



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1209
Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/01140/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

10 January 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter dated 19th October in your capacity as Chair of the Petitions Committee. I can confirm that the viability of introducing a register for unpaid carers has been discussed by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Unpaid Carers and a second meeting was also held to focus solely on this issue.

Before I share details of these discussions with you, I would like to highlight our commitment to supporting unpaid carers in Wales. This is evidenced by the £42 million funding allocated since January 2022 to improve the lives of unpaid carers of all ages in Wales.

In April 2022, we announced £29 million to provide 57,000 unpaid carers in Wales who were in receipt of Carers Allowance on March 31st, with a £500 carer payment. By the end of October, returns from local authorities show that 77% of eligible unpaid carers have successfully registered for the payment.

During Carers Week in June, we announced funding of £4.5m to continue our successful Carers Support Fund over the next three years. Unpaid carers in financial hardship will be able to apply for grants of up to £300 to pay for food, household items and electronic items. Eligibility for the fund is not linked to Carer's Allowance but it will target carers on low incomes who are struggling to cope with their caring role.

The Carers Support Fund is administered by Carers Trust Wales and was first established in 2020. Carer Trust Wales published an [end of year report for 2020/21](#) which states:

The Support Fund has strongly demonstrated that many unpaid carers are living hand to mouth and there is further work to be done to fully understand the extent to which this has resulted from the pandemic or been amplified

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.Morgan@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

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.

by it. The sheer demand for the Support Fund and the very basic needs it has been used to meet, provides further evidence that addressing the financial impact of caring should be a continued priority for Welsh Government.

One unpaid carer who received the grant commented:

I was very very thankful for the grant I received, it took a huge amount of pressure off me that month regarding how I was going to be able to keep my children warm, I was issued a shopping voucher and the money I saved from having to shop I put straight into my gas meter. Thank you so so much."

From this year £9m over three years is being invested to establish an innovative short breaks scheme for unpaid carers on low incomes who are struggling to cope with their caring responsibilities.

In this financial year, £1million has been allocated to health boards to focus on supporting unpaid carers when the person they care for is admitted to or discharged from hospital.

We continue to provide funding to national third sector organisations, Carers Wales, Carers Trust Wales, the All Wales Forum and Age Cymru, through our Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant. This scheme was extended and will now run until 2025. We will have allocated £4.4m to four carer specific projects over the five years.

One of these projects is Carer Aware. This project will focus on carer recognition, respect and support across health and social care settings in Wales. This will be achieved by supporting more social care professionals to develop their practice based on insight into the lived experience of carers.

With regard to the viability of introducing a carers' register, conversations are ongoing. In addition to discussions with members of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Unpaid Carers, we have also considered the proposal with officials leading on data collection within the Social Services and Integration Directorate and Digital Health Communities Wales. Opinions vary on whether the investment required to establish and manage a carers register would deliver real benefits for carers. However, agreement has been reached on the following points:

- It would not be possible for Welsh Government to access data collated by local authorities or health boards for other purposes, such as the Covid 19 vaccination, without securing the agreement of the individual to utilise their data for other purposes. This would be a very costly and time-consuming process, therefore unpaid carers would be required to self-nominate to join the register. This creates some issues around accuracy given that some people do not readily identify themselves as unpaid carers, are harder to reach due to not being online or may not wish to share their details in any event. Therefore, a register generated in this way could not be used to collect accurate data on the numbers of unpaid carers in Wales.
- The primary purpose of a register would be to disseminate information to unpaid carers. It would have to be maintained and kept up to date and factor in any changes in the circumstances of individuals who have identified as unpaid carers.

Our conversations have also highlighted some benefits to introducing a register. It could enable more unpaid carers to receive information to help them with their caring role and further enable local authorities to deliver their duties under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. Ensuring unpaid carers have access to information at an early stage can also help services achieve the principles of prevention and value for money.

Alongside exploratory discussions, work is ongoing to include information about carers in other data collections. The Children's Receiving Care and Support Census asks local authorities if the children who are receiving care and support for their own needs also have caring responsibilities. A new Adult Receiving Care and Support Census is also being developed. It will be in place in April 2023 for the first year of data to be reported to Welsh Government in 2024. This census will ask local authorities to state whether adults who have their own care and support needs also have responsibilities as a carer.

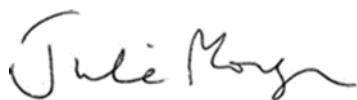
The Performance and Improvement Framework data collection also includes nearly 20 data items specifically about carers. While this data collection cannot be used to identify individual carers, it does show the number of people contacting local authorities for support, number of carers assessments undertaken and the numbers of those who go on to receive support. The consistency and comprehensiveness of this data collection is still in development and we have been working closely with local authorities to improve the available data.

Another successful way our partners have been collating data on unpaid carers is via the Carers Support Fund. Feedback collected in the end of year report for 2021/22 highlighted that 32.6% of those who accessed the fund were previously unknown to services. In some areas, that figure is as high as 70% and carers told Carers Trust Wales of the value of being recognised as a carer for the first time and having access to the wider carer support that emanated from being connected to a local carer centre.

As detailed earlier in this letter, we are currently prioritising funding to ensure unpaid carers can take a break from their caring role and can access financial support, which is becoming increasingly important due to the cost of living crisis. Although conversations relating to the viability of a carers register remain ongoing, we must take difficult decisions with regard to funding allocations and balance cost with likely outputs, often in the most challenging of circumstances.

I hope this letter reassures you that we acknowledge a need to improve data collection concerning unpaid carers and we are currently working with partners to broaden our reach so that more unpaid carers can receive the information, advice and assistance they require to continue their caring role.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services