



Consultation Response
September 2014

**Carers Wales response to the National Assembly for Wales’
Environment and Sustainability Committee Consultation on the general principles of the
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill**

Carers and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

1. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill is the third piece of Welsh legislation to cover strategic planning for carers since 2010.
2. Research by Carers Wales, Carers UK and many other organisations, shows that information is vitally important for carers. Without the information they need, carers face major difficulties in sustaining their caring role without serious consequences for their own health and well-being. Getting the relevant advice at an early stage in the caring journey gives carers choice and control over their own lives. Knowing where to find the practical and financial help is critical in reducing stress and also helps carers make the critical choice whether they are able to remain in work rather than have to give up paid employment plummeting them into poverty. Being unemployed, not only has long term implications for carers and their families but also has knock on economic effects on local economies. After years of campaigning by Carers Wales, the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 was introduced by the Welsh Government, following a proposed Legislative Competence Order by Plaid Cymru. The Measure placed a duty on Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts to prepare, publish and implement a strategy for carers, with Local Health Boards as the lead agency. The detail of the strategies were provided for by regulations and included amongst other things; identification of carers, the provision of information, training of front-line staff, engagement with GPs and consultation with carers. The Measure came into force in 2012 and provided a clear joint planning mechanism for carers with health as the lead agency.
3. In 2013 the Welsh Government published the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill, which for the first time ever puts carers on an equal footing with those they care for. Carers Wales welcomed the high profile of carers throughout the Bill and were pleased that the Bill broadened the definition of carers and positively strengthened carers’ rights to assessment, care and support. However, the Bill also repealed the Carers Strategies Measure. Carers Wales and the Wales Carers Alliance vehemently opposed the repeal of the Measure and the Welsh Government introduced an amendment to the Bill in January 2014 to address these concerns. Section 14.3 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 maintains a duty on LHBs to report to Welsh Ministers on any sections of

the local health and wellbeing strategies which relate to carers (via the Single Integrated Plans).

4. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Bill tabled in July 2014 subsequently repeals section 14.3 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. This Bill, which aims to simplify and streamline strategic planning for public bodies in Wales, putting Public Service Boards on a statutory footing with a duty to assess, plan and report on their objectives to improve the wellbeing of their populations, only contains one reference to carers in section 36.
5. Carers Wales and the Wales Carers Alliance is concerned about the oversight of the legislative process which has incrementally diluted the legal status of strategic planning for carers in Wales; in particular the specific duty, as the lead agency for carers strategies, on LHBs and NHS Trusts and the detail of the local carers strategies, provided for by regulations under the Carers Measure.
6. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill aims to simplify and streamline strategic planning for public bodies in Wales and to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There are major demographic changes facing our society and the ability to meet the increasing demand for care (both paid and un-paid) in a sustainable manner is going to be a considerable challenge ⁽¹⁾. The role of public bodies in supporting unpaid carers is therefore very relevant to the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill and the Wales Carers Alliance welcomes putting Public Service Boards and local wellbeing plans on a statutory footing. We are concerned however that in the desire to streamline strategic planning important legal provisions for carers have been lost. The only reference to carers in section 36 of the Bill relates to the population needs assessments under section 14 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and in no way replicates the detailed strategic planning for carers outlined in the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010.
7. Even though this Bill states that assessments undertaken by the Public Service Boards will have to include carers and the objectives are to improve the well-being of their populations then carers must be a fundamental part of this and there must be a replication of the current duty for health to maintain the lead to develop carer information strategies in line with the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010. Currently, the Bill contains one reference to carers in section 36 and the Bill does not specify the content of the local wellbeing plans under Section 37.
8. The current Single Integrated Plans are extremely variable regarding carers. This ranges from no mention at all, to one sentence or maybe a paragraph. A number of local authorities though have appropriately included a section on carers in their current Single Plans, acknowledging and summarising their involvement in the local LHB carers strategy e.g. Cardiff, The Vale of Glamorgan, Denbighshire, Merthyr and RCT. Similarly the Bill provides no detail on the content of the reports under section 44 and as there are no regulatory provisions under these sections of the Bill, Welsh Government will not be able to

prescribe the content of the local wellbeing plans or reports under regulations either as is currently the case with the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010.

9. There are over 370,000 carers in Wales ⁽²⁾ and for the vast majority of these their main contact with statutory agencies is via a health care professional ⁽³⁾, which is why it is so important to maintain a clear and specific duty on LHBs and NHS Trusts for carers. Carers Wales and the Wales Carers Alliance is calling for the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill to maintain LHBs and NHS Trusts as the lead agencies for carers. The vast majority of carers deal primarily with health services and have little, if any contact at all with social care, it is vital that as well as ensuring that the detail of the current local carers strategies remain (e.g.; the identification of carers, provision of information, training of front-line staff, engagement with GPs and consultation with carers), that they are firmly and clearly embedded into statutory legislation with regular monitoring and reporting mechanisms put in place to measure their impact.
10. Carers Wales and the Wales Carers Alliance has provided officials with a number of suggestions on how this can be accomplished and we look forward to working with Ministers and officials to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

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- (1) 2011 Census
- (2) Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 Guidance issues to LHBs, NHS Trusts and Local Authorities Welsh Government 2011
- (3) The Generation Strain: Collective Solutions to Care In An Ageing Society IPPR report 2014