

Carers Focus Group – March 2020

INTRODUCTION

An open invitation was extended to carers to attend a Focus Group at Central Hub with the opportunity to share their views on caring for a loved one in Hartlepool. 11 carers attended, with varying levels of caring roles, genders and ages as well as an ex carer.

The Focus Group was based around the Hartlepool Borough Council Carers Strategy (2019-2024) and an introduction was given by Hartlepool Carers CEO Christine Fewster.

As an opening activity, carers were asked to briefly explain what being a carer in Hartlepool is like for them as an individual (appendix 1).

PRIORITIES

The Carers Strategy focuses around six main priorities:

1. Identify carers at an early age, recognising their contribution and involving local care in planning individual care packages.
2. Carers having a family and community life alongside caring personalized support for carers and providing good quality information, advice and support
3. Support carers to stay healthy – mentally and physically
4. Carers realising and releasing their potential in education and employment
5. Providing opportunities to help ex-carers sustain and fulfill healthy lives
6. Widen participation of carers to influence decision making at a local level

For each priority the carers were asked to discuss in groups what they felt worked and didn't work.

PRIORITY 1: IDENTIFY CARERS AT AN EARLY AGE, RECOGNISING THEIR CONTRIBUTION AND INVOLVING LOCAL CARE IN PLANNING INDIVIDUAL CARE PACKAGES

WHAT WORKS?

“Activities give us chance to have a break from our caring roles”

“Being able to talk to someone who knows me at young carers helped me manage with my emotions”

“Support with homework at young carers homework group”

“Being able to access activities and being able to speak to other young carers”

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

"Schools aren't aware of what a young carer is to be able to identify and support them"

"Children don't recognise that they are young carers and entitled to support"

"Lack of awareness of what a young carer is by GP"

"No support at school and lack of awareness at college"

"Other services with support groups for specific illnesses do not seem to be accessible to young people"

WHAT HAVE HARTLEPOOL CARERS DONE THIS QUARTER TO IMPROVE IN THIS AREA?

Over the past three months we have been working hard to build relationships with schools, GPs and colleges to help them to understand and identify young carers and how they can be supported.

We have contacted all primary and secondary schools to extend an invitation for staff training which has been taken up by three primary schools so far. We have also held information stalls at two schools for parents' evenings which gives both teachers and parents the opportunity to engage with us.

During Young Carer Awareness week we also held stalls at two local colleges during lunchtime and gave assemblies at a further college.

We have approached all GP surgeries and provided them with packs to inform their staff (GPs, nurses and reception/office staff) of what being a young carer entails and where to signpost them. There will also be displays in the surgeries where people can find information themselves.

The Carer Access Card will be launched this month and is free to all young carers under the age of 18. This currently will allow them to access discounts in the same way as the adults, but we also hope that schools, colleges and GPs will acknowledge this as identification of a young carer so that this can be shared with them to understand carers needs.

We have launched our Young Adult Carers group (ages 18-25) which meets on the first Monday of each month, this is a difficult age in terms of fitting in with either the young carers or the adult carers and so we hope that this will go from strength to strength to enable these young adults to engage.

We have seen an increase in young carers attending our sessions each week and had a programme of activities over February half term which were well received. We are now putting together plans for the Easter holidays and looking for funding for residential trips.

PRIORITY 2: CARERS HAVING A FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE ALONGSIDE CARING PERSONALISED SUPPORT FOR CARERS AND PROVIDING GOOD QUALITY INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

WHAT WORKS?

“Having access to Hartlepool Carers gives you a break from caring role and being able to socialize with other carers at activities”

“Meeting other carers so you can swap advice and socialize”

“Being able to take part in focus groups to voice our opinions”

“Respite and P/As can work well [for some]”

“Having a community hub to socialize”

“Community led support for advice, information and being more accessible”

“Help with transport for hospital and appointments [for some]”

“One-to-one support during my role as a young carer”

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

“Transport can be an issue – especially for young carers”

“All carers don't get a carers assessment”

“Lack of consistency with services”

“Too busy with caring role to be able to have a normal life”

“Social Worker did not listen to carer needs”

“Accessing enough support within our caring roles”

“Some people still don't know where to go for support”

“Carers are not aware of IAG available in Hartlepool”

“Bidding system for carers is not good – no computers!”

“Housing – not fully accessible e.g. have a walk in shower but a step to get into house”

WHAT HAVE HARTLEPOOL CARERS DONE THIS QUARTER TO IMPROVE IN THIS AREA?

We are working hard to become more engaged in the local community. In December our new Community Development Lead began employment and has been engrossing herself in the community to find activities and opportunities for carers of all ages.

We are more accessible to the community than ever, with weekly information and advice stalls at Middleton Grange, Community Hub North and South and other support groups throughout the town.

Numbers of new registrations continue to rise and we are seeing more referrals from social workers, GPs and schools and so hopefully these services are becoming more aware of the information, support and guidance we can offer and this trend will continue.

We are working closely with other VCS groups within the town to put together a guide of services available to carers.

PRIORITY 3: SUPPORT CARERS TO STAY HEALTHY – MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY

WHAT WORKS?

“Social services were very helpful with my son”

“Hartlepool Carers are a great help”

“CAB very helpful people and advice in filling in forms and general advice”

“Meeting people who have cared for someone and can give you advice is very helpful”

“Young carers always gives me someone to talk to which helped with my mental health”

“MIND helped with my caring role”

“Access to information about health and college such as drugs and alcohol and food and nutrition”

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

“No support from my employers as they aren't aware of my caring role”

“Not fully aware of help I can receive”

“GP not understanding what a carer is/not knowing I am a carer”

“Struggle to get GP appointments”

“Not enough respite which makes us tired and then we have a lack of motivation”

“Despite the support from carers my sister I cared for felt she never go the correct support from CAMHS with her mental health”

“Don't get time to feel well and do something my own health”

“No respite – lack of sleep”

“Would love to go swimming but can't go because of husband's needs”

“Lack of wheelchair access to do things together with cared for”

“HBC direct payment – in my circumstances the direct payment was set up to benefit my mum by the social worker for transport costs to take her to places and a domestic cleaner for the flat. Apparently it was supposed to be for my benefit”

“So much support comes from Charities such as Mind, Hartlepool Carers etc. They just start to help and then funding is lost and we are back to the beginning”

“Some carers don’t think they need help, even though they do”

WHAT HAVE HARTLEPOOL CARERS DONE THIS QUARTER TO IMPROVE IN THIS AREA?

We are launching a Carers Well-Being Programme to help support carers in their mental and physical health. This has included to date sessions of chair exercises in all support groups and also displays around various health issues such as cancer and mental health. We arranged for a smoking cessation event on National No Smoking Day and will be involved in various other campaigns throughout the year.

Our Information, Support & Guidance workers support our carers to find information to help them take care of themselves and, as mentioned previously, our Community Development Lead is sourcing a variety of activities throughout the town in which our carers can engage. We also run numerous peer-to-peer support groups during the week to help develop connections between carers that will support their mental health.

We are also working to engage and educate GP surgeries to enable them to best support carers they have registered as patients.

All carers complete a survey after attending each session so we can monitor how supported they feel by staff and if sessions are beneficial on their mental health.

PRIORITY 4: CARERS ABLE TO RELEASE AND REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

WHAT WORKS?

“Self-employment worked for me”

“Help with certificates”

“Jobs club at Hartlepool Carers”

“I got support making my CV and getting my first part time job”

“Being able to volunteer with young carers helped me pass on my knowledge and skills”

“Accessing young carers helped me do activities I never thought I could access”

“Work are supportive and understanding”

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

"Caring full time makes it impossible to find employment"

"Employee doesn't have any awareness of what being a carer entails"

"I had to give up a day at work to get Carers Allowance"

"No support from employers as they don't know I am a carer"

WHAT HAVE HARTLEPOOL CARERS DONE THIS QUARTER TO IMPROVE IN THIS AREA?

We hold jobs clubs and one-to-one sessions of CV writing. Our young carers can also attend our weekly study group to do homework in a quiet environment and make use of the computers and internet for their studies.

We continue to try and engage with schools and colleges to offer support in what being a young carer is and make them aware of how this can impact on their education. We also offer to aim similar training to employers in the town.

We offer volunteer opportunities for our carers and will be launching our Carers Ambassador Scheme next quarter.

Our young carer sessions offer a variety of different activities including sports, crafts, cooking, first aid, fire safety and other life skills.

PRIORITY 5: PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP EX-CARERS SUSTAIN AND FULFILL HEALTHY LIVES

WHAT WORKS?

"I received support from Hartlepool Carers, Bereavement Support, Alice House Hospice and Mind"

"Hartlepool Carers "life after caring group" allows me to meet with other ex carers who understand the loss, not only of our loved ones, but also how to cope with having so much spare time now".

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

"If somebody has to go into care, then the person who did the caring role before has no input anymore"

WHAT HAVE HARTLEPOOL CARERS DONE THIS QUARTER TO IMPROVE IN THIS AREA?

Our weekly Life After Caring group is open to all ex carers to forge friendships with other people going through the same situation and hopefully help them to find other ways to fill the gap that has been left by no longer having a caring role. We offer a variety of activities each week such as crafts, dancing and exercise as well as peer to peer support.

We can offer help support with CV writing, job club and searching for volunteer roles once/if the ex carer feels ready to return to the workplace and can help point them in the direction of services for bereavement counselling.

PRIORITY 6: WIDEN PARTICIPATION OF CARERS TO INFLUENCE DECISION MAKING AT A LOCAL LEVEL

WHAT WORKS?

“Strategy Group”

“Carers Focus Group”

“Being able to be a Hartlepool Carers board member has helped me to give insight as a young/young adult carer”

“Young carer forums within Hartlepool Carers”

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

“Don't know what meetings are taking place and when”

“Not enough information about what the public are able to attend”

“Where can we find out what's going on and how to be a part of it?”

“Some carers don't see the importance of focus groups although they may have something really useful to say”

“Can't actually attend meetings due to caring role!”

WHAT HAVE HARTLEPOOL CARERS DONE THIS QUARTER TO IMPROVE IN THIS AREA?”

Focus Groups have been reinstated and dates are scheduled for the rest of the year. These are open to all carers to attend. All carers who attend our sessions complete a survey for our own purposes to see what works, what doesn't work and what carers want. Our groups are also given the control of planning what activities they would like to take part in so that they can shape how the sessions run.

We have asked all carers to complete a survey based around the Carers Strategy to see how strongly they agree or disagree that things have been implemented as per the six priorities.

APPENDIX 1

What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

I FIND IT REWARD LOOKING AFTER MY BROTHER
HELPING HIM WITH HIS DAILY TASK'S.

BUT SOMETIMES IT CAN BE TIME CONSUMING.
BUT REWARDING AS HE APPRECIATES IT

What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

Lack of employment opportunities, lack of status (stigma), lack of assertiveness / confidence, feel that you're not able to cope (and don't ask for help), people making (wrong) assumptions (eg that person cared for doesn't have capacity), dealing with feelings can be tough

What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

Looking after my brother and gran, can be challenging with my brother, but
me and my mother both look after them.

Doctors not
know.

Support from Hartlepool & Carers.

Need more support. Awareness of support can get.

not acknowledged enough.

People aren't aware of unpaid carers enough or
what they go through.

Can meet other
young carers.

What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

Chaotic!

Got to think ahead all the time -
brain can't switch off.

Complicated.

Go for help and don't fit criteria.

Support is mixed, don't know what is
out there.

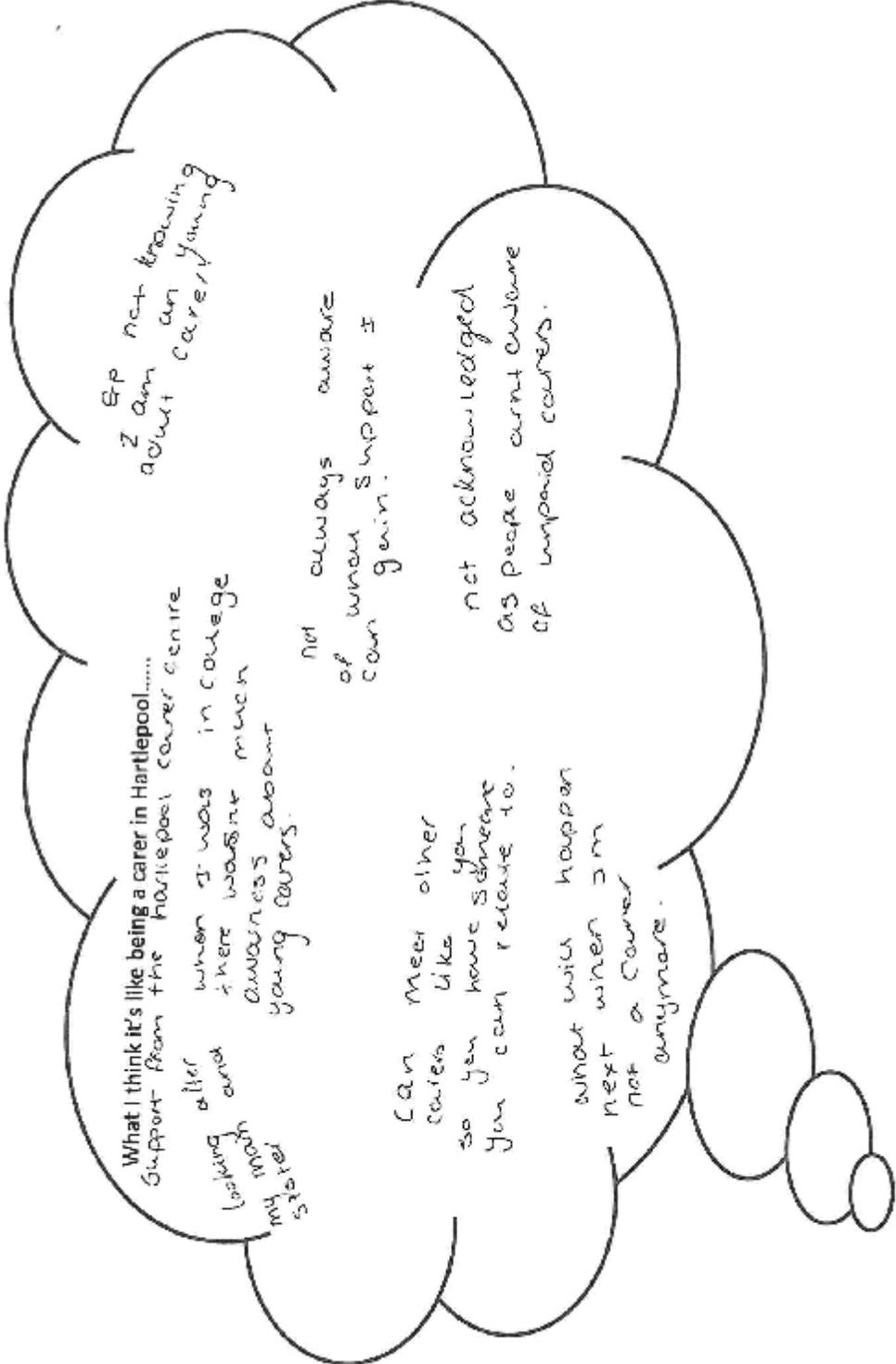
What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

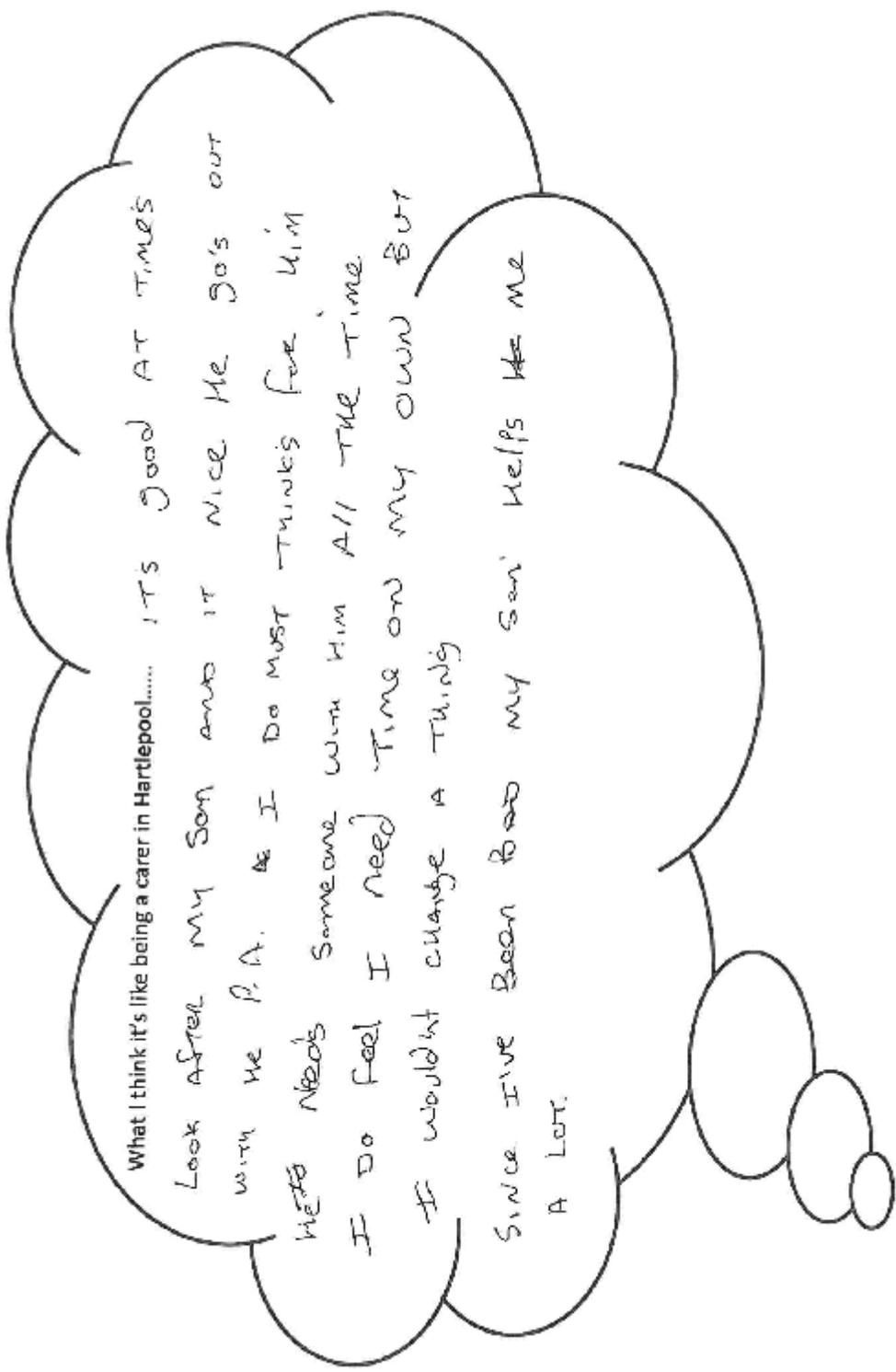
Hard work

He appreciates all the work I do but it is
getting to much this is why I go to most of
the things the Carer ~~was~~ Run to get a break

What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

I'M NOT SURE TO WHATS OF ANY DIFFERENT BEING A CARER BECAUSE AS I'VE NOT EXPERIENCED OF IT. I'M NOW AN ES-CARER AFTER KUN MATHAN PASSED AWAY IN 2019, MY FATHER ALSO IN NOV 2014, I CARED FOR JUSTIN ADYN. BEING A CARER FOR ME WAS ALL CONSUMING AT TIMES, WITH LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT SERVICES WERE AVAILABLE TO ME, MY MUM OR DAD. IT TOOK TIME FOR ME TO FIND OUT ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICES, H/POOL CAREERS, N.D.C. / THE BRIDGE ETC AND UNDERSTAND D.W.P.





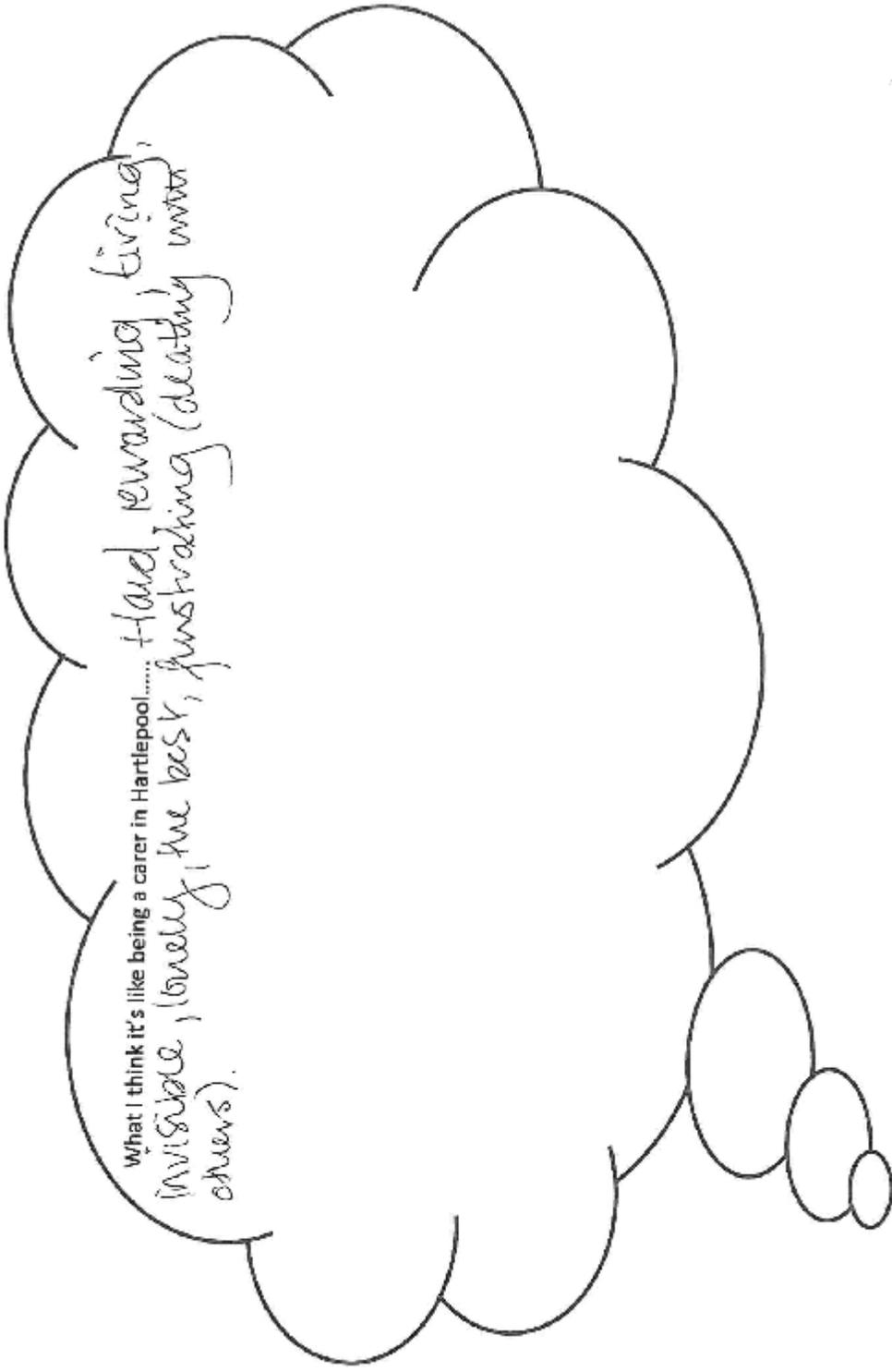
What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool..... IT'S GOOD AT TIMES

LOOK AFTER MY SON AND IT IS NICE HE GO'S OUT WITH ME P.A.

HE NEEDS SOMEONE WITH HIM ALL THE TIME

IF I DO FEEL I NEED TIME ON MY OWN BUT I WOULDN'T CHANGE A THING

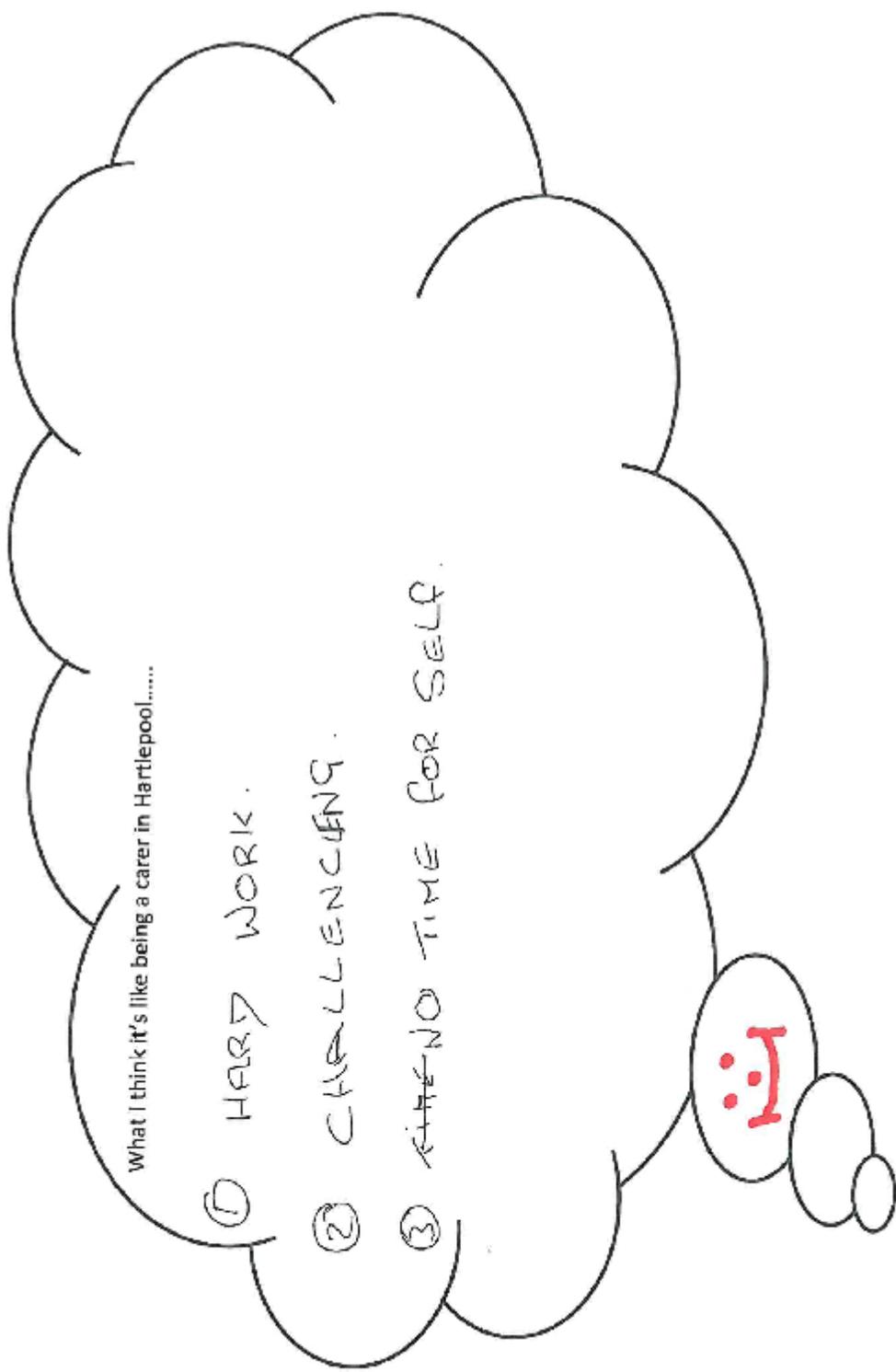
SINCE I'VE BEEN BOB MY SON HELPS ME A LOT.



What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....
Hard, rewarding, tiring,
invisible, lonely, the best, frustrating (dealing with
others).

What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

CAN BE DIFFICULT CARRYING OUT DAILY TASKS
FOR MY PARTNER, VERY GRATEFUL TO ASSIST IN EVERYDAY CARE,
APPRECIATED BY MY PARTNER FOR LOOKING AFTER HER.



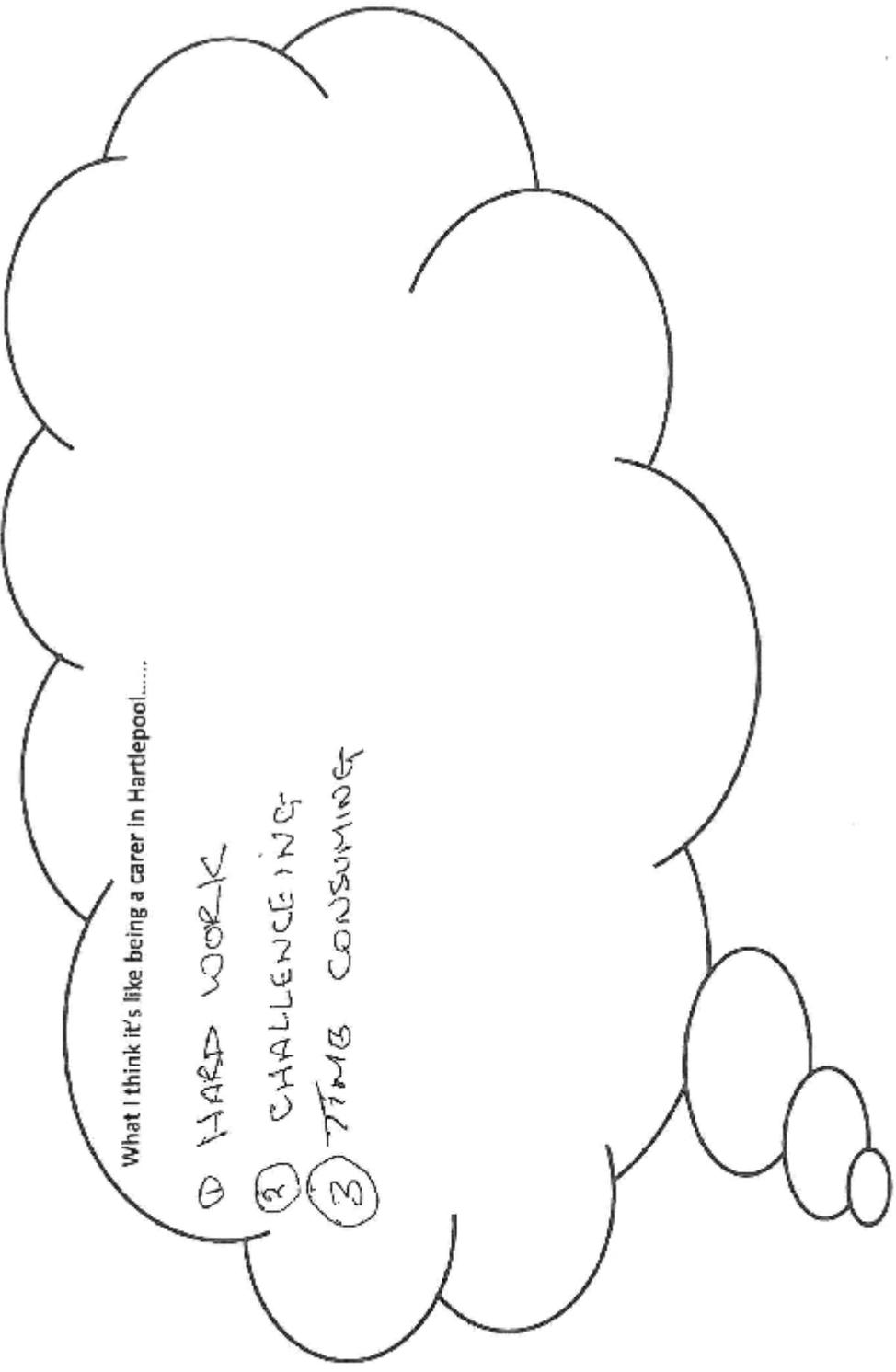
What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

① HARD WORK.

② CHALLENGING.

③ TIME FOR SELF.





What I think it's like being a carer in Hartlepool.....

1 HARD WORK

2 CHALLENGING

3 TIME CONSUMING