A Family Carer is someone of any age whose life is restricted because they are looking after another person who cannot manage without help because of illness, age related frailty, mental health need, substance misuse or disability. Family Carers are not paid and do not always live with the person they care for. They may be caring for a friend, neighbour or relative.

Who are Family Carers?

Many people have caring roles within their families and are expected to help out with keeping homes clean and tidy, helping with personal hygiene, assisting with toileting, parental feeding, doing shopping and in some cases provide personal care including giving medication and keeping appointments with GPs and hospitals. Some carers provide care 24/7. Family carers may have their own care needs, such as a physical disability or depression. Caring roles affect work, relationships, hobbies and the carer’s personal and social lives. We know is can be difficult to take time out to pursue an activity, take a holiday or time to relax

Many carers are invisible to the health and social care system. Many do not define themselves as carers (many do not like the label) and prefer their identity of parents, sons, daughters, partners or friends.

However we label it and whether or not carers are known to the health and social care systems, this role is crucial for the people cared for and for our society as a whole. Family carers save the economy £119 billion per year. It is therefore vital that family carers are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing needs.

Strategy background in Suffolk

The ‘Family Carers in Suffolk Strategy 2014-2016’ (the Strategy) has been developed by the Family Carers Partnership Board – a partnership of interested and committed members including Family Carers, Suffolk County Council, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Suffolk Constabulary, the Fire Service and Voluntary Sector organisations.

The Strategy represents the Partnership Boards continued commitment to Family Carers of all ages, giving direction to the development of services for Family Carers across Suffolk. We are strengthening established support networks and existing shared strategic aims leading to an ever strengthening Family Carer community, with a more preventative focus to helping carers that enables them to continue to provide the crucial support that they do in balance with their health and wellbeing needs.

From April 2015 the Care Act formalises the rights of carers to an assessment, support and a carer’s budget (should a carer meet the national eligibility criteria). Suffolk has traditionally valued the role of carer and the Family Carers Partnership Board has been
involved in ensuring that carers in Suffolk have been well supported and this statutory recognition of the rights of carers is very much welcomed.

**Who is this strategy for?**

The Strategy relates to Family Carers who are looking after a friend, neighbour or relative of any age. A Young Carers strategy has been produced by local agencies and is representative of all Young Carers and Young Adult Carers in Suffolk caring for a friend, neighbour or relative.

The strategy is to ensure that there is a common shared approach amongst key partners to developing services/support for carers in Suffolk.

**Where are we now?**

There is a need for organisations to work with Family Carers to identify those that have a caring role and be able to find the right support at the right time. This will encompass a range of support from some straightforward advice or information through to a Carers Assessment and/or review to identify the right support to assist them to continue to care, if they wish, enabling them to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.

The State of Caring Report 2013 produced by Carers UK has identified five key challenges to improve Family Carers lives that the Family Carers Partnership Board is committed to and has integrated into local planning and commissioning processes:

1. Ensure better access to support and information.
2. Deliver services and workplaces that support carers to juggle work and care.
3. Act urgently to prevent carers’ financial hardship.
4. Ensure carers are able to achieve the best health outcomes possible.
5. Deliver high quality care and improve the interface between health and social care services.

*(State of Caring Report 2013, Carers UK)*

**Family Carers in the future**

The Family Carers’ Strategy in Suffolk is a local response to issues raised by Family Carers; taking into account national strategy, new legislation and an evidence based approach to understanding needs. It is important that this strategic vision of the needs of carers is kept under review and updated on a regular basis. The Board is committed to doing this.
The refreshed National Strategy for Carers called - Recognised, valued and supported: Next steps for the Carers Strategy – outlines an important vision for the future of carers. This strategy endorses and supports that future vision, which states that by 2018:

Carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals’ needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside of caring, whilst enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.

The Care Act mainstreams carers and embeds them throughout the reformed system. Within the Care Act, prevention is placed within the context of personalisation and community resilience. It recognises the role that family, friends and the community can provide and in recognising the needs of carers extends its duty to preventing or reducing the needs of carers.

Supporting Lives: Connecting Communities (SLCC) is an approach which develops communities, where people can live more independently of public services, and feel in control of their lives. To achieve this they need to recognise their assets, skills and strengths within the community. Agencies are working in partnership across the county to recognise their expertise and experience. When people need more help and support public services will be able to work with their partners as effectively as possible. This approach will support carers to have control in their lives, maintain their caring role but not be dependent on services and be part of a carer friendly community.

The programme of Health and Social Care Integration (HASCI) is a key element in this direction of travel - developing communities, where people can live more independently of public services, and feel in control of their lives. To achieve this, Health, Social Care and partner organisations will need to work together to identify and utilise the rich resource of support information and advice within local communities.

A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was commissioned for carers and was completed in October 2014. The overall aim was to assess whether services for carers were meeting current and will meet future need.

“A population’s need for a service can be defined as the capacity to benefit from that service; this may differ from the demand for services and the services supplied.” (JSNA Oct 2014)

The JSNA prioritised the recommendations into Must, Should and Could categories. The Must categories describe the recommendations that the authors of the report and the steering group believe must be satisfied. These recommendations form part of this strategy’s action plan.

In addition the JSNA will contain a supplementary report which will inform the refresh of the Young Carers and Young Adult Carers Strategy and inform future commissioning. This will be available by Spring 2015. The Young Carers Regulations are out in draft at the moment for consultation and these will also refresh the Children’s Trust Partnership and Suffolk County Council strategy to support young carers and young adult carers in Suffolk.
The Children and Families Act delivers better support for families, legislating to break down barriers, bureaucracy and delays which stop vulnerable children getting the provision and help they need and which underpins the SEND reforms.

**Moving the Strategy on**

Family Carers can exercise choice and control and are able to access services that promote health and mental wellbeing. This is a key feature of the Family Carers in Suffolk Strategy Action Plan. The Family Carers’ Partnership Board will monitor the Strategy priorities and action plan during its quarterly meetings.

In order that we let Family Carers know how the Strategy is progressing we will aim to hold an annual Family Carers’ Conference that will bring together the development of the action plan at the end of the strategy period.

**Making a difference**

Suffolk’s diverse community marks the need for respite and support services to be available to all Family Carers from all communities, and forms the essence of the work needed to improve reliability, quality, flexibility and choice of the respite and support offer across the whole of Suffolk. This includes those who do not recognise themselves as Family Carers or may not be aware of the range of support and choice available to them. The development of the action plan will support early identification of Family Carers of all ages.

**Progress and achievements**

The Family Carers’ Partnership Board has a vital role in supporting the strategic priorities with Suffolk Social Care and Health services, Clinical Commissioning Groups, the Voluntary Community Sector and the private sector by way of links to the Suffolk Congress.

The key role of the Board is to ensure its membership is reviewed and reflective of communities of Family Carers across Suffolk. The Board will report regularly to the Health & Wellbeing Board in line with its’ reporting structure.

The 2011 Census noted there were approximately 77,500 Adult Family Carers across Suffolk, a 17% increase since the last 2001 Census. Therefore we need to respond to the ever increasing numbers and complex roles Family Carers undertake to ensure the lives of individuals are not restricted due to their caring roles. The aim of this strategy is promote health and mental wellbeing for all Family Carers.
Making Suffolk the safest place to care

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub is a range of organisations in Suffolk with responsibility for safeguarding both adults and children such as Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police, Health Services, District and Borough Council Housing Services, Education, Probation and the Youth Offending Service have come together to create a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The Suffolk MASH, has been developed as a result of learning from previous experiences, especially from lessons highlighted by reviews of serious safeguarding incidents across the country. A recurring theme of these reviews is the importance of information sharing and close working arrangements between relevant agencies.

The MASH model has been strongly endorsed in the OFSTED report ‘Good Practice by Local Safeguarding Boards’ and ‘The Munro Review of Child Protection’. The Care Act 2014 draft guidance also highlights a MASH which includes adult safeguarding as best practise.

The Care Act sets out a clear expectation that carers are listened to where they speak up about abuse and neglect.
Key priorities and Outcomes to support Family Carers of all ages in Suffolk

Priority 1 - All Family Carers are treated with dignity and respect and are recognised as expert care partners - given real opportunities to be involved and to influence the planning, development and delivery of support in their communities.

Outcome:
- Carers have a direct influence on the development of support for them

Priority 2 - Family Carers have the right to expect an integrated response to their needs. With access to a full range of information and support that is relevant, appropriate and accessible to assist them in making choices and taking control of their own lives.

Outcome:
- A joint commissioning approach is fully established, taking account of the identified needs of carers – establishing, commissioning and developing support services
- Staff across all organisations are aware of family carers and their associated needs and Carer Awareness Training is integral to staff training / development

Priority 3 - Family Carers are confident that monitoring and evaluation inform the commissioning of future services.

Outcome:
- A systematic approach to engaging carers in the design of services and in the evaluation of their effectiveness is established

Priority 4 - Family Carers are supported to make choices and access opportunities which promote their own health and wellbeing, including opportunities to access advice, information and support to maintain or return to learning, employment and/ or leisure activities.
Outcome:
- Agencies work together to further develop trusted advisors and advocates in community organisations that are able to effectively support and direct carers to the services they need

Priority 5 - Family Carers have the opportunity to plan their support including respite and breaks, with support if required to plan for and arrange replacement care should they experience an emergency or crisis.

Outcome:
- Engagement with Carers is included as part of an integrated approach to holistic, whole family assessment of support needs

Priority 6 - Young Carers and Young Adult Carers will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods.

Outcome:
- A comprehensive assessment of Young Carers and Young Adult Carers needs is commissioned and findings are acted upon through the joint commissioning group

Priority 7 - Carers are an important part of a connected family / friend / neighbour support unit. A whole family holistic assessment should be a strategic priority that will support this unit and ensure that the support needs of carers are not lost within it.

Outcome:
- An integrated approach to understanding and responding to the needs of carers and the cared for is developed across the statutory and community sectors – incorporating the statutory rights of carers under the Care Act
The Family Carers’ Partnership Board would like to thank the following for their assistance in reviewing and re-shaping the Family Carers in Suffolk Strategy:

- Family Carer Representatives
- Crossroads Care East Anglia
- Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group
- Sue Ryder Care
- Suffolk County Council
- Suffolk Family Carers
- The Alzheimer’s Society
- Waveney and Great Yarmouth Clinical Commissioning Group
- West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group

For more information about Family Carers in Suffolk Strategy please contact Suffolk Family Carers on 01473 835400
If you would like information in another format, such as large print, braille, audio or another language please contact Suffolk Family Carers on 01473 835400.