

Statement for the PDS panel 16 June 2025. Carers Strategy Update.

Thinking about the Report which the panel is asked to consider today, I was struck by the fact that we could not possibly know what it was like to care for someone 24/7 unless we had direct experience of it. The sheer mind-numbing fatigue I have observed in friends and neighbours is compounded by worry about finance and the future care which may or may not be provided for their partner or child when they are gone. It all adds to the stress, one Swallows mother told me last week, when you just want to make sure the child you love is as happy and safe and secure as they can be. (I will refrain from doing a commercial for the Swallows charity for young adults with learning difficulties, HQ in Westfield...)

Having a Carers strategy is a thoroughly good idea, not least because it will, I hope, set out clearly what BANES residents can expect from the Council, above and beyond what is set out in national law. I hope it works better than the 'parish charter', at least as Westfield parish council see it. There must be a way to reduce the 'bureaucracy'; as the Swallows mums see it, and bring together all aspects of caring for a disabled person. If the dementia charities can do it, and Macmillan have a range of useful leaflets, not to mention the RNIB who have given me so much support, surely the Council can manage it, while also making residents with caring responsibilities feel valued, and not a nuisance or an unnecessary burden on the council tax payer.

It frustrates me when, as happened at my surgery on Saturday, a resident presents a terrible problem, and I have to give four (or more) different agencies who can help with some aspect of the problem. These papers illustrate the problem. First, there is the difficulty of getting a statement of educational and health needs, and the whole controversy over SEND I would have been very interested to see how many of the children who require one are on Free school meals. Disability is the fast route to poverty, as I am sure you all know. Then we see that the school exclusions disproportionately affect children with special educational needs. In the Youth Justice report, the same inequality appears. Yet the government funding over the last decade has not been made available to address this. Health is at the root of each individual's situation, but I cannot see Active Travel helping the disabled in Radstock-Westfield very much. I myself am fed up with the conduct of reckless cyclists.....

The Swallows mums need their cars, and there is no way they could safely cycle. And what about Home to School transport in this context

It is assumed that everyone can find out all they need to know on the BANES website. 20% of my residents do not have internet access

The Swallows mums told me to tell you that they want to be consulted, to have the annual reviews done promptly and without months of delay and chasing, and not to have their gratitude taken for granted.

Today is the 110th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo I do hope that the blackhole in the council finance because of ASC costs and the needs of SEND children does not mean Section 14 and the Council's Waterloo.

Dr Eleanor Jackson

Westfield parish Council

And BANES Councillor for Westfield