

Julie Morgan AS/MS

**Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref: MA JM 1744 20

Dr Dai Lloyd MS
Chair
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

14 July 2020

Dear Dai,

I am writing to provide you and the members of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee with an update relating to the actions being taken forward by Welsh Government, following publication of the committee's inquiry report last November.

My first response sent in January of this year addressed all 31 of the inquiry recommendations. However, several of the recommendations requested an update in six months. I can now provide you with these, as well as an overview of progress and activity to help and support carers in Wales.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I am conscious that many of the pre-existing issues and pressures that carers' experience have been exacerbated. I therefore thank all carers of all ages who have shown huge commitment and dedication to caring for family, friends, neighbours, and anyone who has required help and support in these extremely challenging times. We must work in partnership with carers, across government and all sectors, to ensure carers' needs are recognised and addressed, and in government we continue to ensure the rights of carers' under the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014, are upheld.

As we are all continuing to adapt to the new ways of working in a frequently changing situation, the public sector and third sectors and businesses have had to respond in different ways. This has also affected Welsh Government and many officials have been redeployed to help manage the crisis. We remain some way from business as usual but have focused resources on the short term and necessary Covid-19 response, in relation to carers.

The crisis has inevitably required us to adapt and refocus our programme of carers' policy work which was in place prior to the emergence of the pandemic. As the immediate crisis eases somewhat we intend to address the impact of changing circumstances on many carers. Over the summer, we will determine, with the input of stakeholders and carers themselves, how we can best support carers as we emerge from lockdown and address their ongoing needs.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Current situation

For many carers there have been increased pressures, not just in terms of caring for others, but also for their own mental health and wellbeing and potentially their physical health. Carers have been worried about catching the illness, but also have fears about passing the virus to those they care for, particularly if such individuals have underlying health conditions, are in vulnerable categories, or are shielding. There has also been concern about reduced support because of the impact of the pandemic on the social care workforce.

For some carers the closure of opportunities for respite, such as day centres, community groups, or being unable to access an overnight sitting service, has increased pressures. People have not been able to call upon wider family networks to help, although in a small number of cases exceptions are permissible in order to ensure a continuation of care, or provision of respite.

Some carers took on more caring themselves because of concerns about domiciliary care workers coming into the home and potentially spreading Covid-19. Others have been concerned about lack of access to a needs assessment, and have experienced difficulties in accessing food or medication.

Third Sector response

The third sector has made a huge effort to support carers. Their swift move to increasing online provision and telephone helplines has helped many carers access vital information and advice. I know there has been an increase in demand for telephone help and support lines, which is why I was pleased that we could provide £50k of funding to Carers Wales to boost their emotional and wellbeing support services.

Coronavirus Act 2020

The temporary modifications to the 2014 Act are part of the range of measures we, and our sister Government's across the UK took in the Coronavirus Act 2020. I want to put on record, my thanks to the organisations representing carers and others from across the social care sector, who responded to our rapid engagement exercise on the accompanying draft statutory guidance.

Our approach has ensured we have directly addressed stakeholders' concerns and provided a clear and unequivocal framework should it be necessary to utilise those provisions. In all of our communications we have explicitly set out our expectations that:

- local authorities should comply with the 2014 Act requirements and related Codes of Practice for as long and as far as possible;
- any modifications should only be exercised where this is essential in order to maintain the highest possible level of services; and
- any modifications must only be temporary, justifiable due to unavoidable local circumstances, and removed at the first available opportunity.

We have been clear that any changes to individuals' care and / or support will be returned to their pre-modification arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity. Local authorities should establish arrangements and communicate to those impacted, how this will be achieved.

My Written Statement for Carers, published on 4th May explained the safeguards that are in place and that a person's wellbeing remains the prime consideration.

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-written-statement-carers> It is a testament to the commitment of both carers, and the social care workforce, that the impact on individuals' care and support has for the most part, been maintained, because of the continued dedication of individuals to deliver care within our communities.

Working with stakeholders

A crucial aspect in our work as government has been to ensure close communication and co-operation with bodies such as the Wales Carers Alliance, whose membership includes a number of different charities and organisations whose client groups include many carers.

My officials have been in near daily contact with Carers Wales, Carers Trust Wales and the All Wales Forum for Parents and Carers. A time limited working group has been created, which meets every fortnight to help channel the information from the third sector. This has provided swift feedback about the concerns of carers arising from the Covid crisis, and helped facilitate our response.

The range of issues we have worked to address with the national carers' organisations have ranged from: impacts of the Covid 19 situation on vulnerable groups and those who have been and remain shielding; concerns about unpaid carers not having access to supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); differences across local authority areas regarding confusing advice for carers; the financial impact of the crisis on those who are caring; and reductions in care and support planning.

Funding to support carers, third sector and adult social care

At the April meeting of the Carers' Ministerial Advisory Group I thanked the third sector for its innovative and flexible approach to supporting carers during this crisis. I recognise the hard work that is taking place in this sector and we are keen to learn from innovations and new ways of working.

I also recognise the unprecedented financial pressures on the third sector. Our Third Sector Covid-19 Response Fund worth £24 million, supports three distinct areas of activity; helping charities and third sector organisations financially through the crisis; helping more people volunteer by supporting third sector organisations in the community who are co-ordinating the volunteer response; and by strengthening the third sector infrastructure.

In addition we have set aside an initial £40m of extra funding to local authorities for costs incurred in adult services due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Local authorities are having to make difficult decisions on what matters most and how this money can be best spent, but they continue to work closely with the third sector so that critical services for individuals most at risk can be delivered, and new demands can be met. Unpaid carers will benefit from the services this funding aims to support.

In April 2020 three new carer specific projects commenced having been awarded funding of £2.1m under the new Third Sector Sustainable Social Services grant scheme for 2020-23. These projects will enable Carers Wales, Carers Trust Wales and Age Cymru, to offer services to help improve the lives of carers of all ages. We have discussed with each of these national charities how their activity might, if appropriate, be amended to better support carers who are struggling at this time. We have also agreed to provide an additional £50k to Carers Wales, alongside their existing Third Sector Sustainable Social Services grant funded project, for additional psychological and emotional support services.

Finally, please see attached in Annex A my response to those recommendations where you requested an update on activity / progress. The replies to Recommendations 1 and 2 have been combined, and the same for recommendations 21 and 23.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

**Health, Social Care and Sports Committee Inquiry recommendations –
“Caring for our future - Impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act
2014 in relation to Carers”**

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services six month update letter to the Chair of the HSCS Committee – July 2020

Recommendation 1. *The Welsh Government must, as a matter of priority, demonstrate stronger national leadership in the delivery of rights and services for carers under the Act. As a starting point, it must prepare, within 6 months, a clear action plan for addressing the failings of implementation highlighted in the evidence we received. In doing this, it must consult key stakeholders and carers. It must also set out a clear timetable for delivery of the actions identified in its plan; and*

Recommendation 2. *The Welsh Government must plan now for the anticipated rise in the number of unpaid carers. It must take a long term view of what the needs of carers will be in the future and how, along with local authorities, local health boards and the third sector, it will meet those needs. The Welsh Government must clearly set out how it will achieve this and report back to us on progress in 6 months.*

As stated in my January response¹, we are planning for the significant population changes in our society. Forecasts show that Wales has an increasingly ageing society, and this is likely to result in higher carer numbers in future. Now more than ever planning will require a pro-active partnership approach. We intend using our Carers Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG), with its membership drawn from key sectors, to assist us in developing plans to respond to this trend.

Some activities have been temporarily delayed as a result of the need for us to address Covid-19 requirements, and this also affected the work planning of the Carers MAG. However, I am pleased that since January, we have held two “virtual” Carers MAG meetings, in late April and in early July.

In April members started to discuss a post Covid 19 exit strategy, and restarting work on a public consultation document, to help inform the development and drafting of our new national plan for carers. As part of this work the MAG will be considering a range of information and evidence emerging from the Covid-19 crisis. This includes reports from Carers UK such as their “Caring behind closed doors”, and “Carers Week 2020” research reports, plus the “Briefing: Young Carers and Covid 19” document published in April by Carers Trust Wales.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

¹ <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s98194/Welsh%20Government%20response%20-%2028%20January%202020.pdf>
<https://busnes.senedd.cymru/documents/s98194/Ymateb%20Llywodraeth%20Cymru%20-%2028%20Ionawr%202020.pdf>

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government must ensure that the Ministerial Advisory Group is supported and resourced to be an effective forum. *It must be of sufficient status within the Welsh Government to raise the profile of caring and carers' needs across government policy areas, including local government, health, housing and transport. As such, it should be chaired by a member of the Welsh Government. It should be transparent, and should publish agendas and minutes of its meetings. The Deputy Minister must report back to this Committee within 6 months on the actions that have been taken to address these issues.*

The Carers MAG has been maintained and its profile was strengthened by the appointment in January 2020 of its new independent Chair – Arwel Ellis Owen. Arwel has pro-actively engaged with the membership and is already offering robust challenge to the members, as well as offering practical advice from his experience of the health and social care sector. We are also seeking to invite new representatives to join the group, where this will strengthen links across government portfolios.

When the MAG was first created Ministers committed to the development of a new Engagement group which would extend the opportunity for carers with a broader range of experiences, including young carers, to support the work of the MAG. Initial funding of £12k in 2019-20 was agreed to support the creation of the group, and we have agreed funding of just over £33k in 2020-21 for Carers Trust Wales to continue to facilitate the group's work and support the membership.

This group's first meeting was on 20 January 2020, and the next will be a virtual meeting this summer. Ahead of the meeting we have asked Carers Trust Wales to speak with the members and collect evidence of their direct experiences of COVID-19, and any wider impacts on individuals and carers.

We have now published the Carers' MAG meeting minutes on the Welsh Government website, as well as the group's Terms of Reference. <https://gov.wales/ministerial-advisory-group-carers>

<https://llyw.cymru/grwp-cynghorir-gweinidog-ar-gyfer-gofalwyr>

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 4. *The Welsh Government must, as a matter of priority, give effect to its commitment to undertake a major publicity drive to raise awareness of the Act and carers' rights under it. This should raise the profile of caring, improve identification of carers, promote the benefits of needs assessments under the Act, and encourage take-up. It should also signpost people to appropriate information, advice and assistance about caring. The Deputy Minister must report back to this Committee within 6 months on progress.*

We launched our carers and older people's rights campaign on 21 November last year, with the support of national carers' organisations, to raise awareness of carers' rights in the 2014 Act. The supporting advertising element of the campaign was completed before the UK entered lockdown. This included a pan-Wales newspaper media schedule and a bilingual radio campaign. A social media element was receiving high levels of engagement but was cut short. This was to be followed with a second phase of

booklets and posters to be made available in, and displayed across community settings in Wales.

As a result of the Covid-19 situation Welsh Government communications campaigns have been paused so as to focus effort on keeping the public informed with key messages and guidance relating to coronavirus. However, all arrangements for the carers' rights campaign have been completed and this action will be delivered when it is appropriate to do so.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 6. *The Welsh Government must ensure that the formal needs assessment process for carers is clarified and standardised across local authorities. It must be able to demonstrate how it has achieved this and should report back to this Committee within 6 months on progress.*

As I explained in my reply in January, we ensured that the Social Services and Well-being Wales 2014 Act places clear duties on those exercising functions under the 2014 Act, beginning with the assumption that the adult is best placed to judge their own well-being.

The carers' needs assessment process is clearly identified in the dedicated Part 3 Code of Practice (assessing the needs of individuals) which must be applied by all local authorities when they undertake an assessment with an individual or carer. This code sets out a process for assessing the needs of an individual for care and support, or support in the case of a carer, and a process of assessment that will apply to everyone – children, adults and carers, as well as a process of review and re-assessment, that will apply to assessments.

Coronavirus has resulted in significant challenges for everyone across our communities. Throughout those challenges we have continued to reinforce our expectations that the principles underpinning the Social Services and Wellbeing of Wales 2014 Act are undiminished. The statutory guidance issued under the Coronavirus Act 2020 was explicit that these principles remained unchanged. The model of assessment as described in my January reply remains fundamental - that everyone ensures that the rights of individuals with care and support needs, and carers, are always at the heart of our social care system.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 13. *The Welsh Government must ensure equitable provision of services for carers across Wales, including respite services. As a starting point, it must ensure that a baseline range of support services for carers, based on eligibility criteria, is provided by all Local Authorities. The Welsh Government must introduce a mechanism to monitor delivery of this support. It should report back on progress within 6 months.*

As I stated in my reply in January, the national eligibility criteria set out in the 2014 Act provides for a consistent approach to meeting the care and support needs of all individuals in Wales, including carers. Central to this approach is the spirit of co-production, working with the individual, carer and family to understand their needs,

capacity and resources and the outcomes they wish or need to achieve. Needs can be met not only through the provision of services but also through active support and assistance to enable people to meet their own needs.

I also explained that we are discussing with local authority social services representatives how greater consistency can be achieved and reported on including by building upon existing mechanisms such as reports provided to the Regional Partnership Boards and their annual reports to Welsh Government. We have been unable to progress these considerations because of the Covid 19 situation, however, we will be inviting representation from the Association of the Directors of Social Services (ADSS), to the fortnightly working group meetings between carers' organisations and my officials. ADSS are also represented on the Carers MAG, so these two mechanisms will be used to consider this commitment and how we can take discussions forward.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 17. *The Welsh Government must ensure that all young and young adult carers are able to access the support and services they need. In doing so, it must address the specific concerns raised by young carers in evidence to this committee. It must ensure that the support and services for young and young adult carers are person-centred, age-appropriate and flexible to meet their specific needs. There must also be a strong connection between schools and carers' services. The Welsh Government must clearly set out how it will achieve this, and must report back on progress within 6 months.*

I wish to applaud the swift response of the local authority funded young carers' services which have shown resilience, and continue to provide help and support via online, social media, telephone support mechanisms. The need for a range of support mechanisms and organisations to help all young people will be essential going forward, including supporting young carers with their emotional and mental health needs. I expect all local authorities to continue to maintain a quality service for young carers.

I want to be clear that throughout this crisis the rights of young carers under the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014, have been maintained and the duties on statutory bodies to ensure this have not changed. The Coronavirus Act did not create any changes for young people, but applies in relation to adults with care and support needs, and adult carers.

To ensure young carers and young adult carers could access information about their rights as carers, as well as more general support and advice, we provided contact and website details of all local authorities to the operator of MEIC, the national young people's support service. <https://www.meiccymru.org/> This information was also given to the Children's Commissioner for Wales, who has created a coronavirus advice hub for young people, including a section for young carers. <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus/>

Some of the key problems affecting young carers which have been exacerbated by this pandemic situation, have been accessing medication and supermarkets. I was very pleased that we were able to work swiftly with Carers Trust Wales, Carers Wales,

Community Pharmacy Wales and other key bodies in the pharmacy sector, to support development of a new ID letter that is being used by carers of all ages to help them access medication and collect prescriptions for others.

With the closure of schools we made it clear that all schools should identify and initiate support wherever appropriate for all of their vulnerable learners, including young carers. Since the reopening of schools from 29th June we are conscious that families and young people need clear communications and guidance from government, local authorities and their own schools. This guidance can be found on the Welsh Government's website at: <https://gov.wales/education-coronavirus>.

Supporting vulnerable learners including young carers is important at any time. Schools and colleges continue to play a key role in helping identify young carers. Local authorities, governing bodies, head teachers, school and college employees can still do more to improve their understanding of the needs of young carers. To help them we have funded Carers Trust Wales to produce guides for teaching staff, school governors and lesson plans, and we plan to launch these in September.

Last year Estyn published their Thematic Review into Young Carers and Young Adult carers in schools, FE and PRU provision². Whilst the pandemic crisis has massively affected schooling and study for so many, I urge local authorities, schools, FE colleges and other bodies to review again the core recommendations from Estyn's report.

We will continue to look at a range of evidence around the experiences of carers, including young carers, emerging from the pandemic situation as part of the discussions of the Carers MAG, to help inform development of our new national plan for carers.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 20. *We believe that the young and young adult carers' ID card scheme should be a national scheme, delivered by all local authorities with appropriate support from the Welsh Government and accessible to all young and young adult carers. The Welsh Government should ensure this is achieved as a matter of priority. It should report back on progress within 6 months.*

Back in January I made a statement for Young Carers Rights day, stating my commitment to progressing this project in the next 12-24 months³. There was a pause in activity due to Covid 19 resource pressures and while we agreed a revised 2020-21 work plan with Carers Trust Wales (CTW). We are providing annual funding of just over £36k for 2020-21 for CTW to continue developing resources to support this ID card work, and support local authorities as they test new models and processes.

A short survey has been launched by CTW seeking input from local authorities which will give us a clearer picture of their ability to progress their involvement in the coming

² <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/provision-young-carers-secondary-schools-further-education-colleges-and-pupil>

https://www.estyn.llyw.cymru/adroddiadau-thematig/darpariaeth-ar-gyfer-gofalwyr-ifanc-mewn-ysgolion-uwchradd-colegau-addysg?_ga=2.49591072.785795501.1593535119-1878271694.1551452352

³ <https://gov.wales/written-statement-young-carers-id-cards>

<https://llyw.cymru/datganiad-yggrifenedig-cardiau-adnabod-i-ofalwyr-ifanc>

months. We have also maintained our commitment to making £200k available for use by local authorities in the current phase of activity, in 2020-21.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 21. *The Welsh Government needs to ensure the standardisation of information, advice and assistance for carers across local authorities and local health boards. This must include bilingual provision of these services. As part of this, the Welsh Government should convene representatives from local government, health boards and the third sector with the aim of developing an approach that will secure these improvements for the service user. We ask the Deputy Minister to report back to us on progress within 6 months and;*

Recommendation 23 *The Welsh Government needs to ensure that staff providing information, advice and assistance as part of each local authority's central advice and information point have up-to-date information about rights and services for carers under the Act, and that refresher training will be provided where necessary. We note the work being undertaken by Social Care Wales, the Welsh Government and local authorities to develop a competency framework to support the development of information, advice and assistance workers. We ask that the Deputy Minister updates us on progress with this project.*

I was pleased to see that all local authorities moved swiftly to ensure their local communities and individuals have been able to access services through online support and telephone, including relevant information, advice and assistance for carers. I know that all of our partners across health and social care want to reflect upon the communication channels that have proved effective both in terms of their immediate reach, as well as their continued accessibility for people in their areas.

Our Carers MAG will be considering a number of actions going forward in light of COVID-19, including how carers can be appropriately helped and supported to access suitable information advice and assistance, whether from statutory services, or from the excellent advice and support that the third sector has implemented during the current crisis.

As I outlined in January, not every local authority uses a model of a single point of access for people to obtain IAA, as illustrated by the WAO's Front Door to Adult Social care report. The findings and recommendations of that report remain valid and I continue to expect all local authorities to have in place and fund, an appropriate up to date employee strategy and training offer for their staff, wherever they work.

We commissioned Social Care Wales to work with partners to develop a competency framework for those delivering statutory information, advice and assistance services ((IAA) and to update the 'Better Conversations' resources for IAA staff. Both of these are in the final stages of production and conversations are underway about their publication. These latest additions are part of the suite of resources that support all practitioners to deliver outcomes focussed social work practice that ensures a

consistent approach and experience for those engaging services across social care.

One is the new Social Services practitioner (SSP) award which is being developed ready for a launch in September 2020. All content has been developed including assessment methodology and now the teaching / delivery methodology is being agreed with the social care sector. This award is currently delivered by the Open University (OU) (and is equivalent to the OU's first year social work degree, but is also a discreet award at Level 4). This was introduced to meet the requirements in the 2014 Act, regarding the ability to ensure proportionate assessments of an individual's potential care and support requirements, or a carer's potential eligible support needs.

Alongside this SCW are considering what elements of the SSP award could be used to support IAA workers who are focused at the front line i.e. the information point of IAA services. This work is ongoing but should be complete at the same time as the work on the new SSP award.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 25. *The statutory sector is heavily dependent on the third sector for delivery of vital services to carers. That dependency needs to be reflected in both the provision of adequate funding for the third sector, and the meaningful involvement of the sector in planning and decision-making around that funding. We believe this matter should be explored by the Ministerial Advisory Group. We ask the Deputy Minister to provide us with an update on this work within 6 months.*

Now that we have recommenced meetings of the Carers MAG, as part of their identification of key areas of activity and review within their forward work plan, this will include consideration of funding to the Third sector.

We were very conscious of the calls from WCVA and across the sector of the need for financial help and support at a time when they are themselves facing a significant increase in demand for their services. As a result of this we announced our £24m funding for the sector to provide support during the current crisis.

Looking ahead at our ability to plan for the longer term, the UK Government announced in the Budget in March, plans for a multi-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to be concluded this summer. At the time of writing, those plans have been put on hold due to the coronavirus crisis.

At present, the UK Government has delivered a Spending Round for one-year only. We recognise and are therefore sympathetic to calls from our public sector partners (and to many in the third sector who provide commissioned services), for budgeting over a longer period, in order to support forward financial planning. It is always our ambition to provide long-term clarity over budgets, whenever possible, however, this must be balanced with realistic and sensible planning assumptions. The UK Government's austerity agenda coupled with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 crisis on public finances and continued uncertainty regarding the UK's EU exit, constrains our ability to do this.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 27 - *The Welsh Government should provide a comprehensive and accessible list of available funding sources for support for carers to be delivered by the third sector. This should be done as soon as practicable.*

A mapping exercise was undertaken by officials in 2018 and details of the sources of funding available under each Regional Partnership Board footprint and where these entered the system, were issued in September 2018. This exercise did not include all funding to third sector bodies who provide services relating to carers, either nationally or locally.

I advised that we would look to expand on this exercise to provide more information about funding streams, and how we can improve the accessibility of Welsh Government grants, including raising awareness, particularly to the third sector. Unfortunately due to the impact of Covid-19 on internal Welsh Government resources the planned work to increase the profile of the information about the grants has been postponed, but this will be taken forward as soon as possible.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 29 *The Welsh Government must take a stronger lead on a national approach to data collection on carers to ensure that appropriate and meaningful data is collected across all sectors in a coordinated and consistent way. We believe this should be a function of the Ministerial Advisory Group, which should develop national guidelines to determine what data needs to be collected, how it should be collected and how it will be used following collection. The data should be published, and should be used to inform future service and financial planning. We believe that the Performance and Improvement Framework is an important part of this work, and we ask that the Deputy Minister provides us with an update on progress.*

I can assure the committee members that development of our new national plan for carers, will be led with advice and input from our Carers MAG and Engagement group members, who will be considering a wide range of sources, including considering data and research evidence. We spent considerable time on development and consulting with stakeholders to develop our Performance and Improvement Framework. It is very much our intention that the new national carers plan will draw upon the Framework to inform its discussions.

The Performance and Improvement Framework for local authorities came into force as anticipated in April 2020. However due to Covid-19 social care data collections have been put on hold to allow local authorities to reallocate resources appropriately. Time has been spent to ensure we are receiving relevant social care data related to Covid-19 to allow understanding and support to be channelled to the pandemic.

Officials are in discussions regarding when routine social care data will resume, however mechanisms are now in place through the framework to allow for more detailed data to be collected from local authorities when it is considered the appropriate time to do so. As outlined in my previous response this will include more robust data on carers and their care and support. My officials are also working with the social care

sector to develop a social care data strategy. This will allow stakeholders and users of social care to agree on a shared vision for social care data, including how it can be used to support services to achieve better outcomes which are evidence led, accountable and effective. Work on the discovery phase of the project, in conjunction with KPMG, started earlier this year, and has recently recommenced.

The evaluation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 remains ongoing. A substantial amount of work has happened to date to assess how the 2014 Act has been implemented at a local, regional and national level. This will include how the principles of “voice and control” have been applied. Reporting of this phase of the evaluation was due to take place in June 2020, however due to Covid-19, fieldwork for the evaluation has had to be put on hold which will cause a delay in reporting. It is now anticipated that we will report towards the end of this year.

The final report assessing the impact of the 2014 Act on those who receive care and support, and carers who receive support, is due to be published in October 2021. It will give insight into how the principles of the act such as ‘voice and control’ have been applied and the impact the 2014 Act and the principles have had on carers and carers’ well-being. Findings from the evaluation will be used to support policy in understanding on how we can further improve the lives for individuals, and their carers.

I would also like to update the committee about the “Measuring the Mountain” Welsh Government funded project, which is designed to help us better understand the experiences of those who receive care and support, and carers. The report for the first phase of the work was published in March 2019 which set out its findings but also a number of recommendations to take forward, many of which related to how support for carers can be improved.

We provided a formal response to those recommendations ⁴and are working hard to ensure the findings of the project are recognised across the social care sector and more widely known and used. The project is now in its second phase looking to further understand the emergent trends from phase one. The project will next report in December and will provide further insight into the experiences of carers, and how services and the recognition of carers and their help and support needs can be improved. This project links very clearly with planned work to improve understanding of carers’ experiences under the aegis of the 2014 Act.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget.

Recommendation 31. The Welsh Government must provide an update on progress of implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System within 6 months.

There are currently 15 organisations that have gone live on WCCIS, with 19 signed contracts in place. There are in excess of 11,500 users using WCCIS across Wales, this number has increased recently due to the latest go-lives, and increased usage due to COVID-19 (The programme is currently collating latest numbers). Hywel Dda

⁴ <https://llyw.cymru/datganiad-ysgrifenedig-ymateb-ffurfiol-ir-argymhellion-wnaed-gan-y-prosiect-mesur-y-mynydd>

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-formal-response-recommendations-made-measuring-mountain-project>

University Health Board is one of the most recent organisations to have gone live with Community Nursing and for integrated Social Care teams within the Ceredigion Authority area in December. Swansea Bay University Health Board are currently finalising a Full Business Case for the implementation of WCCIS.

In September 2019 Welsh Government committed additional funding to support the acceleration of the national programme, regional deployment by Local Government, and NHS implementation of WCCIS functionality. This funding is being made available from the Digital Priorities Investment Fund and the Integrated Care Fund.

Audit Wales is currently reviewing WCCIS and its report is expected in September 2020. The Welsh Government welcomes the review and is working with Audit Wales to identify areas within the WCCIS programme that can be supported to further accelerate and assure roll-out.

Financial Implications – Yes, contained in existing plans and budget. WCCIS funding to support the national programme and the work undertaken by health boards continues to be supported from within the Digital Priorities Investment Fund (DPIF) for 2020-21, the agreed funding this year totals £4.401m. The Integrated Care Fund (ICF) also continues to provide funding through the Regional partnerships, co-ordinated by the National programme in the form of agreed bids.