 million annually. From an early intervention and prevention perspective, addressing the needs of carers enables Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (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). Providing information, advice and support to carers ensures they promote their own wellbeing, carer breakdown is prevented, and resilient communities are established.
3. 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 assistance. 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.
4. In related matters, the Adult 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 – a new way of operating for the Council which seeks to work with partners and communities to put in place new and innovative approaches, allowing SBC to not only save money but also reshape what it does for the better, and in the best interests, of local residents.
5. Whilst the existing offer was considered to be effective, it was felt that it would be of benefit for the service to be scrutinised to provide assurance around its current delivery. It was hoped that this review would help highlight any gaps in the service and, in turn, help shape future developments for local provision.
6. The Committee took evidence from key personnel from within the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate, the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), Mobilise (an external organisation working with SBC), and Eastern Ravens Trust. In addition, the Committee considered the recently published Care Quality Commission (CQC) report following the late-2024 inspection of SBC adult social care services, as well as other Local Authority approaches / good practice in supporting carers. Committee Members also visited the LiveWell Dementia Hub to engage with staff and carers.

### **Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment**

7. As reflected in the conclusion of the Committee's final report, SBC understand that there are approximately 20,000 unpaid carers across the Borough (around 10% of the total population of Stockton-on-Tees) – however, only around 3,500 carers were open to the local Adult Carers Support Service in 2024. The Committee's recommendations aim to strengthen carer-identification, service accessibility, signposting to / promotion of support, and the transitioning of young carers into the adult service, as well as ensuring the continuation of a range of options (in-person and digital) to help those seeking assistance with their caring role (many of whom remain hidden).

An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) will be completed by the Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate when future developments and any proposed changes to the exiting Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service are considered in response to the Committee's final report and recommendations.

### **Corporate Parenting Implications**

8. There are no direct implications in the report.

### **Financial Implications**

9. Committee recommendations on the development of SBCs in-house digital support offer for local carers and the call for more flexibility in relation to the existing Time Out element may have a financial / resource implication for the Council, though the latter could potentially be offset by the introduction of a standing / means-tested charge for providing individuals with a break from their caring role. It is also recognised that strengthening promotion of, and accessibility to, the service may bring challenges in meeting demand, particularly given the significant number of local carers who are not yet seeking / receiving support.

### **Legal Implications**

10. There are no direct implications in the report.

### **Risk Assessment**

11. The review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

### **Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward / Councillors**

12. This review is relevant to residents within all Wards across the Borough.

### **Background Papers**

13. None.

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