

# CARERS ASSOCIATION SOUTHERN STAFFORDSHIRE



## ***BUSINESS PLAN***

***Executive Summary***

***2008 - 2013***

This Business Plan is intended as a working document that can be read by carers and professionals alike.

### **CASS Mission Statement**

To ensure carers in Staffordshire are recognised, supported and have more control over their own lives

### **Organisation Background**

The Carers Association Southern Staffordshire (CASS) is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Since 1996 CASS has provided a service to informal carers of all ages living in the administrative districts of Stafford, South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, Lichfield, Tamworth and East Staffordshire. In July 2005, with the Charity Commission's approval, members voted to extend the organisation's area of benefit to Staffordshire and the Midlands, making it easier for CASS to work in collaboration with other agencies on countywide projects

Referrals to the project have increased year on year and, at June 2008, nearly 4,000 adult carers and 450 young carers are registered with CASS and receiving a service to varying degrees. Over 100 former carers are also being supported through a transition period of bereavement including that experienced when the cared-for enters permanent residential care.

The work is carried out within the following principles -

- confidentiality
- equal opportunities
- protection of vulnerable adults
- child protection

Funding for the majority of the work of the organisation is provided through the County Council (current main contract running until end of March 2009); with other posts being funded from other sources but all with fixed time spans.

Other funding is received, at varying levels, from South Staffs Primary Care Trust, Staffordshire's Children's Fund, Community and Learning Partnership, South Staffs and Shropshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, South Staffordshire District Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The 2008 National Carers Strategy<sup>1</sup> was launched in June of that year and set out a vision for services for 2008 to 2011 and beyond and contained a range of recommendations and proposals. This, together with our own experience, local and national research, and a comprehensive needs analysis has provided the foundation for this plan. All aims and objectives, unless otherwise stated, relate to carers of all ages, caring for people with physical or sensory impairment, learning disabilities, mental ill health or frailty/illness due to old age.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Carers at the heart of 21<sup>st</sup> century families and communities' DoH 2008

### ***1. Provision of advice, information and support to carers***

The provision of accurate and up to date information is essential in assisting carers to maintain control of their lives and to enable them to access services that will support them and the person they care for. The organisation's approach is flexible and much of the work is carried out through home visits to carers, as well as through telephone contact. CASS has been particularly successful in providing valuable emotional support to many carers. This support is not easily quantifiable however, service evaluations have shown that carers are greatly encouraged and strengthened by the fact that there is someone 'just for them', who will listen to them, in confidence and without judgement, and share their concerns. This alone can help alleviate their stress.

The organisation's paid staff are complemented by over 60 trained volunteers who provide a range of support to carers, particularly around befriending or helping at drop-ins, Alz Cafes etc.

Our priorities for the next five years are to –

- **Continue to provide a range of information for carers**, regularly reviewing information and resources; providing information in other formats; looking for opportunities to promote CASS and its services
- **Maintain and develop support to carers**, in particular by, reviewing outreach services in response to demand; reviewing carers' needs for emotional support and developing new services accordingly: maintaining and developing support using volunteers
- **Increase the diversity of services**, by identifying the needs of specific groups of marginalised carers; working towards expanding the PDSS service
- **Develop services for mental health carers**, working towards establishing a seamless service for carers of any age of people with functional or organic problems; responding to projected increase in demand for dementia services

### ***2. To ensure that the capacity and quality of the service to carers is of the highest possible standard***

Quantitative monitoring of service delivery is usually carried out on a quarterly basis. Qualitative monitoring is more difficult as staff may sometimes only undertake a brief period of intensive case work with a carer until the situation is resolved and may not always know the long term positive outcome for the carer.

Mindful of the fact that carers are very busy people, an organisational evaluation is undertaken with carers every 18 months to 2 years (the next to be undertaken in September 2009). The outcome of the last evaluation<sup>2</sup> was very positive and highlighted the fact that CASS was still meeting the needs of Carers after 11 years of support.

Because of the continual increase in referrals, that has not been matched by additional funding for increased staffing, waiting lists are in operation in most areas of work

CASS has been working with PQASSO Version 2 (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) for some while and has successfully achieved level 2. The organisation aims to complete an external assessment using the latest version of the quality standard.

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<sup>2</sup> CASS Service Evaluation September 2007

Our priorities are to -

- **Increase current levels of service to meet demands.** This will include regularly reviewing CASS' ability to meet changing demands; reviewing service delivery levels in response to demand; ensuring continuation of adequate levels of funding; developing new initiatives, opportunities, funding sources
- **Continue to develop quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation systems:** monitoring numbers and profiles of carers contacting the service; evaluating quality and impact through various methods
- **Continue to recruit, develop and support staff** by maintaining robust personnel procedures; through systematic and appropriate training; offering development opportunities and supervision
- **Make best use of evolving technology,** including ensuring IT systems and equipment are appropriate and fit for purpose

### ***3. To raise awareness of carers and their needs***

Despite an increase in the profile of carers, both nationally and countywide, work still needs to be undertaken to ensure that all agencies coming into contact with carers are aware of the issues, work towards meeting their needs in the most appropriate and effective way both within their own organisations and in partnership, and to increase the uptake of services by carers who may not recognise themselves as such.

Our priorities are to -

- **Increase carer awareness with commissioners and providers of services,** to ensure that carers views are taken into account
- **Promote the identification of carers by themselves and others,** improving public awareness
- **Maintain and develop networking links** to encourage partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies, seeking opportunities to work together in response to identified need

### ***4. To provide opportunities for carer involvement in service planning and delivery***

Carers are increasingly being recognised as being vital to the process of planning and delivering services. More opportunities are being provided with the statutory sector however these do not always extend past membership of panels and fora. We recognise that our own consultation process on services (both our own and others) also needs to be more robust and inclusive.

Our priorities are to-

- **Influence service planning and delivery of support to carers,** by maintaining and developing representation on appropriate boards and fora
- **Maintain and improve methods of consultation with carers** to ensure the carers voice is heard
- **Maintain and improve representation of carers' views** by ensuring CASS/carers reps have places on relevant boards/fora and that their views are accurately and appropriately represented; encouraging, training and supporting carers to act as representatives for other carers in strategic arenas
- **Improve feedback to carers on strategic matters** and keep carers up to date with changes and developments

## **5. To give carers choice and control in order to improve lives and opportunities**

The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to inform carers of their right to an assessment and that work, life-long learning and leisure are considered in that assessment. In addition, when the assessment is being completed it must take into account whether the carer works or wishes to work, any courses the carer is taking or wishes to take, and any other leisure activities the carer undertakes or wishes to undertake.

The 2008/2009 Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Staffordshire contains one indicator specifically referring to carers – NI 135; Carers receiving needs assessments or reviews and a specific carer's service or advice/information. The increase in assessments being proposed will inevitably result in increased referrals to CASS and other Third Sector organisations. We wish to maximise the positive outcomes for carers from assessments and to provide opportunities to have a life outside of caring.

The priorities are:

- **Improve lives through Carers' Assessments** by supporting SC&H in undertaking quality Carers Assessments (including the feasibility of undertaking CA's on their behalf)
- **Maximise carers' income** by ensuring access for carers to benefit/financial advice; assisting in increasing the take up of Carers Allowance; encouraging the uptake of Carers Direct Payment; supporting carers in taking more control over their money management
- **Promote good mental and physical health for carers**
  - *For young carers:* increase the opportunities for them to access activities; to make healthy choices in relation to their physical, mental, emotional, sexual and overall lifestyle; improve life and social skills; ensure smooth transference from young to adult carer services
  - *For adult carers:* improve the attendance at drop-ins; broaden the Learning and Leisure service programme of activities
- **Promote training, education, and life opportunities for carers** by providing carers with choice and assisting them to have a life outside of caring; offering opportunities to enhance personal development
- **Increase the number and variety of breaks available to carers** by increasing the in-house provision or by helping to influence future developments and commissioning of breaks
- **Improve support for working carers** by raising awareness with businesses/employers of the needs of working carers; showing them the benefits of retaining them on the staff

A copy of the full Business Plan, which includes the Action Plan, budget and organisational chart can be obtained from the address below.

Any comments or feedback would be welcomed and addressed to –

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