

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 22nd November 2021
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Equalities

Report Title

The Carer Confident Quality Standard

Summary

A self-assessment is required to be undertaken in order to achieve the Carer Confident Quality standard, via membership of the GM Employers for Carers Consortium, facilitated by Carers UK.

The standard demonstrates a commitment as an employer to improve working conditions for employees who have unpaid/informal caring responsibilities.

This report provides Members with further details regarding the quality accreditation and it sets out proposals which would enable Trafford Council to progress the quality accreditation attainment.

The report does not constitute a Key Decision at this point, but actions which result from implementing the Carers Confident Quality Standard may constitute a key decision at a later date

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Executive:

- **Approve the proposals which would enable Trafford Council to progress the quality accreditation attainment; and**
- **Approve the proposals to embed quality principles within commissioning practices across the Council, once the quality accreditation is attained.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Lindsey Mallory
Extension: 07970 301 479

Background Papers: *None*

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Wellbeing – supporting the health and wellbeing of our employees • Successful and Thriving Places – ensuring carers can successfully find and maintain work alongside their caring responsibilities • Green and Connected – supporting employees with caring responsibilities to maintain and develop social connections in order to maintain their wellbeing
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposal relates to the NWADASS Carers Network Priority around preventing carer breakdown • It also relates to the GMCA Carers Network priority to support carers to gain and maintain employment
Financial	We have already committed £5,000 from the adult budget to fund membership of EfC. A further £500 is required to pay for the assessment/accreditation process. The budget for the additional £500 has not yet been agreed
Legal Implications:	No legal implications-the process simply assesses our current policies, procedures and systems and does not require any changes to them
Equality/Diversity Implications	The proposal relates to unpaid and informal carers. Whilst this group of people are not formally recognised as a protected group, there is informal recognition that they are disproportionately disadvantaged by their caring responsibilities Furthermore data shows that unpaid/informal carers are more likely to be women and older people
Sustainability Implications	The Carer Confident Quality Mark is live for 5 years after completion of the self-assessment
Carbon Reduction	Not applicable
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	This project will require project management resource from the Modernisation Team and will also require resource from our Human Resources department, including the skills and development team
Risk Management Implications	<p>Human Resource Risk: the assessment process will impact across the Council, but will also require project management resource, most likely from HR professionals and possibly from the Modernisation team. This risk cannot be mitigated</p> <p>Human resource risk: The proposal may require further human resource and possibly training and development resource if the recommendations</p>

	<p>from the assessment indicate that changes are required to the Council's policies, procedures and training for staff and managers. This risk is potentially mitigated by the fact that we have the option not to pursue the accreditation following the assessment</p> <p>Financial risk: there is a risk that the changes outlined above may result in additional cost to Trafford Council, for instance if there are recommendations to change our workforce conditions. This risk is mitigated by the fact that we have the option not to pursue the accreditation following the assessment. This risk is further mitigated by evidence from Carers UK which demonstrates that achieving the Carer Confident Quality Standard often leads to a reduction in sickness absence and improvements in staff retention</p>
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The proposal will support improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Trafford Council employees
Health and Safety Implications	None

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Carer Confident Quality Mark is hosted by Carers UK. The Carer Confident benchmarking scheme ("The Scheme") supports employers to build a positive and inclusive workplace for staff who are, or will become, carers and to make the most of the talents that carers can bring to the workplace.
- 1.2 The Scheme is intended to provide a practical framework to assist employers to:
- Develop and implement a package of support for carers, whatever size or sector; and
 - Identify and measure the impact of workplace policies and practices which can support carer (and wider workforce) retention, engagement and productivity; and
 - Heighten profile and reputation as an 'employer of choice' for the growing numbers of people looking to work more flexibly (whether carers, former carers, older workers, returners or others).
- 1.3 The certificate of achievement will be presented to employers with a UK presence who demonstrate they have built a positive and inclusive workplace where carers are recognised, respected and supported. It demonstrates the organisation's commitment to supporting people with unpaid or informal caring roles outside of their paid employment
- 1.4 The Scheme has three levels:
- Level 1: Active in addressing carer support;
 - Level 2: Accomplished in providing carer support; and
 - Level 3: Ambassador for carer support both internally and externally.

The Scheme has been designed be clear and simple, based on a straight-forward self-assessment process, with employers describing how they meet the criteria expected at each of the three levels and providing relevant evidence.

- 1.5 Each of these 3 levels is measured across the following 5 key criteria:
- Preparation – how are you enabling carers to identify and recognise themselves?
 - Policy and guidance – how are you making your support for carers transparent?
 - Practical support – what practical provisions and arrangements are available for carers?
 - Peer support – how are you connecting and engaging carers?
 - Promoting support – how are you communicating carer support?

1.6 The Carer Confident Quality Mark is achieved by an organisational self-assessment process.

1.7 The fee for each level of Carer Confident Quality Mark is £500 + VAT.

2. **Benefits of Carer Confident Quality Mark.**

2.1 There are several advantages to pursuing the quality mark, including those listed below:

- a. The quality mark shows our employees and potential employees that we are a caring organisation so that we can retain and attract the right people to work for us;
- b. The quality mark raises awareness of unpaid carers and promotes understanding across the organisation;
- c. The assessment process will highlight areas for improvement which will further improve conditions for unpaid carers;
- d. The additional resources available to us through Carers for Employers will help us to train managers and staff to recognise caring responsibilities and to support employees so that they can remain in paid employment, thereby maintaining their quality of life and reducing the costs associated with recruitment of new employees;
- e. The quality mark may encourage carers to be more open about the issues they face, so that managers can be flexible about their working arrangements, where this suits the needs of the business, and this could in turn reduce sickness and other absence and improve productivity;
- f. The quality mark allows us to set an example to our partner organisations and encourage them to achieve the quality mark whilst also taking advantage of the umbrella membership afforded by Carers UK. This will further help our partners to achieve their social value ambitions and add value to the contracts they hold with Trafford Council;
- g. The quality mark is aligned with our ambitions to promote equality and diversity across the organisation and across Trafford

3. **Position Statement**

3.1 Trafford Council has already signed up to membership of the GM Employers for Carers Consortium which is also hosted by Carers UK. AS part of our membership we have access to a range of online tools as well as face to face consultancy support, to help us to be supportive employers for people with caring responsibilities. The membership can also be extended to organisations working in partnership with Trafford Council, including commissioned service providers

- 3.2 Membership provides access for all staff at Trafford Council to a members' platform, EfC Digital. This platform provides a range of online practical resources, tools and e-Learning to support the carers in our workforce. Membership also includes a free 'lunch and learn' or similar session and virtual Members Networking Events.
- 3.3 Trafford Council currently has in place a range of policies, procedures and other activities which support our unpaid carer workforce. These include: carers leave, flexible working options and an employee led Carers Network.
- 3.4 Having met with Carers UK and conducted a brief review of policies and procedures, Trafford Council is confident that it can evidence achievement of level 1 of the Scheme and the Council could realise further benefits by completing the level 2 self-assessment stage of the Scheme, for the following reasons:
- it remains that unpaid carers often struggle to meet the demands of their caring and work responsibilities and as a result, many find it impossible to work and as a result, will suffer financial hardship and the mental health issues associated with social isolation and money or housing worries.
 - Furthermore Trafford Council may lose several work days each year due to absence as a result of emergency leave requirements resulting from caring responsibilities or sickness absence as a result of poor health resulting from the pressure to meet work/caring responsibilities. Some of this will be hidden because employees will fear that their employment may be affected if they are honest about their situation.

4. Carer Confident Quality Mark Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that Trafford Council completes the self-assessment process for Level 2 of the Scheme and to submit an application, together with the self-assessment fee of £500 plus VAT, to attain a certificate of achievement for Level 2 of the Carer Confident Quality Mark. The rationale for this being that we are confident that our existing policies, procedures and workforce terms and conditions would already comply with the Level 1 standard and we wish to build on this. Further consideration would be required at a later date, with regard to our commitment to complete the Level 3 self-assessment
- 4.2 Once the Level 2 Carer Confident Quality Mark is attained, it is proposed that the following steps to embed quality principles within commissioning practices across the Council, will be taken:
- Encourage and support organisations currently commissioned to deliver services on behalf of Trafford Council, to achieve the Carer Confident Quality Standard; and
 - Require organisations to complete the Carer Confident Quality Standard as a condition of being awarded future contracts to provide services on behalf of the Council. This will require further consideration in partnership with STAR procurement colleagues

Other Options

1. **Do not complete the self-assessment process in order to achieve the Carer Confident Quality Mark:** The outcomes include a self-assessment fee cost saving of £500 plus VAT and lack of knowledge about how we support our unpaid carers.

- This would also mean that we cannot hold commissioned providers to account in terms of how they support unpaid carers and would require no HR or PMO resource
2. **Delay completing the assessment process:** this would result in a delay in the cost of the £500 plus vat self-assessment fee, a lack of knowledge about how we support unpaid carers who are our employees, a delay in holding commissioned providers to account in this respect and a delay in the requirement for HR and PMO resource
 3. **Source an alternative quality mark:** this would lead to delay in achieving the quality mark because we would need to research the availability of an alternative. It would also mean that we are not making full use of the membership fee we have already paid as part of the GM Employers for carers consortium which is a waste of Council resource already committed

Consultation

There are no public consultation requirements in respect of this report. Consultation with the Carers Partnership Board with regard to this proposal has been undertaken.

Reasons for Recommendation

1. We have already committed to membership of the GM Employers for Carers Consortium and this will help us to maximise the membership benefits
2. We believe that we are able to demonstrate that we can achieve level 2 of the Carer Confident Quality Mark and this will add to the benefits of working for trafford Council
3. It will raise awareness of the issues for employees with caring responsibilities so that we can be supportive and retain our employees
4. This will allow us to hold our commissioned providers to account by improving conditions for their employees
5. This in turn will support more Trafford residents with caring responsibilities to maintain or gain employment and improve their financial and emotional wellbeing
6. The quality mark is a tangible way of demonstrating our commitment to equality and diversity
7. By attracting unpaid carers into the workforce we are also improving the economic wellbeing of Trafford residents

Finance Officer Clearance (type in initials).....HZ.....

Legal Officer Clearance (type in initials).....DS.....



[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE (electronic)...

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To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.