

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Gwella mynediad at gymorth i ofalwyr di-dâl](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Improving access to support for unpaid carers.](#)

UC31: Ymateb gan: Carers Wales | Response from: Carers Wales



September 2025**About Unpaid Carers**

A carer is a person of any age who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who is disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, or who needs extra help as they grow older. According to the [2021 Census](#), there are at least 310,000 (1 in 10 of the population) unpaid carers in Wales, however research for [Carers Week 2025](#) suggests this number is likely closer to 480,000, or 1 in 6 of the population.

About Carers Wales

Carers Wales is part of Carers UK, the charity that exists to make life better for unpaid carers. We do this by supporting carers with information and advice on their caring roles, campaigning alongside carers for change and by offering specific support for carers balancing paid work and unpaid care through our Employers for Carers service.

The main barriers faced by unpaid carers in accessing the support they need; including any specific challenges for carers based on factors such as age, ethnicity or where they live;

Before unpaid carers can access support, they must identify themselves as a carer or be identified by others as a carer. This is the foundation on which all subsequent interactions can build upon. Despite duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 on all local authorities to proactively promote information on unpaid caring in their communities, it is widely acknowledged that far too many unpaid carers take too long to be identified by services or to self-identify.

Our [Track the Act 6](#) report, published in November 2024, monitored the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. The carer survey, structured around key statutory duties in the Act, found that just 39% of unpaid carers identified or were identified by others as a carer within a year of their caring role commencing. 25% identified or were identified within 1 and 3 years after their caring responsibilities began and more than a third of carers in Wales (36%) took more than 3 years to be identified as a carer. Significant under-identification of carers in Wales presents a substantial barrier to accessing support with many people caring for years until they are identified as a carer and can be told about support or are able to seek it for themselves.

Under the 2014 Act, local authorities must ensure their area has an information, advice and assistance service for unpaid carers, but our 2024 Track the Act survey found less than half of carers (47%) saw information, from any source and regardless of quality, about caring. We further found that just 31% had received advice on caring. For the minority of carers who had received advice of any type during that period, access to practical support including respite was one of the most common topics carers sought advice on, showing interest and demand to

learn more about respite. Information and advice are crucial in helping carers learn about and access statutory support, but too few carers receive information and advice.

A leading barrier to carers accessing support is the situation across Wales whereby far too few carers have had their needs assessed. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 gives all unpaid carers in Wales an entitlement to have their needs assessed and to have their eligible needs met in the form of support from their local authority. Carers Needs Assessments are therefore the primary formal method through which carers can access support in accordance with the Act, and local authorities have a duty to proactively promote Carers Needs Assessments to carers in their local area. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, in their October 2024 [report](#) following their own-initiative investigation, found that just 2.8% of carers in the four investigated local authorities areas had received a Carers Needs Assessment. Despite this legal entitlement having been in force since April 2016, our Track the Act 6 report, published in November 2024, found that the majority of carers in Wales have never had their needs assessed, with just 43% saying they had received an assessment at any point since 2016. With so few carers being assessed it is therefore unsurprising, but deeply concerning, that many carers are prevented from accessing support they could otherwise receive following an assessment. The Ombudsman found that only 1.5% of carers in the investigated areas had received a support plan following an assessment.

Poverty presents a further barrier for unpaid carers regarding accessing the support they need. Unpaid carers are more likely to be in poverty than the non-caring population. Carers Wales, in partnership with WPI Economics, [found in 2024](#) that the poverty rate for unpaid carers in Wales is 30% higher than the population who are not carers due to the higher costs carers face and reduced ability to earn an income. Meanwhile our [2024 State of Caring survey](#), responded to by over 1,000 carers in Wales, found that 1 in 3 (34%) of carers in Wales are cutting back on essentials such as food and heating, risking their health and the health of the person they care for. Many of the policy interventions that would make the biggest difference to carer poverty in Wales are reserved to the UK level, and so the Welsh Government must be bolder in lobbying for changes on behalf of unpaid carers in Wales at the UK level.

The £100 weekly cap on non-residential care charges helps to prevent costs spiraling for carers and their families and the next Welsh Government must commit to keep this cap in the years ahead. When costs are not capped, or it is not possible to access local authority funded support, carers often struggle to afford the support that they and their loved ones need. In our [2024 State of Caring in Wales report](#), the largest carer survey in Wales with over 1,000 respondents, carers explained how stays in respite facilities that are privately funded are significantly more expensive than local authority funded places in the same facility. One carer said of their experience, “*Respite care cost in a care home here is £1500 per week privately or £100 per week through the Council but the latter is not available for my husband.*” In 2024 64% of carers said they were worried about living costs and their ability to manage in the future, and financial precarity directly impacts on the ability of carers to pay for the support they need. A third (33%) said they needed more financial support with the costs of travel, such as to

frequent medical appointments or to the person they care for if they do not live with them, and 24% needed more financial support to pay for care workers to help look after the person they care for. Against this backdrop the £100 weekly cap provides reassurance to carers whose services fall within it, but a lack of funded local authority provision often means carers have to use their own finances to access support, with many struggling to do so, risking their own health and well-being and that of the person they care for.

Carers from an ethnic minority background face particular barriers accessing services. 2022 [research](#) by Carers Trust Wales found that services can fail to meet cultural needs and that there can be a lack of cultural sensitivity from service providers, underscoring the need for staff training. In a September 2025 focus group that we conducted with carers from across Wales to feed into this inquiry, a carer reflected how carers from an ethnic minority background can have smaller support networks than the wider population and other carers, saying that *“Everyone else they do have family here and I don't. I don't have parents here. I don't have relatives here.”* This reduces the ability of some carers to seek assistance from relatives with caring tasks or when trying to access services.

It should further be noted that many unpaid carers are themselves in poor health, and more likely to be disabled themselves, at the same time as caring for someone with care needs. In the [census](#), 29.8% of carers in Wales were disabled, compared to 21.4% among non-carers. A Public Health Wales [study](#) in 2021 found that carers in Wales had higher rates of 36 out of 37 long term health conditions compared to the non-carer population, with musculoskeletal disorders and depression being among the most common. We further found in [State of Caring](#) that more than 1 in 3 (38%) of carers in Wales reported having bad or very bad mental health, up from 28% in 2023. Service providers need to be aware of the health impacts of caring and how this can affect an individual's ability to access support services.

Carers living outside urban centres can face gaps in public transport services that require them to travel further, alongside increased risk of social isolation and difficulty in accessing services within a reasonable distance. Companion travel schemes offer some support when carers are accompanying someone with a disability but there is no recognition that unpaid carers also travel independently to undertake caring tasks and to access respite for their own health and well-being. Despite experiencing poverty at higher rates, and traveling to undertake a vital caring role, unpaid carers are nearly entirely absent from Welsh Government transport strategies and objectives. In the [Care Policy Scorecard 2025](#), conducted by Oxfam Cymru, Carers Wales and the Bevan Foundation, the internationally used scoring matrix led to a score of only 53% for carer access to public transport and consideration of carers in Welsh public transport policies and data.

The current availability of respite care across Wales, including levels of variation across regions;

The term ‘respite’ is used by carers to refer to a range of services from one-off or recurring breaks for the carer themselves, domiciliary replacement care services in the home or stays in a respite facility such as a care home. In our response to this inquiry, we have sought to embrace the diversity of respite provision, believing that the common thread across all is that they, to varying extents, provide relief to the carer and a break from caring tasks.

The establishment of the national Short Breaks Scheme by the Welsh Government in 2022, that aims to provide 45,000 carers with a break between 2022 and 2026 is welcome, and it is positive that the scheme has provided a variety of opportunities often delivered by local third sector organisations with good local knowledge of carers in their communities. Regrettably, the scale of the investment falls far short of the level of need. The 2021 census found that there were 310,000 unpaid carers in Wales, with 107,000 providing over 50 hours of unpaid care a week. Recent modelling estimates the number of carers in Wales to be significantly higher. A similar challenge is evident with the national Welsh Government-funded Carer Support Fund. This aims to support unpaid carers on low incomes to buy essential items or access opportunities that are beneficial to them. £5.25m has been invested in the Fund between 2022 and 2026. While we welcome the Carer Support Fund and note many positive examples where it has supported carers, the Fund aims to support just 36,000 carers over the funded period. ONS modelling in the [2025 Carers Week research report](#) suggested there could be as many as 483,000 unpaid carers in Wales.

Considering as well the long-documented situation whereby only a [very small minority](#) of unpaid carers across Wales receive a support plan from their local authority it is perhaps unsurprising, though deeply concerning, that carers continue to feel exhausted by their caring role. Our State of Caring in Wales 2024 survey found that 60% of carers often or always feel overwhelmed by caring, and 40% said not getting enough support from care services, including respite services, was a reason why they felt overwhelmed. The majority (57%) of carers who had tried to access social care support said that services were not available when they needed them, with the availability of respite a particular issue. A carer told us they “*needed help over a weekend as the person I care for couldn’t mobilise- only suggestion was to call an ambulance and have them admitted to hospital*” while another said “*I have not had respite from my son in the past 4 years.*” The lack of respite further acts as a barrier as carers do not have the time, or are unable to leave the person they care for, to access community support. Our Track the Act survey found that only a quarter had accessed community support (26%) and that not having respite care to enable them to attend was a leading reason why many carers were unable to access support. In Wales today the availability of respite care is a serious and recurring concern for unpaid carers. There is also evidence to suggest the situation in Wales is worse than the rest of the UK. Public polling by Opinium for Carers Week 2025 found that 48% of carers and former carers in Wales said having more breaks would address the disadvantages carers face. This was noticeably higher than the UK-wide figure of 38% and the highest of all the UK nations.

National schemes, in particular the Short Breaks Scheme, are meant to supplement not replace statutory support arranged by local authorities (a point made by the Local Government and Housing Committee in their recent hospital discharge inquiry [report](#)). Considering how few carers receive support plans from their local authority, carers need reassurance that national funding has supplemented - rather than replaced - the support local authorities should provide under their statutory duties in the 2014 Act. Additionally, local authorities and partners, acting through Regional Partnership Boards will, to varying extents, fund respite services through regional funding such as the Regional Integration Fund. Taken together, the system is convoluted and difficult for organisations interested in supporting unpaid carers, and carers themselves, to navigate. The complicated methods through which respite is delivered further complicates official data collection and understanding of the level of provision across Wales, and there is a real need for stronger data collection in this area.

Variations between regions are commonplace, and indeed likely a byproduct of the current framework explored above, but variations in the availability of respite care are also common within regions and within the same local authority area too. Even within the same county there are often variations in service availability and eligibility depending on the condition of the person in need of care, with geography and age also shaping access. During a focus group we held with carers to co-produce our response to this inquiry, a carer told us how they could not access a respite stay in a local care home in their county as they lived in the wrong GP catchment area, *“there's a local authority care home in Bangor called [Name] and we were told that he could only go there if our doctor's surgery was in the Bangor area and that was the same for Llanberis as well.”* Another carer explained how their local authority offered a sitting service but only for older people with disabilities. As the person with a disability they cared for was under 18, the carer was not able to access a sitting service in their county.

The extent to which the demand for carers support services is being assessed and addressed, and current levels of unmet needs;

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a legal duty on local authorities to offer all unpaid carers a Carers Needs Assessment. Following this assessment of their needs, carers can be offered a range of support services. Despite the Act having been in force since 2016, the majority of unpaid carers have not had their needs assessed, with only 43% saying they had received a Carers Needs Assessment at any point since 2016 in our 2024 [Track the Act](#) survey. This is all the more concerning when considering the legislation states carers should be offered a new assessment every 12 months. Furthermore just 25% of carers in Track the Act said they were not interested in an assessment, demonstrating the vast majority of carers would be at least open to having their needs assessed. Widespread perceptions of a lack of support for carers from the systems that should be supporting them has concerningly led many carers to feel cynical about Carers Needs Assessments. 16% are so disillusioned with Carers Needs Assessments that they do not think they help carers in general and a further 15% do not think a Carers Needs Assessment would help them with their own caring role. With only 25% of carers saying they are not interested in having an assessment, evidence suggests that there is significant unmet need for Carers Needs Assessments. Indeed, an investigation by the Public Services Ombudsman, published in October 2024, found that just 2.8% of carers in the four investigated local authorities had received a Carers Needs Assessment.

Carers can have their eligible needs met in a variety of ways following an assessment, but the Ombudsman shockingly found that just 1.5% of carers in the investigated authorities had received a support plan from the local authority. As part of our Track the Act research, Carers Wales submitted information requests to all 22 local authorities. Although figures varied, all local authorities reported very low proportions of carers having their needs assessed or being provided with a package of support to help meet their needs. For example, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council reported that they had provided just 13 Carers Needs Assessments in 2023/24, representing just 0.2% of the 6,205 carers recorded in Merthyr Tydfil in the census. Carmarthenshire provided the highest number of Carers Needs Assessments at 1,151 across the same period, though this represented just 6% of their carer population. There is overwhelming evidence that the demand in Wales for carer support services is under assessed and under addressed.

Though unpaid carers have a right to a standalone assessment of their own needs, our Track the Act information requests found that some local authorities often combine a Carers Needs Assessment with an assessment of the person with care needs, while some local authorities will operate a two stage process whereby carers will have an initial conversation with a professional, such as a social worker, before potentially being offered a Carers Needs Assessment. These approaches run the risk of obscuring and masking the true level of need among carers. In Track the Act, carers reported a level of perceived gatekeeping when they attempt to access a Carers Needs Assessment. This may be a byproduct of carers being unclear about the process. We further found in our Track the Act information requests that a

number of local authorities were unable to distinguish in their records between carer support plans and support packages. Many were further unable to say how long carers wait for an assessment of their needs after requesting one as they do not collect that data. The Ombudsman's investigation also raised concerns that there "*are discrepancies between the Investigated Authorities in the way that support provided to carers is recorded*". This represents poor data collection and undermines the ability of local authorities, and Wales more widely, to accurately record, address and assess levels of need, and undermines any certainty that might otherwise be possible regarding the level of unmet need. Given the fact that the vast majority of unpaid carers have not had their legal entitlement to an assessment of their needs fulfilled, we have serious concerns about the ability of decision makers at any level to confidently articulate the level of carer need in their area.

Unmet need for replacement care directly impedes the ability of unpaid carers to participate in the workforce and maintain their living standards. Around half of all unpaid carers in Wales are in full or part time employment and 76% of carers in employment in our State of Caring in Wales 2024 survey said reliable replacement care would help them juggle work and care. Sadly, many unpaid carers feel they must reduce their hours or give up work entirely as a result of caring responsibilities, with negative consequences for the economy, the public purse and their family's finances.

[2023 analysis](#) by Sheffield University and Carers UK found that unpaid carers save Wales more than £10bn over a 12 month period by providing care that the NHS and local government would otherwise have to provide at significantly greater cost. A failure to adequately support unpaid carers risks the ability of unpaid carers to continue to provide this vital care and support to people in significant need while undermining carers' own health, finances and wellbeing. Tackling unmet need and adequately assessing and addressing the needs of carers is an investment and not a cost.

The role of Regional Partnership Boards in the provision of support for unpaid carers, and the effectiveness of current commissioning practices for services;

The purpose behind Regional Partnership Boards is commendable, including their function to conduct regional assessments of the care and support needs of their population and plan services accordingly. However, considering the significant under assessment of carers, and serious deficiencies in the quality and breadth of data on carers collected by local authorities detailed above, we question whether most statutory services are able to share upwards to the regional level quality data on carer need in their area that could effectively inform regional service planning and commissioning. We further feel regional population needs assessments are poorly understood by statutory partners and interested organisations outside of an RPB's membership, let alone the regional population that RPBs serve. More should be done to make this important function more transparent and accessible to the public and stakeholder organisations to ensure greater scrutiny and support in planning to meet regional demand.

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities have an obligation to ensure there is an information, advice and assistance (IAA) service for carers. Our Track the Act local authority information requests found that while many local authorities provide this in-house, some commission third sector organisations to deliver their IAA service. This leads to a more complicated picture regarding IAA delivery across Wales, and can make it more difficult for carers to know where to turn to for information on available support. However, when we asked carers in our Track the Act survey from whom they received the most useful information, information received from carers charities was rated as more useful than information provided by local authorities. Fundamentally, carers generally do not consider it to be important who delivers a service, just that it is high quality and reliable. With that in mind, there must be longer-term, sustainable funding for commissioned services at every level of delivery. Too often, funding remains short-term and precarious, undermining the ability of funded providers to recruit and retain staff and plan services effectively while also making it more difficult for professionals, such as social workers, to signpost carers to services with confidence due to the churn of available services.

Regional Partnership Boards are rightly expected to demonstrate co-production with unpaid carers, and must have a Carer Representative on the board, though this requirement has not always been fulfilled by all RPBs. Carers Wales is funded to convene and provide ongoing support to these Carer Representatives across Wales. Through our interactions with the reps, we can see examples of good practice in many RPBs but are concerned that some RPBs are better than others at supporting the participation of their Carer Representatives, and practice varies across RPBs regarding the extent to which carers are embedded in all instances and levels where decisions are made. Some RPB Carer Representatives can feel their involvement is, at times, tokenistic as a result. To enhance carer representation and account for the difficulties carers can face in attending meetings around unpredictable caring duties, all RPBs should appoint at least two Carer Representatives (as some RPBs already do). They should also establish a dedicated standing committee to consider the needs and feedback of carers, co-chaired by carers, following best practice already seen in some RPBs. In recognition of the barriers carers face in participating, and the sometimes extensive amount of time asked of unpaid Carer Representatives, RPBs should offer replacement/respite care and remuneration to facilitate carer involvement. Using good practice already published through the [charter](#) for service user, carer, third sector and provider members, RPBs should provide ongoing staff support to their Carer Representatives. Regionally commissioned and planned services for carers will be strengthened and better informed through full and meaningful adherence to the co-production duty on all Regional Partnership Boards.

The actions required to improve the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provisions for unpaid carers (including Carers Assessments and support plans).

Health and social care professionals across Wales are working hard to support unpaid carers, but they must be given the tools and knowledge to effectively discharge statutory duties and

help carers to access support. In our State of Caring 2024 survey, the majority of carers said how to access respite care should be a priority area to be covered in Carers Needs Assessments, though we know this is often not the case. Fundamentally, all relevant professionals should be trained in Carer Awareness to help them to identify unpaid carers, understand the sometimes hidden challenges carers face and provide quality information and advice. Greater carer awareness among health and social care services additionally provides business benefits to the services themselves. Evidence shows that many staff working in [health](#) and [social care](#) are themselves unpaid carers. With ongoing recruitment and retention issues, having in place robust systems to support carers in the workplace will help address problems many services face regarding recruitment and retention of staff. We believe the Carer Aware project, currently funded by the Welsh Government until 2026, represents good practice in ensuring more staff in these vital sectors are Carer Aware. Delivered jointly by Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales, this project delivers training and produces resources for health and social care professionals to assist them in identifying, understanding and assisting carers. The social worker training sessions that Carers Wales has already provided to hundreds of social work professionals across all 22 local authority areas additionally assists social workers to conduct Carers Needs Assessments in line with their legislative duties and in keeping with good practice principles that we co-produced with carers and social workers.

Carers Wales has long called for the Welsh Government to commit to the production of an Action and Implementation plan for unpaid carers in relation to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The plan should:

- be fully co-produced with unpaid carers and carer representative organisations.
- address the findings of the Welsh Government-commissioned independent evaluation of the Act published in 2023, the 2024 Ombudsman for Wales report and our series of Track the Act reports.
- set out how the Welsh Government will ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of the Act and how it will be transparently reported on.
- ensure that the Welsh Government takes greater leadership in the implementation of the Act, ensuring a consistent minimum level of support across local authority areas in Wales.
- address inconsistencies in terminology relating to Carers Needs Assessments and the carer journey through statutory support services across local authority areas.
- include plans for a large scale co-produced awareness campaign to improve awareness of carers rights and help carers identify themselves as carers.

The Welsh Government must ensure that there is sufficient capacity within statutory bodies to deliver on their legal duties as outlined in the Act. Consideration should be given as to whether additional resource should be protected and provided to local authorities to increase the number of assessments carried out and provide support where required.

In March 2024, the then Welsh Government committed to co-producing guidance for professionals in healthcare settings to help better identify and support unpaid carers. We believe, and evidence shows, that this is still very much required.

The Social Services and Well-being Act is a forward-thinking piece of legislation, with broad support, that provides a valuable, comprehensive framework for how unpaid carers should be supported. Unfortunately, a significant gap between the intention of the legislation of the reality for carers has been known about and documented for many years.

[Measuring the Mountain](#) was a community-based action research project funded by Welsh Government to evaluate the early impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It focused on the experiences of unpaid carers and individuals requiring care and support. The project ran between 2018 and 2020. The project's [2019 report](#) concluded "*The most urgent conclusion however, is the need to provide better support for carers. Three in four of their experiences were negative*". Then, in 2020, the [final report](#) published by the project concluded that there is "*a mixed picture of people's experiences of using care and support services and of being unpaid carers. In some cases the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 can be seen prominently and keep with the aspirations of the Act. In others, they are missing and people's experiences are at best poor, and at worst damaging.*"

Carers Wales published Track the Act evaluations regularly in the [early years of the Act's implementation](#). The implementation gap was evident between 2016 and 2020, before the onset of Covid-19. Between 2016 and 2020, the highest proportion of carers who said they had seen any information on caring (regardless of quality or topic) was 53% and the lowest proportion was 38%. In 2017-18 Track the Act found that 73% of carers had neither had nor been offered an assessment since the Act came into force in 2016. 69% said the same in 2018-19 and in 2019-20 over 7 in 10 carers (72%) said they had not had an assessment in any of the years since 2016. All carers are entitled to have their needs re-assessed every year.

In 2019 the Senedd Health and Social Care committee's [inquiry](#) into carers rights under the 2014 Act said "*Given the lack of impact of the legislation to date and the scale of the future challenge, we believe that the Welsh Government needs to demonstrate stronger national leadership in support for carers*" with the committee recommending that the Welsh Government "*must prepare, within 6 months, a clear action plan for addressing the failings of implementation highlighted in the evidence we received*".

The Welsh Government commissioned an independent national evaluation of the Act, the IMPACT study, that ran between 2018 and 2022. In March 2023 the [final report](#) of the evaluation was published. It said that while we could be "*positive about how the Act was conceptualised*" we should be "*less positive and slightly more challenged in considering the implementation*", and found that the majority of service users and carers experienced "*a series of barriers*" that "*work against the experience 'offered' and 'promised'*" by the Act. The evaluation made several recommendations, including improved performance measurement by Welsh Government, and posed a number of 'test questions' for the whole system to consider to spur the necessary system change.

In 2022 Welsh Government asked ADSS Cymru to lead a review into whether carers rights were being upheld in Wales. The [final report](#), published in June 2023, concluded *“From what we have been told, many carers are not having their rights upheld. This is recognised by local authorities, who are taking action to address it. In terms of the law, carers believe the Act is all that is needed. Implementation and enforcement is the weakness.”*

In 2023 the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales chose to use its powers to commence an own-initiative investigation into the delivery of Carers Needs Assessments. The investigation, that published its findings in October 2024, found that just 2.8% of carers in the investigated authorities had had their needs assessed and just 1.5% were in receipt of a support plan. Launching the report, the Ombudsman said *“More must be done to ensure unpaid carers are proactively identified and informed of their right to a Carers Needs Assessment and the support that may be available to them”*. The Ombudsman urged all 22 local authorities to consider the recommendations in the report, and encouraged *“local authorities and health boards to reflect on their own role in supporting carers”*.

In November 2024, the Carers Wales Track the Act report, based on a carer survey and information requests sent to all local authorities and local health boards, found that the majority of unpaid carers had not seen or received any information or advice on caring, the majority have never had their needs assessed and that there appeared to be real gaps in data collection and understanding of delivery across local authorities.

Unpaid carers save health and care services in Wales over £10bn a year, but the wider implications of a failure to provide additional support to unpaid carers are significant. Without adequate support for unpaid carers it will be harder to discharge patients from hospital back to their family, undermining efforts to cut waiting lists. With carers facing serious health impacts as a result of caring, we could see more carers themselves admitted to hospital, piling pressure on the NHS as well as the social care system that would then have to immediately step in to look after the person the carer cares for. Without support in the workplace and from community services, more carers will have to cut back their hours at work or leave the workforce entirely, undermining efforts to grow the Welsh economy while leaving employers in Wales to foot the bill of increased staff turnover. With [projections](#) of an ageing population with increased care needs into the future, it will never be easier or cheaper than it is today for Wales to fix the foundations for unpaid carers. Addressing this gap between the rhetoric of the Act and the reality on the ground should be a central focus for current and future Welsh Governments.

The social care system faces significant challenges on many fronts due to a range of factors, some of which are long-term. However, after many years of an evident and persisting implementation gap regarding the 2014 Act that has seen so many unpaid carers miss out on the support they need and are legally entitled to, it is beyond time that we finally act upon the findings of so many years of evidence gathering without any delay. Unpaid carers deserve nothing less.