



ACT CARERS STRATEGY

Progress Report 2020

Community Services Directorate
JULY 2020

PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2020

1 Develop and deliver a handbook to support improved understanding of the role of kinship and foster carers in the child protection and out of home care systems, including carer participation and engagement in care planning.

2 * Deliver programs and activities to help carers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carers, navigate available services and supports, such as mentoring for new carers.

3 * Define respite care and promote access to suitable respite care.

4 * Support carers to advocate for themselves and the people they care for.

5 Support carers of people with disability to access information and services that assist them in their caring role.

6 Promote digital services that carers can access, including access to government web platforms.

7 * Promote carers in the ACT during National Carers Week.

8 * Deliver an annual event to celebrate the role and contribution of carers.

9 * Develop and implement a communications strategy to promote awareness of carers in the community.

10 * Identify and respond to young carers who require additional support in order to remain engaged in education or training.

11 * Flexibly support young carers by collaboratively designing individualised learning pathways.

12 * Collaborate to link existing programs in order to provide tailored support to meet the education and training needs of young carers.

13 * Advocate for the provision of mental health and wellbeing support to young carers.

14 Employ engagement approaches that enable participation by carers, including in policy development.

15 Seek input from carers on initiatives that promote the rights and inclusion of people with disability.

16 * Include carers in consultation and planning for Better Suburbs.

17 Consider carer needs and engage carers in consultations for planning initiatives.

18 * Identify barriers and explore options to:

- Acknowledge carers on health plans, including their role and support needs.
- Consider carers' needs during hospital discharge processes.

19 Conduct a carer impact assessment for the 'Hospital in the Home' initiative, to consider carers' needs and their role as part of the care team.

20 * Assist carers to navigate the range of relevant, subsidised training opportunities and learning supports available in the ACT.

21 Ensure the views and training needs of carers in the Canberra community are represented during annual consultation on the ACT Skills Needs List.

22 * Promote innovative adult community education projects designed to address barriers to carers' participation in vocational education and training (VET) and employment.

23 Promote carer access to services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), migrant and refugee communities that build skills relevant to workforce participation.

24 * Engage the Canberra Business Chamber and private sector to promote employment of carers and support for carer employees.

25 Develop standard wording around recognition and support of carers in the workplace to support advocacy work.

Key

Yet to commence
No action to date.

Planning stage
For example, research, scoping or initial meetings.

Early progress
Early progress towards outcomes for carers.

Significant progress
Tangible outcomes evident for carers.

Complete
Future work will maintain outcomes.

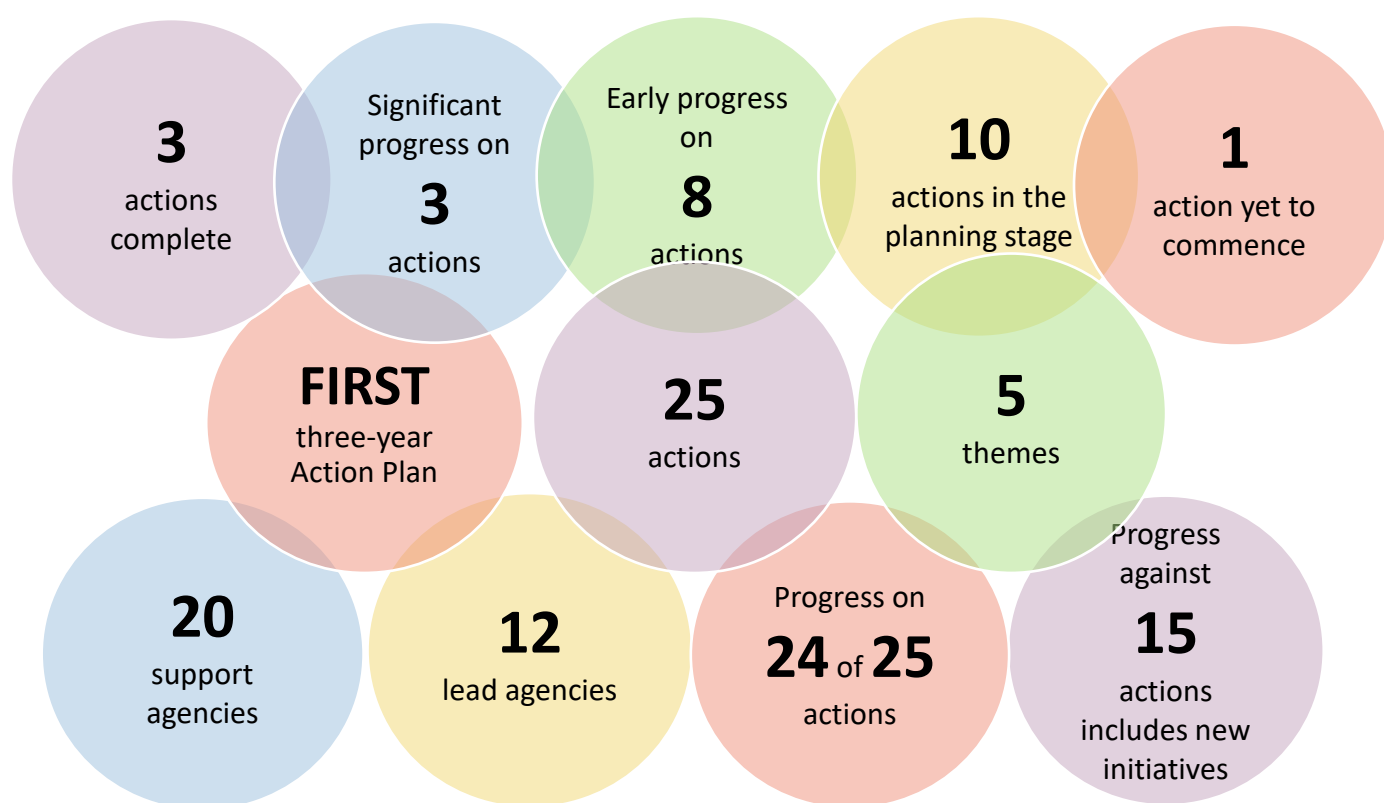
Progress on action includes new initiatives.

Introduction

The *ACT Carers Strategy 2018-2028* (the Strategy) first three-year Action Plan (the Action Plan) includes 25 actions that will deliver on the vision, outcomes and priorities established for carers by the Strategy. The actions fall broadly under five themes: services and supports for carers; recognition and awareness; inclusion; support for young carers; and workforce and skills recognition.

This progress report has been prepared by the Community Services Directorate, in consultation with the Carers Strategy Governance Group, which oversees the implementation of actions and contributes to reporting. The Governance Group includes representatives from ACT Government, Carers ACT, the community sector and the Canberra carer community.

Progress on several actions is already delivering tangible outcomes for carers. This report highlights examples of progress and is not a comprehensive list of all outcomes provided by lead and support agencies.



In developing the Action Plan, representatives from Government and the community sector were engaged through a deliberative process that included identifying work already underway by their agency that contributed to the priorities and outcomes identified in the Strategy.

The progress against actions in this report includes some new initiatives implemented since the launch of the Action Plan as well as a range of work that was already underway by agencies before the Action Plan was launched, but which was identified as contributing to the priorities and outcomes of the Strategy.

Actions that are being met in part or full through new initiatives are marked on page one of this report.

Highlights

Services and Supports

- The *Carer Handbook: the go-to resource for kinship and foster carers in the ACT* was developed by ACT Government Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS), in partnership with ACT Together, Carers ACT and foster and kinship carers, and launched in March 2019. Around 550 copies of the handbook were delivered to carers as part of Carer Resource Kits.
- Carers ACT implemented the new Carer Gateway services in April 2020. These services include peer support groups and coaching as well as counselling, carer support action plans, supports for carer wellbeing and provision of information.
- Carers ACT has supported carers to advocate for themselves by delivering training to staff to build the capacity and capability of carers to self-advocate through online training and tools.
- Carers ACT has developed and distributed over 600 information sheets with the University of Canberra and Canberra Health Services on:
 - understanding the impacts of a crisis on cognitive processing, particularly the impact on the ability to make rational decisions,
 - how to identify a decline in mental health for carers of people with mental illness who were unable to see the person they cared for during COVID, and
 - tips on how to help people with mental illness to re-engage with support services post COVID. This included working with the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drugs Access Team at Canberra Health Services to ensure carers who phoned for assistance were provided with information on how to support help-seeking in people with mental illness.
- Carers ACT, the Health Care Consumers Association and the Mental Health Consumers Network have developed a consumer and carer representative training package for delivery by Canberra Health Services. The training package will build skills and confidence in carers to undertake representative roles, to ensure the voices of carers are heard in a range of Canberra Health Services committees.
- The Mental Health Carers Advocacy and Policy Advisory Group, established by Carers ACT, launched its first three-year strategic plan at the end of 2019. The plan includes goals and outcomes that aim to enhance the health and wellbeing of carers and was developed by mental health carers.
- Carers ACT is partnering with the Aboriginal Nannies Group to conduct a forum to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers in Canberra about the issues they face, with a focus on finding solutions. Carers ACT is also partnering with the Aboriginal Nannies Group and Gulanga to develop a My Care record for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, to prevent them having to re-tell their stories multiple times.
- Carers ACT runs both the Ngullaway Art Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and a retreat for mental health carers, which provides respite and assists carers to access and navigate services.
- Carers ACT has appointed a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) worker to engage with CALD groups and organisations to raise awareness of carers and carer supports. The worker has also trained Carers ACT staff to increase engagement with CALD carers.
- The Community Services Directorate (CSD) Office for Disability distributes the *involved* e-newsletter approximately every two months. Subscribers include carers of people with disability. *involved* provides updates about what is happening in the disability space and supports carers to access information and services that assist them in their caring role.

- Carers ACT conducts a workshop program that delivers a range of education and information sessions to support carers of people with disability, including carer self-care training, diet and pain information, understanding trauma and first aid training.
- The 2019-20 ACT Budget funded two Carer Engagement Clinicians to pilot a range of support and psychosocial education activities, to help build capacity for the families and carers of people with mental health conditions.
- ACT Health and Canberra Health Services have established a six-month program for carers to access telehealth services during the COVID-19 emergency.

Recognition and Awareness

- A 12-month communication strategy is being developed to promote awareness of carers in the community. This is being developed by the CSD Media and Communication team with input from Carers ACT and ACT Together.
- ACT Together hosts events each September to recognise ACT's foster and kinship carers. In 2019, this included a range of media articles along with a function and events to recognise carers.
- In 2019, Carers ACT coordinated Carers Week activities to increase awareness and recognition of the role of carers, support carers to advocate for themselves and celebrate the contribution carers make to our community. Activities included:
 - Carers Week flags on London Circuit and the accompanying flower bed on Northbourne Avenue;
 - radio interviews with Carers ACT, carers and the people for whom they care;
 - carers attending the Carers Australia Breakfast at Parliament House to meet and be heard by members of parliament; and
 - a cocktail party at the Hyatt Hotel for 180 carers, a young carers' celebration in Civic Square and an afternoon tea at Carers ACT.
- In 2019, Carers ACT supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers to attend the formal and informal NAIDOC Balls.
- Carers ACT has also continued to advocate strongly for the needs of carers and care recipients throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency by:
 - developing information in partnership with the Office for Disability about caring for people with a disability during the emergency;
 - advocating for personal protective equipment to be provided for carers through the ACT COVID-19 Response;
 - providing evidence to the Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response calling for public acknowledgement of the role carers have played in flattening the curve; and
 - working with ABC radio to produce and nationally broadcast carer stories.
- Carers ACT is currently planning a carers cocktail evening at the National Art Gallery, tentatively booked for October 2020 (dependent on COVID-19 social distancing restrictions).

Young Carers

- The Education Directorate is providing resources to all ACT public schools to assist staff to identify and support young carers, including the *supporting students who are young carers* information sheet, which links to a good practice guide for working with young carers in schools and a teacher's guide for young carers.
- The Carers ACT Young Carer Coordinator, appointed in August 2019, has made links with all ACT high schools and colleges to build awareness of the wellbeing and mental health needs of young

carers and how schools can support young carers to meet their education and training needs in a flexible and supportive way. One school has committed to establishing a new young carer support group and other schools have shown interest in a similar group.

- Young carers undertaking their year 12 studies at Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) have a plan put in place at the time of enrolment that provides support and flexible training options and considers the specific needs of each student.
- The Canberra College Cares (CCCares) program provides education and support to young people including young carers. The program offers students year 12 certification, goal-oriented learning packages, online learning, vocational education and employability skills within a mainstream college context. The program has onsite child-care and links with community agencies to provide advocacy and support services.
- Canberra Health Services has ensured that consideration of the support requirements for children of parents with mental illness is a fundamental component of a comprehensive mental health assessment.
- Feedback from young carers has been included in the ACT Government Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing's review of children and young people in relation to their mental health and wellbeing.
- Carers ACT provides scholarships for young carers to participate in education and training options.
- Carers ACT proactively contacted more than 100 young carers during COVID-19 to ensure they were able to balance caring and education and to check on their equipment, support and wellbeing needs.

Inclusion

- A number of ACT Government Directorates have used engagement approaches that enable carers to participate in policy development on issues that impact them.
 - There are currently 16 carer-related qualifications and 17 Skill Sets listed on the 2020 ACT Skills Needs List.
 - Carers ACT represents carers on the Consumer Reference Group, providing input on models of care development and facility design processes to ACT Health's SPIRE project for territory-wide health services planning.
 - Carers ACT represented carers in discussions on the development of the wellbeing indicators framework, which will assist in tracking the wellbeing of carers from Canberra Day 2020.
 - Carers ACT was a key partner in developing the work plan for the ACT Government Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing.
 - Carers ACT has worked with the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing to identify barriers to engagement for carers within mental health services and to encourage the acknowledgement of carers as part of the care support team, particularly around hospital discharge planning.
 - The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate ensures engagement processes are accessible to a wide range of people, including carers, by holding workshops and public information sessions in different locations and times to provide a variety of options for attendees.
- Carers are represented on the ACT Disability Reference Group, Carers Strategy Governance Group, Our Care Committee, Partnering with Consumer Standard Committee and Carers ACT was included on the panel for the 2019 Disability Inclusion Grants.
- The Care Closer to Home Steering Committee, coordinated through the ACT Health Directorate, is collaborating with Carers ACT to undertake a carer impact assessment of the 'Hospital in the Home' initiative. The Hospital in the Home Carers' Survey is currently underway and will run until

the end of August 2020 with Canberra Health Services staff collecting surveys with carers from their service.

- Carers were engaged through a deliberative democracy process in the development of the Better Suburbs Statement. Carers were invited to participate in the Play Spaces Forum, which used participatory budgeting to allocate funding to upgrade and improve play spaces across Canberra.
- Canberra Health Services implemented a Discharge Operational Procedure for use by Mental Health Inpatient Units and Community Teams. This procedure will be amended to clearly state that Discharge planning should commence prior to or as early in the patient's admission as possible. The process should include the input of all members of the multidisciplinary team, the patient and their carer.
- Carers ACT, with support from the Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing, conducted research into the factors that prevent carer engagement in mental health inpatient and community outreach teams.
- Canberra Health Services has undertaken a clinical bed side audit, completed in June 2020 that reviewed compliance of clinical handover, including the participation of the carers.

Workforce and skills recognition

- Carers ACT has progressed a range of work to ensure carers are supported in the workplace. This includes:
 - developing a partnership with MIND Australia and their 'care fairly' campaign for awareness of carers in the workplace;
 - developing a partnership with Carers NSW to introduce a national carer friendly workplace accreditation program in the ACT;
 - conducting 'supporting carers in the workplace' presentations at Australian Government departments of Health and Parliamentary Services; and
 - supporting the launch of Palliative Care ACT resources for supporting palliative carers in the workplace.
- Additional Support funding is available for students undertaking qualifications through Skilled Capital and User Choice (Australian Apprenticeships) where it is identified there will be additional cost associated with their training. A student may need extra support with language, literacy and numeracy via accredited or non-accredited foundation skills training, sign language interpreter services or a mentor who can assist in providing, for example, a culturally sensitive learning environment.
- Carers were identified as a specific target group for Skills Canberra's Mature Workers Program to assist Canberrans aged 25 years and older. The program has reported 3,129 mature worker enrolments in the second semester of 2019, which is a 12.84% increase since 2018 and a 23% increase in engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mature workers.
- The CIT Skills for Carers program offers carers an opportunity to access short courses to support them and the people for whom they care. Carers studying other CIT training courses can also access support services and receive advice on flexible study options in their training area of choice.
- Carers ACT has partnered with Carers NSW and other members of the National Network of Carer Associations to develop and implement the Carers + Employers website, resources and accreditation program. This seeks to encourage workplaces to implement best practice standards for supporting staff with caring responsibilities.
- Carers ACT has worked with WorkSafe ACT to discuss carers in the workplace and raise awareness of the need for carer-friendly practices. Discussions are underway to conduct a webinar on supporting carers in the workplace as part of the mentally healthy workplace initiative.