

Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Chwefror 2022
Petitions Committee | 7 February 2022

Reference: SR22/1851-3

Petition Number: P-06-1241

Petition title: Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers

Text of petition: Please sign the petition and ask the Welsh Government to meet with a wider audience of unpaid carers and listen to our stories. We want the Welsh Government to meet regularly with carers outside of the carer organisations and committees. The aim of these meetings would be to give carers a voice, a chance to share their concerns and for the Welsh Government to hear the real stories of carers on the ground.

We deserve the right to have our voices heard. Unpaid carers have been ignored for too long and even more so during the pandemic. For example, the Welsh Government stated that they couldn't find any examples of services being stopped during the pandemic, but actual carers on the ground know that services were stopped and still haven't be restarted.

We're asking that relevant Minister to meet with us so we can help shape future policies to ensure a better future for unpaid carers living in Wales.



1. Background

Carers Trust Wales refers to an unpaid carer as anyone who provides unpaid care for someone who is ill, older, has a disability, has mental health concerns or has addiction issues. The type of care can include physical, emotional and financial support, cooking, cleaning and medical intervention on a periodic or daily basis.

According to Carers Wales, the number of unpaid carers rose from one in six to over a one fifth of the population in Wales during the pandemic, which is an estimated 683,000 carers.

2. Third sector action

There are third sector organisations supporting and representing carers in Wales, including, as referred to above, Carers Wales, and Carers Trust Wales.

One relevant project being run jointly by Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales is Carer Aware, which is funded by the Welsh Government. Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales work collaboratively with unpaid carers, social care and health professionals to ‘better empower unpaid carers to be actively involved in decisions and services for the people they care for and themselves’.

The Wales Carers Alliance (an alliance of charities that aims to uphold the rights of unpaid carers and champion the voice of carers across Wales), published a manifesto for the 2021 Senedd election, which set out six priorities for carers. One of the priorities relates to working in partnership with carers and states that the Welsh Government ‘must ensure carers are empowered to meaningfully co-produce national policies and local/regional services’. Further details on this priority are provided in the manifesto.

3. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government published its Strategy for unpaid carers in March 2021, which sets out what the Welsh Government will do to improve the recognition of and support to unpaid carers. A Strategy for unpaid carers: delivery plan 2021 was then published in November 2021.

In correspondence to the Committee on 5 January 2022, the Deputy Minister for Social Services notes that she welcomes hearing the views of unpaid carers and

looks to meet with them wherever possible. An example is given of meetings held with unpaid carers on Carers' Rights Day on 25 November 2021.

In relation to more formal engagement with carers, the Deputy Minister refers to the **Carers' Ministerial Advisory Group** (MAG), which has provided information and advice to Ministers. The group meets at least four times each year with members including statutory bodies such as local authorities and health boards, the independent Commissioners, Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales, national carers' organisations, young people's organisations and officials.

The MAG assisted the Welsh Government in developing the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and the Delivery Plan.

The Deputy Minister also highlights that since 2019 the Welsh Government has funded Carers Trust Wales to support a **Carers Engagement Group** which enables the Welsh Government to engage directly with unpaid carers, social care and health sector professionals. Members of the group worked with MAG members and officials on both the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and the Delivery Plan. One specific group is continuing to work with the Welsh Government to co-produce a new Carers' Charter which aims to be launched in early 2022.

The Carers Engagement Group is undergoing a review of its remit, and the Deputy Minister notes that this will enable it to support wider engagement with carers as the Welsh Government takes forward the actions in the Delivery Plan. This will include the addition of young carers to the group. A decision will be made in early 2022 on the new format for the refreshed Carers Engagement Group.

Funding has been provided for Carers Wales to host a **5 day Carers' Summit** in February 2022, which will involve a series of discussion sessions for carers, concluding with an expert panel question and answer session which the Deputy Minister will be attending and observing.

In relation to the petitioner, the Deputy Minister states:

I wish to assure both him and the committee that whether or not a carer is linked with any government or formal network, their views are equally valued and important.

4. Welsh Parliament action

In November 2019, the Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee published its [report](#) on its inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers of all ages in Wales.

The Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee also published a [report](#) into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social care sector and unpaid carers in March 2021.

The Sixth Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee ran a consultation on [priorities for the Sixth Senedd](#) between July and September 2021. This asked for views on initial priorities identified by the Committee, and other key priorities the Committee should consider in relation to health services, social care and carers, and COVID recovery. The Committee received 139 responses.

The increasing pressure on unpaid carers was acknowledged in a large number of responses. A range of issues were highlighted, including the need for emotional and mental health support, lack of breaks/respice, Welsh-medium support for carers, and the accessibility of information and advice online, particularly for older people.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.