

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee – Inquiry into the Impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to Carers

MINISTERIAL EVIDENCE PAPER - January 2019

Caring can be hugely rewarding but can also be really challenging, and some carers need support both as a carer and to maintain their own lives alongside caring. The Welsh Government values the enormous contribution made by carers and has consistently prioritised actions to improve to the lives of carers. The first Carers' Strategy for Wales was published in 2000, the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure was published in 2010, and the Carers Strategy for Wales and the Delivery Plan 2013-2016. Support for carers is now contained within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Unpaid Carers

The 2011 census carried out by the Office for National Statistics showed there were over 370,000 people in Wales, who undertake at least one hour of unpaid care every week, which is around 12% of the population. In almost every category Wales has the highest proportion of carers in the UK, whether it is the highest proportion of older carers, the highest proportion of carers providing over 50 hours of care a week or the highest proportion of carers under the age of 18.

Questions about caring were included for the first time in the National Survey for Wales in 2016-17¹. People were asked: "Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems related to old age?" and were requested not to count anything they did as part of paid employment. The National Survey, using this definition, found that 32% of people were caring for others in 2016-17, but this fell to 25% in 2017-18 (the fall was almost entirely in those providing less than 20 hours a week). These figures may be higher than the census as they follow after other questions on volunteering.

The census and National Survey figures correspond more closely when you look at those who do 20+ hours of caring a week (around 5% of adults), so the main difference is those reporting less than 20 hours of caring a week which is the majority of carers. The percentage of carers doing more than 20 hours per week increases with age.

Distinguishing between different levels of need (including no need) for different carers is important when delivering proportionate and targeted support and understanding data on numbers of people accessing support. It should therefore be noted that many carers are not likely to need help from formal services, such as respite care, because they manage their caring role without too much difficulty. This is especially so for people whose time spent on caring is relatively small. UK-level evidence from the Understanding Society study² shows that only 24% of carers aged 40+ are dissatisfied with their leisure time. This and other sources of evidence show that greater social

¹ https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/?tab=el_home&topic=nhs_social_care&lang=en

² <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Caring-for-Carers.pdf>

need is more likely to be found in people who devote a larger proportion of their time to caring. The National Survey for Wales found that when people caring 1-19 hours a week were compared with non-carers, there was almost no difference in material deprivation and long-term health problems between the two groups.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014³

This legislation replaced the Welsh Government's Carers Measure 2010⁴ and strengthened carers' statutory rights so that, for the first time, carers have the same right to an assessment and support as those that they care for. If anyone – a carer or someone who needs care – has needs that are eligible for support then the local authority has a statutory duty to plan for and meet those needs.

The fundamental principles of the Act are voice and control, prevention and early intervention, well-being and co-production. The focus is on talking to individuals about what matters to them and the outcomes they want to achieve. That conversation begins with Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) and continues, where appropriate, with an assessment of needs.

Information, Advice and Assistance

IAA services, provided by local authorities in accordance with the Act, provide a proportionate response to an enquiry to empower the individual to access early intervention and preventative services. For carers, that may include;

- information on support, without the need for an assessment (which for many people is not needed and would be disproportionate);
- advice on support, that is comprehensive, impartial and appropriate to the individual, following an assessment that is proportionate to the information provided by an individual;
- assistance which enables the individual to access the appropriate care; and
- support services, including early intervention and preventative services

Assessment

Where a carer's needs cannot be met through information, advice and assistance alone, the purpose of an assessment is to understand the carer's needs, the extent to which the carer is able and willing to provide care for the person they care for, the outcomes they want to achieve and then to identify how they can best be supported to achieve them.

Carers Wales stated in their recent 'Track the Act 3' briefing published in October 2018⁵, that there is a lack of consistency in the approach that local authorities take as to how and when carers are assessed, and some confusion amongst carers about assessments. These concerns are likely to be significantly helped by forthcoming practitioner guidance from Social Care Wales who have commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) to develop a suite of engaging, bilingual tools to support good, lawful, outcomes-focused practice for social workers and other professionals

³ <https://socialcare.wales/hub/sswbact>

⁴ <https://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/carers/?lang=en>

⁵ <https://www.carersuk.org/files/section/5763/carers-wales-track-the-act-2018-final-081018.pdf>

assessing carers' support needs. This work began in 2018/19 and updates and a draft of the Toolkit were circulated to the members of the Ministerial Advisory Group for Carers in late November. The expectation is to launch the Toolkit resources in early 2019. This is in addition to the recent launch by Social Care Wales of a more basic e-learning module about carers aimed at members of the health and social care workforce⁶, alongside the current suite of information and guidance materials, developed in co-operation with Carers Wales and Carers Trust Wales⁷.

Assessing the impact of the Act

Welsh Government is committed to assessing the impact of the Act. The current data about carers is imperfect but work is underway to ensure that data will be more reliable and more usable in the future.

The published experimental statistics for 2016-17⁸ show that in 2016-17, there were 6,207 assessments of need for support for carers, resulting in 1,823 support plans. In 2017-18, the data indicates 6,178 assessments of carers needs, resulting in 2,027 support plans. Limitations of the data are set out in the statistical releases (for example, incomplete data as not all local authorities were able to supply the required information)⁹. We also have data on the number of carers who refused assessments – in 2017/18 there were 6,891 who did so.

When understanding this data, in addition to caveats on data quality, it is important to note that carers who do not need support (at that time), or whose needs are being met through information, advice and support services, or who already have a support plan in place and whose needs have not changed, would not be expected to need a carers assessment in any given year. The Social Services and Well-being Act takes a proportionate approach and only carries out assessment where needed, providing support through other means where appropriate. Whilst Welsh Government is concerned that some carers who would benefit from carers assessments are not yet accessing them – and is taking actions to address this (see below) - the gap between those who would benefit from assessment and those who are accessing assessment cannot easily be quantified. It would be expected that only a limited percentage of carers would need assessment in any given year. The fact that of those carers offered an assessment, more refused assessment than took up the offer, illustrates this point.

Welsh Government is currently developing a new Performance and Improvement Framework which will improve the way that data is collected in relation to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and thus our understanding of the impact of the Act, including its impact on carers. The new framework is currently being developed in partnership with local authority heads of service and data leads. The new framework will be in place in April 2020 with the first data returns due for submission in March 2021. A full consultation will be taking place in Spring 2019.

The framework will focus on three key areas – quantitative data, qualitative data and research and evidence. Local authorities will be encouraged to collect a range of data in these areas which will be a combination of nationally prescribed data and locally

⁶ <https://socialcare.wales/service-improvement/working-with-carers-1>

⁷ <https://socialcare.wales/hub/hub-resource-sub-categories/carers-and-the-act>

⁸ <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/171031-adults-receiving-care-support-2016-17-en.pdf>

⁹ <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/adults-receiving-care-support/?lang=en>

determined data so that authorities are able to understand the full social care picture in their area.

As part of this new approach, local authorities will be required to collect additional data on carers, including an increased emphasis on qualitative data, so that carers' opinions and experiences of the Act are collected, as well as quantitative information. Welsh Government has also committed to an evaluation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to explore the implementation of the Act and the impact on people who receive care and support and carers who receive support. It will provide robust information as to how the Act has been implemented at a national, regional and local level.

The evaluation commenced in November 2018 and the contract has been awarded to the University of South Wales. The evaluation will run for a minimum of three years and will include engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and service users, including carers. The final report and recommendations will be published in 2021.

Wider Welsh Government policy in relation to carers

National priorities

The introduction of legislation, alone, does not make a difference in people's lives. To support the delivery of these enhanced rights for carers and to ensure that they are accessed by and make a difference for carers, including young carers, we recognised that some additional development work was needed. As such the national priorities for carers were announced in November 2017¹⁰:

- Supporting life alongside caring - All carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring;
- Identifying and recognising carers - Fundamental to the success of delivering improved outcomes for carers is the need to improve carer's recognition of their role and to ensure they can access the necessary support; and
- Providing information, advice and assistance - It is important that carers receive the appropriate information and advice where and when they need it.

Ministerial Advisory Group for Carers

A new Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Carers was established in mid 2018, with the group providing a national forum to steer the delivery of improvements for carers and provide a cross-sector response to the challenges all carers face. The establishment of this group supports the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act's key principle for supporting an integrated approach, with membership including the key statutory authorities (regional partnership board, local authority and local health board representation) alongside third sector representatives, the Older People's, Children's and Future Generations Commissioners and others.

¹⁰ <https://gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/carers/?lang=en>

The Group will be advising on the barriers which can get in the way of providing effective support to carers, and solutions which can be taken together collectively by Welsh Government and our statutory and third sector partners.

An Engagement and Accountability Group will be established to support the MAG. This group will provide voice for a more diverse range of carers and carers representatives than is possible on the MAG itself, and will help the group keep focussed on the issues that matter in the day to day lives of carers. Detailed proposals for the establishment of this group will be discussed at the next meeting of the MAG in Spring 2019.

Direct Support for Carers

Prior to the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Group, the following support for carers was agreed¹¹:

- £3m to local authorities for the provision of additional respite care. First funded in 2017-18, this recurring funding is now provided via the local government Revenue Support Grant. Reports submitted to Welsh Government show that this additional funding has enabled the provision of a range of traditional and new and innovative models for providing breaks for carers (with or without the person they care for);
- £1m to local health boards in 2018-19 to support the carers national priorities, including improving support for carers in GP surgeries and at the point of hospital discharge of a person they care for;
- Funding in 2018-19 to the All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers to raise carers' awareness of their rights under the Social Services and Well-being Act by creating a sustainable network of carers' champions who support others to understand their rights;
- Funding in 2018-19 to Carers Wales to set up an Employers for Carers Hub in Wales;
- Funding in 2018-19 to Children in Wales to continue to support the Young Carers Network;
- Funding in 2018-19 to Carers Trust Wales to develop the guidance and tools for a national roll-out of ID cards for young carers to enable them to access the support they need from schools, surgeries, pharmacies and other professionals. This funding will continue in 2019-20; and
- The Welsh Government has provided £50m in revenue to regional partnership boards this year to support the development of innovate services in various priority areas on integration, including specifically for carers.

¹¹ <https://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/the-ministerial-advisory-group-for-carers-201819-annual-plan.pdf>

This is in addition to funding provided to Carers Wales and Carers Trust Wales to support carers in accessing the support they are entitled to under the Social Services and Well-being Act. 2018-19 is the third year of funding under the Third Sector Sustainable Social Services Grant. This funding will continue in 2019-20 for a fourth year, prior to a new grant round being introduced thereafter.

Looking to the future:

- On Carers Rights Day on 30 November 2018, the Minister for Children, Older People and Carers announced that additional funding to support carers will be included as part of a larger investment of an extra £15m in 2019-20 for older people and carers in the Integrated Care Fund (ICF)¹². Early guidance on the use of this funding was issued to regional partnership boards in December 2018 and full guidance will be available by February 2019. Whilst the use of ICF funding is determined according to local need, based on population needs assessments produced under section 14 of the Social Services and Well-being Act¹³, Welsh Government guidance sets out a clear expectation that additional direct support for carers should be delivered, including additional respite services, so that carers are able to take a break, supporting them as carers and in their life alongside caring.
- Welsh Government has made a commitment to undertake public awareness raising work in 2019-20, building on our earlier successful 'Care and support in Wales is Changing' campaign¹⁴. This targeted communications campaign will be used to further reinforce the changes which carers and those cared for should be expecting to see under the Act. We intend that carers and their rights under the Act will be a particular focus of the campaign.

Conclusion

The role played daily by carers across Wales immeasurably improves the health, well-being, safety and quality of life of those they care for, whilst very significantly reducing the burden on health and social care services.

As acknowledged in *A Healthier Wales*¹⁵, there is a need to both recognise and support the vital role of unpaid carers “without whom there would be no overall system.”

The Social Services and Well-being Act provides the same right for carers to access eligible support as those they care for. Welsh Government is undertaking a major exercise to improve the quality of data on the impact of the Act, to drive continuous improvement in the delivery of the rights set out in the Act.

¹² <https://gov.wales/newsroom/health-and-social-services/2018/investcarers/?lang=en>

¹³ These assessments are undertaken on the health board footprint and the first population assessment reports were published in May 2017. Every assessment report was specifically required to include carers as a core theme.

¹⁴ <https://gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en>

¹⁵ <https://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/healthier-wales/?lang=en>

In the meantime, Welsh Government is taking practical steps through national priorities, direct support for carers and the establishment of the new Ministerial Advisory Group to continuously improve our understanding of the needs of carers, and actions to meet the support needs of those who make such an invaluable contribution to the lives of those who need care, and the communities in which they live.