

## **Discussion paper for 27 June 2017 Meeting: London Borough of Lewisham All Party Working Group Looking at Barriers for Councillors, and how these can be reduced or removed**

### **Carers and their Rights**

#### **Context:**

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid care and support to someone who is mentally or physically ill, disabled, frail or elderly. Carers can be mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends, spouses and partners. A carer's role can often be stressful, demanding and time consuming, as well as physically exhausting and mentally draining.

- 6.5 million people across the UK currently provide unpaid care
- Around 1 in 9 workers in the UK has caring responsibilities
- By 2030 it is estimated there will be in excess of 10 million carers in the UK
- 3 million people in the UK combine caring for a loved one with paid work
- 70% of carers are more than £10,000 worse off annually because of their caring role
- Carers in the UK provide over £119 billion of care themselves
- 24,500 carers in Lewisham save £412 million every year from the Health and Social Care budget.

The huge positive impact that unpaid carers make is often unrecognised – they are society's unsung heroes! Carers make such a valuable contribution to the health and wellbeing of others, but we want to make sure carers also look after themselves.

#### **Barriers:**

Councillors might wish to consider the following questions in considering how caring might impact on their ability to carry out their role:

- Do you feel you do not have enough time for yourself?
- Has caring stopped you from doing what you enjoy?
- Has caring made it difficult for you to work or do whatever else you have to do?
- Is your own health affected as a result?
- Do you feel unable to cope?
- Do you feel you are under too much pressure?
- Do you have no one to talk to about your concerns?
- Do you feel low?
- Are you sleeping poorly?
- Are you not eating properly?
- Are you tearful, angry and/or anxious?
- Do you have concerns about your own memory?
- Does attending meetings conflict with your care responsibilities?

#### **Suggestions for how to remove or reduce barriers:**

- Discuss flexible working arrangements, eg. job-sharing and/or term-time working.
- Ask for a Carers Assessment from your local Council.
- Use technology to help you to work more efficiently – phone/video conferencing, shared files, while being careful to maintain confidentiality and data protection
- Visit your GP – let them know you are a carer
- Use your local carer service - Carers Lewisham provides advice, information, support, training and can refer you to other specialist services
- Don't dismiss caring or make assumptions, work with it on an individual case by case.

Carers Lewisham raises awareness locally of caring and some of the challenges that carers may face. We highlight the challenges carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities.

The national Carers Week, which this year takes place between 12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017 is an annual awareness campaign to celebrate and recognise the vital contribution made by the UK's 6.5 million carers.

This year we're focusing on **Building Carer-Friendly Communities**. Communities which support carers to look after their loved ones well, while recognising that they are individuals with needs of their own.