

Initial Briefing on learning support for carers in Haringey

The current Haringey Scrutiny review of Carers, the Personalisation agenda for Adult Services, the supportive role that Culture, Libraries and Learning can provide and the findings/recommendations of recent policy documents have been used to inform this briefing.

Summary Profile of Carers in Haringey:

The numbers of carers are estimated to be 16,000 in Haringey, although only 1200 are registered carers. The latest figures available from the 2001 census show men represent 41% of carers and women the remaining 59%. It also shows women undertake considerably more hours of caring than men in the borough: Of those who care 50 or more hours, 66% are women. Haringey has the most young adult carers aged 18-34 years.

Summary of LSC Policy document July 09 on carers :

The Learning & Skills Council published a report in July 09, entitled 'Including carers: towards a framework for meeting the needs of carers in Further Education and Adult Learning'. This report makes a number of recommendations on how mainstream educational provision could be made more accessible to carers. It requests that a number of agencies consider ways of working together more effectively to remove identified practical, psychological and systemic barriers that prevent access to learning. These include: government departments, such as DWP, LSC/SFA, OFSTED, local Social Services, FE & Adult Education providers, carers centres and carer support organisations.

The LSC report pinpoints a common factor among carers, That is 'the unpredictability of their caring situation and therefore, their capacity to attend provision regularly, complete assignments and take exams.' **We therefore need to adapt, offer courses flexibly and provide a supportive atmosphere.**

The Carers Strategy (HMGovernment,2008) encourages a more flexible approach for lifelong learning opportunities to be made available to carers, particularly those who have been out of the workplace for some time. **Distance learning, modular courses and a wider choice of course times are seen as essential components.** The strategy also focuses on the need for a greater emphasis on the provision of planned breaks to provide carers with the time to take up work, education, leisure and training opportunities. The Paper also looks at a survey on carers accessing NEC distance-learning courses which shows that 'most students study for enjoyment but almost one-third chose a course with a view to gaining employment or starting their own business.

Current position -HALS and provision for Carers:

- Working partnership with Haringey Foster Carers to provide customised ICT classes through Family Learning provision.
- Foster carers also access Family Learning provision in individual courses run in libraries, schools, children's centres
- Developing partnership with SEN schools in Haringey to provide Family Learning opportunities
- Carers in receipt of benefits can already claim a 50% discount on fee-charging courses. Many courses, including Skills for Life, Work-based learning and Family Learning are free of charge to all learners and many of these courses can offer free crèche places. An additional discount of 10% is offered to all registered Haringey carers accessing HALS provision. Day, evening & weekend provision offers a degree of choice to carers on points of access.
- HALS' IAG (Information, Advice & Guidance) accredited service, is open to all individuals over 20yrs who need career information and advice on learning and work and also run a series of 1 day employability skills workshops to support those returning to work .
- Learndirect in HALS provides flexible online learning options on ways to improve literacy and numeracy skills and gain recognised national qualifications. Courses can be partially accessed from home.
- HALS, in partnership with Libraries, acts as an information point for carers of people with dementia. Staff are currently being trained to promote a DVD, 'Life with Two Hats' supported by Millenium Awards, Carers UK & Alzheimer's society, which gives a wealth of information on how to access help as a carer.
- HALS holds a small subcontract with 'Different Strokes' London North organisation for delivery of exercise classes designed to assist recovery for stroke survivors of all ages. In some cases, carers attend and join in the activities to support further recovery at home.

Proposal for further provision to meet carers' needs through a partnership between Haringey Adult Services and HALS.

HALS already provides a range of flexible short and medium length courses covering Arts, well-being, ICT, Skills for Life , Business & Work Skills, Family Learning and Languages over day, evening & weekend hours at a growing number of access points in the borough.

Although these courses are partially subsidised by the LSC and concessionary rates are available , charges apply in many cases that might prevent carers from accessing provision to support skills development.

It is therefore necessary to remove this barrier by applying a further subsidy to courses that carers wish to attend so that they can be offered completely free of charge. ACCS Directorate have indicated that this subsidy might be possible , particularly to support the personalisation agenda and promote an ethos of social inclusion and widening participation

However, due to the unpredictability of a carer's capacity to attend a course of any length, without respite care being provided, **an additional option would**

be to provide distance learning courses through HALS using the existing Haringey network, that is aimed at sharing information and H&S advice with carers. Piloting a range of popular courses adapted to be accessed through distance learning will require a considerable initial input of time to design suitable schemes of work and resources and provide support systems through telephone/e-mail from Tutors. Local carers could be consulted first of all through surveys/ local networks to determine the most popular choice of courses to include in the pilot and their access to computers/internet facilities. Perhaps a loan scheme could be subsidised by ACCS and made available to those carers without these facilities at home.

In addition to the above choices, **HALS could offer access to ICT resources in partnership with existing carers centres and carers support organisations**, operating a rolling programme using laptop trolleys to create 'instant classrooms' which it already does in some community locations. Tutor-led classes could then be an option at centres as well as drop-in facilities whereby carers could access available distance-learning courses.

Marketing these services to carers

There is a need for good quality information on local informal and accredited/formal courses available. HALS would promote courses to attract carers through:

- Using national helpline (Carers Direct), Carers UK/Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Haringey Carers Website to promote flexible learning opportunities.
- Working in close partnership with Adult Services, care organisations, centres, PCT, health centres, doctors surgeries and other relevant referral points.
- Using Life Channel TV promotion video in targeted health centres and doctor's surgeries.
- HALS prospectus /targeted leaflets delivered to all registered carers
- Attend events aimed at carers to promote opportunities
- Use Adult Services, carers service, care day centres, Job Centre Plus, Libraries and HALS IAG services to widen distribution of information
- In addition to findings of Scrutiny committee, HALS to consult with local carers groups on their mainstream learning needs and aim to prioritise provision identified.

Initial Briefing Paper presented by Pat Duffy, Head of Service, Haringey Adult Learning Service.

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