



# NSW CARERS STRATEGY 2014-2019 PROGRESS REPORT

## FOCUS AREA 2: CARER HEALTH AND WELLBEING



OCTOBER 2016

## Focus area 2: Carer health and wellbeing

### Expected outcome in the Strategy

Carers experience good health and wellbeing

#### Summary of progress

Carers have said that it can be difficult to find the time, energy and resources to look after themselves. Carers are less likely to use services if they face long queues, complex processes and non-negotiable start and finish times. Many carers are unable to use services if there is no one to assist with those they care for.

There are three Strategy projects in this focus area:

- 2.1 Easier access to health care
- 2.2 Individualising respite and support services
- 2.3 Carer peer support.

#### Highlight Project 2.1 Easier access to health care

##### Lead agency

NSW Health with Carers NSW, the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and Healthdirect Australia

##### Identified need

Carers are a vulnerable 'at risk' group in terms of their own health and wellbeing. Carers have the lowest wellbeing of any large group as measured by the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index<sup>1</sup>. Carers are 40 per cent more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition. Health issues like back problems, anxiety and depression, can also be directly linked to caring<sup>2</sup>. Carers are more likely to report high blood pressure (41.6 per cent), high cholesterol (28.8 per cent), and being overweight or obese (55.7 per cent) compared to non-carers<sup>3</sup>.

##### Project description

This project aimed to bring together a number of different NSW Health initiatives to ensure health care services are accessible to carers.

1 Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, Survey 17.1, Report 17.1, page 6, 2007

2 The Health and Wellbeing of Adult Family Carers in South Australia 1994 – 2004, page 14, 2007

3 Ibid.

## Progress to date

The project built links across the public health system with key partners across a number of different initiatives:

- *NSW Family and Carer Mental Health Program* adapted so that support and training about mental illness and management for families and carers is carer-friendly and responds to the needs of specific carer groups such as culturally diverse populations, Aboriginal people and those living in rural and remote locations.
- *After-Hours Palliative Care Helpline* adapted to provide advice and psychosocial support to carers of people who have a life-limiting illness in the after-hours period.
- *Last-Days-of-Life Home Support Service* developed to provide palliative care support for carers who are taking care of patients at their end of life who wish to remain or die at home.

The project also ensured that carers' needs are considered in the following broader health initiatives:

- *Online training* developed, in partnership with the Health Education and Training Institute, for staff across the NSW Health system to increase the awareness of carers and their role.
- *Carer support positions* across Local Health Districts maintained to continue to build capacity of the public health system to be responsive to the needs of carers.
- The *Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service* promoted to carers and to health coaches, to not only be aware of the needs and challenges experienced by carers but also to tailor their approach to individual carers.
- *Stepping On*, a falls prevention program, adapted and actively promoted to carers and carer organisations to increase access by carers.

## Key achievements

- Extensive network of carer support staff across Local Health Districts (approximately 20 Full Time Equivalent).
- Approximately 800 staff across NSW Health have completed the NSW Health Education and Training Institute online education module *Partnering with Carers*.
- Over 10,000 health promotion resources for the *Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service* have been disseminated by NSW Health staff.
- Over 4,400 packages of the *Last-Days-of-Life Home Support Service* have been delivered throughout NSW since December 2013.



## Next steps

Future work will focus on ensuring the health and wellbeing needs of carers continue to be integrated across the primary and acute health care setting. NSW Health will work with pharmacies to promote the health and wellbeing of carers and will also ensure that the needs of carers are reflected in actions that promote disability inclusion across the NSW health system.

*"I've cared for my wife for 9 years. It's been interesting being on the caring journey. I've seen a whole lot of recovery but there have also been struggles to get the right information and service and get through a wall of secrecy. I share this information with other carers as soon as I get it.*

*Through the Family and Carer Mental Health Program I have received valuable education, training and support from an individual support worker. The Program has given me skills and resilience and also helped me to understand the health system and how it works."*

Carer receiving support through the *NSW Health Family and Carer Mental Health Program*



