

Dai Lloyd AM
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Dai

Inquiry: Impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to Carers

We are writing to you in response to issues raised regarding Carers Needs Assessments in the final evidence session of the above detailed inquiry.

As organisations representing carers, those that support carers and carers services across Wales, we are concerned by Welsh Government's written and oral evidence which suggests that rates of refused assessments can be equated to a lack of need for assessment.

Whilst we fully recognise that all carers may not need an assessment, we consider it important to note that there is little evidence which interrogates the reasons behind carers refusing assessments.

Through Carers Trust Wales' Network of carers services, which reaches more than 34,000 carers in Wales each year, we have consistently been told that there are several barriers to carers accessing assessments which include:

- Concern or fear about asking for or accepting help from social services
- Poor knowledge of rights or ability to self-identify as a carer
- Belief that the assessment won't lead to the type of support they need
- Low levels of awareness about the types of support that are available
- A lack of support to navigate what can feel like a complex system and overwhelming system

Carers Wales' Track the Act research found that of those carers who responded to its survey, 61% had not been given any advice about being a carer and 54% said they had not been offered an assessment (including a review of an assessment if one already existed). We are concerned that local authorities are not proactively identifying carers or giving them the information and advice they need including making carers aware that carers needs assessments exist. Carers Wales has

expanded questions in this year's survey to gather more detailed evidence regarding the reasons for refused assessments which will be reported in September.

We remain concerned that too many carers are unable to access Carers Needs Assessments despite them having a clear need for support. There are on-going examples of local authorities counting sending a letter and form out for a carer to complete as an offer of assessment. It is not unlikely that those carers who do not complete that form may be considered to have refused an assessment.

Additionally, we have examples of some local authorities discouraging carers from taking up the offer of an assessment on the grounds that the menu of services they can offer does not meet that individual carer's needs. Clearly, this is contrary to obligations set out under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

Given that data collection is at best experimental, and carers' views on the reasons for refusing assessment have not been consistently sought or acted upon, we believe it is important for the committee to interrogate further why so many carers refuse assessment.

The evidence gathered by our organisations suggests that there is a gap between the number of carers who need support and the number of carers receiving a meaningful assessment. However, despite our collective best efforts there remains insufficient evidence to enable us to quantify the size of the gap.

We would strongly advise that as the committee considers the evidence presented through this inquiry, adequate weight is given to the importance of properly understanding carers' experiences and the way in which obligations under the Act are realised in practice.

If we can be of any further assistance on this issue, or at any point in your consideration of evidence, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely



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