

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the Report of the Health Social Care and Sport Committee's Inquiry into the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and its impact on carers

I would like to thank the members of the Health Social Care and Sport Committee for their report. Its recommendations clearly highlight the concerns of carers and others, as well as the challenges ahead. I have set out in previous statements that the Welsh Government values very highly the contribution that carers make in their caring role, and our commitment as a government to support them.

In relation to the committee's recommendations, I am pleased to confirm that in regard to the majority of the recommendations, we are already planning or taking action to improve the support and experiences of carers. I have set out below my responses in detail to the Committee's individual recommendations. I look forward to discussing this response with you in due course.

Recommendation 1 - The Welsh Government must, as a matter of priority, demonstrate stronger national leadership in the delivery of rights and services for carers under the Act. As a starting point, it must prepare, within 6 months, a clear action plan for addressing the failings of implementation highlighted in the evidence we received. In doing this, it must consult key stakeholders and carers. It must also set out a clear timetable for delivery of the actions identified in its plan

Response - Accept

The Welsh Government is providing strong national leadership in developing better support for carers. Since the introduction of the 2014 Act and its implementation from April 2016, we have worked to develop the rights of carers and focus on how we have the greatest impact for carers across Wales.

As well as working in partnership with carers to develop the 3 national priorities for carers, published in November 2017 we also agreed as part of that work to establish a new Ministerial led strategic forum. Established in 2018, the Carers Ministerial Advisory Group brings together key stakeholders – local authorities, health boards, carers' organisations and others, to consider the needs of carers, now and in the future.

At the Carers Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) meeting in mid-May 2019, I set out my thinking as to how we can take our national priorities for carers forward into 2020 and beyond through a comprehensive national plan. I subsequently announced on 21 November 2019, Carers Rights Day, our intention to develop a new national plan for carers. It will help to drive forward the strategic agenda and work in combination with our existing three national priorities for carers. The new plan will set out the key drivers and actions we will need, and how we can all work together as government, statutory authorities, health boards, commissioners, Social Care Wales, carers' organisations and others, to deliver real impact in carers' lives.

The content and structure of the new plan has already been the subject of discussions with the MAG membership, commencing at their meetings in October and November 2019. This included considering feedback about carers' needs

assessments, how we can improve carers' knowledge of their rights under the 2014 Act, and where they can access information, advice and assistance.

This thinking will be taken forwards at the next meeting of the Carers MAG on 29 January 2020. I want us to be in a position to hold a public consultation later this year, and have a new plan in place before end of 2020.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 2 The Welsh Government must plan now for the anticipated rise in the number of unpaid carers. It must take a long term view of what the needs of carers will be in the future and how, along with local authorities, local health boards and the third sector, it will meet those needs. The Welsh Government must clearly set out how it will achieve this and report back to us on progress in 6 months.

Response - Accept

Wales has an ageing population and more of us will be in a position of caring for our loved ones, with many living with more complex, long term health conditions. The 2011 Census estimated there are c. 370,000 carers, which is by now likely to be an underestimate. In 20 years there are estimates that one in three of us will have caring responsibilities. Demographics forecast that over the next 20 years (in 2040), 1 in 4 of us will be over 65, with those aged over 75 projected to increase from 9 per cent of the population in 2018, to around 14 per cent in 2040.

At a strategic level our Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act means all public bodies listed in the Act must think about the longer term, working better and smarter with individuals and communities, as well as each other, to prevent strategic problems developing and escalating, as well as adopting a more joined-up approach. We have also prioritised social care in our national strategy – Prosperity for All – and A Healthier Wales which emphasises the need for an integrated health and social care system. These strategies will now be supported by our new national carers plan.

The key mechanism for planning is the Population Needs Assessments and guidance is being prepared by government to inform the next round of assessments. We have clearly set out in Part 2 of the 2014 Act that local authorities and health boards have responsibilities to:

- understand the characteristics and needs of their local population, including carers, by conducting a population assessment of people in need of care and support, and carers in need of support;
- provide or arrange the provision of a range and level of services, including preventative services to carers and are accessible within the community; and
- ensure that carers can readily access information, advice and assistance about the type of support available in their community, and as importantly, helps them to understand how the care and support system works in their area.

Financial implications – None. There will not be any additional discrete costs. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing budgets.

Recommendation 3 The Welsh Government must ensure that the Ministerial Advisory Group is supported and resourced to be an effective forum. It must be of sufficient status within the Welsh Government to raise the profile of caring and carers' needs across government policy areas, including local government, health, housing and transport. As such, it should be chaired by a member of the Welsh Government. It should be transparent, and should publish agendas and minutes of its meetings. The Deputy Minister must report back to this Committee within 6 months on the actions that have been taken to address these issues

Response - Accept

Our ministerial advisory group for carers was created in mid-2018 in response to calls from a wide range of stakeholders for a strategic and high level forum whose members can engage with, challenge and influence current and future policy. The group's status and commitment of Ministers is demonstrated by the frequent attendance of the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, to hear the considerations and feedback of the members. They have met five times between summer 2018 and December 2019 and will next meet on 29 January 2020.

Having considered the progress of the work of the MAG, I have appointed Mr Arwel Ellis Owen, former Chair of Social Care Wales, as Chair of this group. With his expertise and experience he will provide clear, impartial and strategic leadership of the MAG at a key point in its work programme – notably development of the new national plan.

We will publish the agenda and minutes of the meetings so that everyone can read about discussions and the development of the new national plan.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 4 The Welsh Government must, as a matter of priority, give effect to its commitment to undertake a major publicity drive to raise awareness of the Act and carers' rights under it. This should raise the profile of caring, improve identification of carers, promote the benefits of needs assessments under the Act, and encourage take-up. It should also signpost people to appropriate information, advice and assistance about caring. The Deputy Minister must report back to this Committee within 6 months on progress.

Response - Accept

I was pleased to inform the committee members of our intention to launch a new carers' rights awareness campaign, when we met in mid-February 2019. We launched the campaign on Carers Rights Day, 21 November, the first phase in a targeted campaign in 2019 and into 2020. We also launched material to inform older people of their rights and used social media to highlight the launch.

The initial phase of the campaign will focus on all ages of carers, with key messages within a poster and leaflet, which informs people that they can contact their local

authority to find out more, and where appropriate, access a carers' needs assessment. Information from this first phase will be used to inform the campaign in 2020-21, including information targeting young carers.

We will be collecting data and information on use of our website pages hosting the poster and leaflet, as well as officials receiving regular evaluation reports and seeking feedback from carers networks such as the members of the Wales Carers Alliance.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 5 The Welsh Government must ensure that those health and social care professionals most likely to come into contact with carers, including GPs, are able to identify carers and signpost them to appropriate services. The Welsh Government must ensure that specific training is provided for this.

Response - Accept

Local authorities have the responsibility for ensuring their workforce is suitably trained to deliver services such as information, advice and assistance and support for carers, but as part of its remit Social Care Wales provides information, resources and training for social care workforce professionals that includes how to support carers, and most importantly, how to hold that critical conversation with a carer, when undertaking a carers' needs assessment.

A senior official from Social Care Wales is a member of the Carers MAG and the development of training and information resources for this critical workforce will feature in the new national plan.

Since 2016-17 we have been providing direct funding to local health boards to support carers and in 2018-19 and 2019-20, £1m has been focussed on supporting carers when in contact with GP services, and when the person they care for is discharged from hospital. For 2020-21 I will ask LHBs to use their allocation in a more flexible way, given our development of the new carers' national plan.

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW) are jointly leading the development of a workforce strategy for health and social care, in partnership with NHS Wales, Local Government, the voluntary and independent sectors as well as regulators, professional bodies and education providers. The workforce strategy is a key enabler, in delivering the ambition of 'A Healthier Wales' and on 12 November 2019 the Minister for Health and Social Services announced a £127.8m investment package to support education and training programmes for healthcare professionals in Wales, an increase of 13% compared with 2019/20.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 6 The Welsh Government must ensure that the formal needs assessment process for carers is clarified and standardised across local authorities. It must be able to demonstrate how it has achieved this and should report back to this Committee within 6 months on progress

Response - Accept

The 2014 Act places clear duties on those exercising functions under the 2014 Act to begin with the assumption that the adult is best placed to judge their own well-being.

The carers' needs assessment process is clearly identified in the dedicated Part 3 Code of Practice (assessing the needs of individuals) which must be applied by all local authorities when they undertake an assessment with an individual or carer. This code sets out a process for assessing the needs of an individual for care and support, or support in the case of a carer, and a process of assessment that will apply to everyone – children, adults and carers, as well as a process of review and re-assessment, that will apply to assessments.

All practitioners must work with people to identify what matters to them, and identify an individual carer's strengths and capabilities. This is central to the system. It is an approach to assessment and care planning that recognises that needs can be met not only through the provision of services, but through active support and assistance to enable people to meet their own needs e.g. helping carers access local services themselves.

Care and support plans evolve from effective assessments about what matters to the person, and the outcomes they want to achieve. This is a model of assessment and care planning that requires the assessment process to start with the person themselves and understand their strengths and capabilities and what matters to them and how their family, friends and local community play a part in their life to help them reach their personal outcomes.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 7 The Welsh Government must ensure that those social care professionals responsible for delivering needs assessments are trained to provide an improved user experience for carers. Training should include an emphasis on appropriate language to be used around assessments, breaking down barriers to engagement with social services and ensuring that carers are able to access the support they are entitled to under the Act. The Welsh Government must evaluate the impact of this training

Response - Accept

In 2018, Social Care Wales commissioned the Institute of Public Care to engage with carer stakeholders and statutory bodies, including officials from Welsh Government and representatives from Carers Trust Wales, Carers Wales and the All Wales Forum for Parents and Carers, to develop a new carers' needs assessment toolkit of resources.

Published in spring 2019 these resources are specifically intended to support social care professionals to deliver carers needs assessments and care and support plans for carers where eligible needs are identified. These are developed with the carer as an equal partner, and with the goal of enabling carers to live the life they want to achieve. They previously launched an e-learning course in autumn 2018, to help professionals across the health, social care and public sector to understand the needs and issues that affect all ages of carer. This is available on the NHS Wales e-learning platform and is intended to complement existing training resources, and to work alongside the carers' assessment toolkit.

Skills in respect of working with carers was included as a new priority in the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) grant for 2019-20. Data is being sought from the regions on their training activity and is part of the grant reporting process during 2019-20.

The "What matters conversation" is flexible and person centred, so language can be adapted to facilitate the conversation, including when it comes to a formal carers needs assessment. We would not expect a social care professional conducting a carers' needs assessment of a young carer, to use the same language as with an adult. It is vital that local authority employees and others who are engaging with carers, including carrying out a carers' needs assessment, truly enable the conversation to be led by the individual.

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 8 The Welsh Government must require an evaluation of the effectiveness of the needs assessment process. The method of this evaluation is a matter for the Welsh Government, but it should be done on an annual basis and the results should be published.

Response - Accept in principle

The 2014 Act takes a proportionate approach and local authorities or their commissioned services employed to carry out assessment, should only carry out assessment when and where needed, providing support to individuals and carers through other means where appropriate. However, the key focus is on the outcomes of those conversations, and the impact on the life of the carer and their ability to continue in their caring role, as well as having a life alongside their caring role.

Formal evaluation of the 2014 Act is ongoing over a 3 year period. Commencing in 2019-20 it will be an examination of the extent to which people have "voice and control", therefore analysing the key principles embedded within the 2014 Act. Our new Performance and Improvement Framework will help us obtain evidence and identify where there may be gaps in our knowledge or data collection.

Quantitative data collected from local authorities is currently published on an annual basis and this includes data in relation to assessments of need for care and support. From April 2020 onwards, the data collected will inform the quantitative data component of the new Performance and Improvement Framework. This will provide a range of data and evidence to measure and monitor performance at a local and

national level, to drive improvement across the social care sector and inform national policy.

Financial implications – None. If appropriate, the costs of such analysis and any associated monitoring would be met through existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 9 The Welsh Government must set out the maximum time that it believes a carer should wait to receive a needs assessment; and

Recommendation 10 The Welsh Government must require local authorities to report back on waiting lists for needs assessments. The Ministerial Advisory Group may provide an appropriate forum for reviewing these reports.

Response - Accept in principle

We recognise and accept that a number of carers are telling us they are waiting for a statutory carers' needs assessment. There is a need to collect more appropriate and meaningful data. I will use that data and more immediate work with the Carers MAG to identify how more timely responses can be delivered, as well as a range of solutions that enable local authorities to deliver timely, effective statutory assessments that are responsive to the support carers need, when they need it.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 11 The Welsh Government must ensure that refusal rates of needs assessments are kept under review. The Ministerial Advisory Group may provide an appropriate forum for this work

Response - Accept

We all need to understand why carers are choosing to refuse their rights to an assessment of their need for support. The formal evaluation arrangements we have put in place has already started to provide the evidence for this. The number of assessments refused by adult carers is currently collected through the Adults receiving care and support data collection. Figures for 2016-17 onwards have been published annually and since 2016-17 the data on the number of carers who refused assessments has remained relatively stable. This data will be included in the new data requirements for the Social Care Performance and Improvement Framework, from April 2020 onwards.

We recognise that there may be more carers for whom it would be appropriate to have a formal needs assessment from their local authority. However, when seeking to understand this data and 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 currently being met through information, advice and support services, or who already have a support plan in place and whose needs have not changed, it is not therefore expected that they would need a carers assessment in any given year.

Asking individuals their reasons for refusing an assessment can be difficult because many may not wish to give this information and often only a very small percentage of individuals return any qualitative survey issued by an organisation asking for

feedback. In light of this the I will ask the Carers MAG to consider whether research beyond that already under way, for example in Measuring the Mountain, to sample and obtain such qualitative data, is appropriate, The MAG will also consider any risks around sampling and scaling up, and how this would impact on local authorities carrying out a carers needs assessment.

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 12 The Welsh Government should ensure that emergency planning is a core component of all needs assessments to ensure that specific arrangements are in place for a time when the carer is unable to continue to care.

Response - Accept

Part 3 of the Code of Practice requires all local authorities to ensure all carers needs assessments include a detailed conversation about how to achieve the outcomes of the carer and what support they may need in different circumstances. These circumstances include situations where there is an emergency.

Within health boards and local authorities there are examples of different approaches to helping carers in such circumstances, for example a number of authorities offer emergency carer ID cards. We would also encourage local authorities to share good practice. For example, Ceredigion local authority offers an Emergency Carers Fund, available to support unpaid carers in any situation that the carer considers an emergency. In 2018/19 the fund was used to look at a more innovative ways of supporting carers and the person they care for, until either longer term arrangements could be made with each party, or until the crisis was resolved in the short term.

The Welsh Government has also been undertaking an informal consultation, including local authorities, about a new draft policy framework for urgent and emergency care. The draft policy framework describes a new six goal approach intended to help local service leaders to do things differently, better and faster for people who want or need to access urgent and emergency care. This will include:

1. Co-ordination, planning and support for high risk or vulnerable people - and their carers - who are more likely to need urgent or emergency care; and
2. Advice and signposting for people, family members and/or their carers who want or need urgent support or treatment.

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 13 The Welsh Government must ensure equitable provision of services for carers across Wales, including respite services. As a starting point, it must ensure that a baseline range of support services for carers, based on eligibility criteria, is provided by all Local Authorities. The Welsh Government must introduce a

mechanism to monitor delivery of this support. It should report back on progress within 6 months.

Response - Accept

Through the population needs assessments, local authorities and local health boards are about to jointly evidence needs for care and / or support in their area and use that evidence to provide or arrange services and support to meet those needs. At the individual level the national eligibility criteria set out in the 2014 Act provides for a consistent approach to meeting the care and support needs of all individuals in Wales, including carers. Central to this approach is the spirit of co-production, working with the individual, carer and family to understand their needs, capacity and resources and the outcomes they wish or need to achieve. Needs can be met not only through the provision of services but also through active support and assistance to enable people to meet their own needs.

Every local authority will have a different level and range of provision available from across the public, third and private sectors, making it impossible to ensure an identical level of service provision or provider. However, we are discussing with local authority social services representatives how greater consistency can be achieved and reported on including by building upon existing mechanisms such as reports provided to the Regional Partnership Boards. This would engage all of the partners who are involved in supporting carers, not just local authorities.

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 14 The Welsh Government must publish information on expenditure by local authorities on respite services. This should cover each financial year since the government's investment of £3 million of recurring funding began in 2017-18.

Response - Reject

Health and social care overall is a priority for us and will continue to be so, with figures from HM Treasury showing we are investing 11 per cent, or almost £300 more per person in health and social care combined, than in England.

The overall budget for health and social care in Wales is just over £9 billion per annum and with the mainstreaming of carers rights under the 2014 Act, all carers have and can expect to access services provided by local authorities and health boards, as can an individual with care and support needs. This includes access to respite provision where appropriate.

As was raised in my evidence to the Committee, and in a detailed discussion of the Carers MAG in October 2018, there is considerable debate about what respite now comprises, as it moves away from the "traditional" model of overnight care in for example a care home for the individual with care needs, or an overnight sitting service, which enables their carer a night's uninterrupted sleep. We also know that individuals who access direct payments can use this mechanism to access and purchase forms of respite, which may take many different forms.

In the absence at present of an agreed definition and a consistent data source we cannot accept this recommendation to publish a national data set. Our focus in this area will be on working with partners to understand the value of different respite models in terms of outcomes for carers.

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 15 The Welsh Government must ensure that the impact of its £3 million recurring investment for respite services is evaluated. This work must identify the quality and quantity of the services provided, as well as capturing information about gaps in provision.

Response - Accept in principle

As part of the right for carers to have their need for support assessed and a right for eligible needs to be met, this can include an assessed and eligible need for respite care. However, it is important that this is delivered through a person-centred approach. We do not support a universal provision of one particular type of support – that would not be based on the assessment of need and tailored to the individual.

The Carers MAG held a detailed discussion in October 2018 about the different forms of respite provision and feedback from carers, including discussion of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales Rethinking Respite report. It is clear from a range of sources that many carers, including young carers, wish to have respite in the form of family breaks / holidays. As a consequence of these discussions I met with the Chief Executive of Shared Care Scotland to hear more about their Short Breaks Fund and Respite Schemes. We will also be taking part in and co-funding a bi-lateral conference between Wales and Scotland in May of this year, to enable academics, officials and other key bodies to exchange ideas and learning.

The number of adults with a care and support plan who received services including respite care and recreational, leisure and lifelong learning opportunities during the year is currently collected through the Adults receiving care and support data collection (this would include carers though they cannot be specifically identified within the data currently collected). Figures for 2016-17 onwards have been published annually. We will continue to collect relevant data and information, to inform us about the ongoing need for carers' respite, and the impact for the individual.

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 16 The Welsh Government should ensure that a minimum standard of advice and support is provided across Wales to those carers wishing to make use of Direct Payments. This should form part of a baseline range of support services on offer to carers.

Response - Accept

All conversations with carers, as part of a carers' needs assessment must include the offer of direct payments to meet eligible needs. Direct payments can be used to

meet any identified eligible need and individuals can choose to meet their eligible needs partially through a direct payment, whilst the remainder is managed and arranged by their local authority.

Our code of practice specifically requires that appropriate, accessible information and support is available to everyone. That support must be available when people are making the initial decision about whether direct payments could benefit them as well as throughout the period they continue to receive a direct payment. Local authorities commission external support or provide this service in-house.

Working with direct payment recipients, third sector partners, local authorities and Social Care Wales, we have developed a dedicated on-line presence and published a range of resources to promote and support the use of direct payments. It is a comprehensive resource aimed at both practitioners and direct payments recipients, cover the basic information they need to know, and signposting to more detailed advice where needed. <https://socialcare.wales/service-improvement/direct-payments-a-guide>

Financial implications. None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 17 The Welsh Government must ensure that all young and young adult carers are able to access the support and services they need. In doing so, it must address the specific concerns raised by young carers in evidence to this committee. It must ensure that the support and services for young and young adult carers are person-centred, age-appropriate and flexible to meet their specific needs. There must also be a strong connection between schools and carers' services. The Welsh Government must clearly set out how it will achieve this, and must report back on progress within 6 months.

Response - Accept

Under the 2014 Act there is no difference between the rights of an adult carer or a child carer and as part of all local authorities' duties in the 2014 Act, it is crucial to ensure that carers of all ages are supported in their caring role and that they are supported in their own life outside caring. If the carer is a child, the assessment must have regard to his or her developmental needs and the extent to which it is appropriate for the child to provide the care.

The Population Needs assessments provide the data on which regional partnership boards and partners should be designing services for carers, as well as seeking their input. This should include young carers. Recognition of the needs of young carers and how to support them must be embedded across services and support provided by local authorities, health boards and others.

We know that the majority of local authority young carers' services are commissioned from the third sector, delivered by organisations such as Barnardo's, Action for Children and Carers Trust Wales. They offer a level of expertise and knowledge around the needs of young people in general, but also most critically the affect that the caring role can have on an individual child. It isn't just young carers services that need to be appropriately designed and funded, which is why we funded

Carers Trust Wales, in 2018-19, to develop a new Good Practice for Commissioners guide. Launched in autumn 2019, its purpose is to assist a wide range of different commissioning organisations, including local authorities, to better understand the needs of carers.

The particular issues and experiences of young carers, and young adult carers, will be part of the work and considerations of the Carers MAG and our new Engagement and Accountability Group as we develop our new carers' national plan. These groups will be considering the evidence submitted to this committee including these recommendations.

We clearly recognise the need for a strong connection between schools and their local young carers' services so that young carers are fully supported. As part of this, we are aware that some schools have identified a lead for young carers to oversee the support young carers receive and signpost to young carers services but we recognise this can be applied more consistently. This work is being further developed in schools and supported by Regional education consortia leads for equity and wellbeing.

Financial implications - None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 18 The Welsh Government should strengthen the existing Code of Practice for Local Authorities about what is considered to be an "appropriate" level of care for a young carer to ensure that the position in Wales is at least equal to that in England and Scotland

Response - Accept

There is no difference or disadvantage for young carers in our 2014 Act. Our Codes of Practice are clear about the assessment process as well as meeting eligible needs, with clear information in particular around the process and practice, considerations that need to be followed when undertaking a needs assessment of a young person who may have care and support needs, or a young carer who may have their own care and support needs.

The assessment process starts with the individual carer, whatever age they are, in order to understand their own strengths and capabilities, what matters to them, and how their family, friends and local community play a part in their life, to help them reach their personal goals and well-being. A young carer's needs assessment will not judge the way they are looking after the cared-for person (unless their safety, or the person they are caring for is at risk), nor must it assume a carer will want to continue in their caring role.

The purpose of a carers' needs assessment is to work with the individual, carer and family and other relevant individuals to understand their needs, capacity, resources and outcomes they want to achieve, then to identify how they can best be supported to achieve them. It is not about making any value judgements on what a young carer or adult carer provides for the individual with care needs, but to consider their needs holistically.

Financial implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 19 The Welsh Government must update and strengthen existing guidance for schools about identifying and supporting young carers, to ensure awareness throughout all schools of the demands on young carers. It should encourage and create opportunities for the sharing of best practice of support services for young carers within schools.

Response – Accept

We recognise the importance of supporting schools to identify young carers and to provide appropriate support to meet their needs in terms of educational attainment, emotional health and learner well-being. The development of our new Curriculum for Wales which contains a much stronger focus on well-being, and on creating ambitious and capable learners, has the potential to address some of the barriers experienced by young carers.

To help young carers we introduced a practical toolkit to help schools support them. Carers Trust Wales produced two guides – ‘Supporting Young Carers in Schools: Guide and toolkit’, and “Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Step-by-step Guide for Leaders, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff”. These were written in association with teachers and school staff to help make the identification and support of young carers in schools as easy as possible. They also developed a toolkit aimed at ‘Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities who are in further education.’

We recognise the importance of supporting schools to identify young carers, and provide appropriate support to meet their needs in terms of educational attainment, emotional health and well-being. In 2019-20 we are providing funding to Carers Trust Wales for a suite of training, resources and guidance to support young carers and their teachers. These resources will be available for use by schools in summer 2020.

Financial implications - None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 20 We believe that the young and young adult carers’ ID card scheme should be a national scheme, delivered by all local authorities with appropriate support from the Welsh Government and accessible to all young and young adult carers. The Welsh Government should ensure this is achieved as a matter of priority. It should report back on progress within 6 months.

Response - Accept

We want a national scheme to be in place so that all young carers aged up to 18 can benefit, wherever they live.

We are working with local authorities and local health boards using a phased approach to national coverage of an ID card scheme over the next two financial years. This first stage of the phased roll out which will start this financial year will involve up to 7 local authorities acting as ‘Early Adopters’ to trial and evaluate different potential components of a national scheme. Alongside these Early Adopter

local authorities there will be a cluster approach where local authorities of similar locality, urbanisation and demographics can group together. The exact date of commencement of the full national scheme depends on the outcome of this testing stage with early adopter authorities, but our aim is to have a full national scheme in place for 2022.

Throughout this development and testing phase we are continuing to fund Carers Trust Wales, who have worked with national and regional GP, pharmacy and education bodies, to raise public service professionals' understanding of the needs of carers. This will continue as the scheme is rolled out, so that the professionals coming into contact with the cards, know what they mean and how to respond appropriately to the young carer.

Financial implications - None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 21 The Welsh Government needs to ensure the standardisation of information, advice and assistance for carers across local authorities and local health boards. This must include bilingual provision of these services. As part of this, the Welsh Government should convene representatives from local government, health boards and the third sector with the aim of developing an approach that will secure these improvements for the service user. We ask the Deputy Minister to report back to us on progress within 6 months.

Response - Accept

Improvement in public services is always possible and we agree that this applies to the conversation between a carer, and a local authority or health provider, when seeking information, advice and assistance (IAA). Our Carers MAG has representation from statutory bodies, the health boards and carers organisations and will be consulting more widely as part of the national plan development process. As part of their discussions they have been considering how to help individuals identify as carers, which is critical before ensuring they know where and how to access IAA.

Local authorities have a clear duty in the 2014 Act under the key principles of the 2014 Act and the statutory Code of Practice (Part 2 - General Functions). Local authorities' IAA services must publicise information about how the care and support system operates in the local authority area; the types of care and support available; how to access the care and support that is available; and how to raise concerns about the well-being of a person who appears to have needs for care and support.

IAA is intended to focus on prevention and early intervention and deliver a wider range of community-based services through partnerships and multi-agency working. The introduction of IAA has been a significant change for local authorities and the approach is still embedding. IAA approaches therefore vary across local authorities and have recently been subject of scrutiny by the Welsh Audit Office (WAO). Their Front Door to Adult Social Care report will be a key document in helping to drive improvement in the quality of IAA.

Welsh language standards for local authorities, who have a duty to provide IAA, were made in 2016. We expect all statutory bodies to meet the requirements set for them under Regulations.

Financial implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 22 The Welsh Government needs to work with local authorities to better promote the availability of information, advice and assistance for carers, including clear details of how to access it. This should be done as part of the publicity campaign referred to in Recommendation 4.

Response – Accept

Local authorities are represented via the Association of Directors of Social Services, on our Carers MAG and will therefore be involved in discussions as to the content of our new national plan. This will include considering how best to target information about carers access to their rights under the 2014 Act.

Not all IAA is provided by a local authority, and a key source of information about such preventative and wellbeing activities is the DEWIS Cymru website. More organisations are registering their activities all the time and making DEWIS a key resource for everyone. We are working with local government, health and third sector partners to further develop and enhance this resource as part of a single national directory of services.

Financial implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 23 The Welsh Government needs to ensure that staff providing information, advice and assistance as part of each local authority's central advice and information point have up-to-date information about rights and services for carers under the Act, and that refresher training will be provided where necessary. We note the work being undertaken by Social Care Wales, the Welsh Government and local authorities to develop a competency framework to support the development of information, advice and assistance workers. We ask that the Deputy Minister updates us on progress with this project.

Response – Accept

We know not every local authority uses a model of a single point of access for people to obtain IAA, as illustrated by the WAO's Front Door to Adult Social care report. However, we expect all local authorities to have in place and fund an appropriate up to date employee strategy and training offer for their staff, wherever they work.

In 2019 we commissioned Social Care Wales to work with local authorities to develop a new competency framework, to support the knowledge, skills and competencies required by local authorities for their information, advice and assistance (IAA) workers. They are expecting to complete and launch the new competency framework in early 2020.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 24 The Welsh Government must ensure that the independent evaluation of the Act considers whether the funding for carers' services has been sufficient to deliver the policy intentions of the Act. It must also consider the funding that will be necessary in the longer term to deliver the rights and services promised by the Act

Response – Accept in principle

The formal evaluation of the 2014 Act is looking at two major areas – the implementation of the Act and the impact of the Act. The primary focus of the evaluation is on the difference that the 2014 Act has made to people in need of care and support, and carers in need of support, so the majority of the evaluation will be focussed on these areas. We will not be looking at funding of services specifically, as part of the formal evaluation which commenced in November 2018, and which will run for three years.

The Carers MAG is the key forum where issues of funding can be explored in more depth, and as part of our considerations as we develop the new national plan. It may advise a change to the existing evaluation of the Act but there may be other options such as commissioning a more bespoke piece of research.

We are committed through our national strategy, Prosperity for All, to developing innovative funding models to ensure additional funding is available for social care in the longer term to help meet the demands it will face. This is part of our wider consideration of alternative ways of funding public services in Wales.

To take this work forward an Inter-Ministerial Group on Paying for Social Care has been established to provide the policy input into the consideration over how such potential additional funds may be raised and distributed, and the priority areas of social care where any funding raised in this way would be most effectively invested. The group's work will be informed by the findings of research we have recently commissioned to analyse the potential options to utilise any additional funding that may be raised.

Funding implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets. Assessment of potential future funding implications in relation to changes in government policy which might impact government budgets and statutory bodies or other organisations, will be considered as part of the ongoing development of carers policy, which we are taking forward in co-production with stakeholders

Recommendation 25 The statutory sector is heavily dependent on the third sector for delivery of vital services to carers. That dependency needs to be reflected in both the provision of adequate funding for the third sector, and the meaningful involvement of the sector in planning and decision-making around that funding. We believe this matter should be explored by the Ministerial Advisory Group. We ask the Deputy Minister to provide us with an update on this work within 6 months

Response - Accept

An element of the terms of reference when establishing the Carers MAG and identifying members, was to consider existing and future funding streams across all sectors. The third sector plays a vital role in delivery and it is most important that we consider how levels of funding and our policy and operational decisions can affect that wider picture. We will include discussion of this recommendation on a future Carers MAG agenda in 2020.

Co-production runs throughout the 2014 Act. All partners involved in the development and delivery of social care services are expected to co-produce services to bring about the changes envisaged in the 2014 Act.

At an organisational level, Welsh Government is already seeing some good examples of co-production through the RPBs' delivery of the Integrated Care Fund (ICF). Service users and carers are key partners in the work for the RPBs and we expect RPBs to proactively engage with people and support them to inform the shape of services in the region. It is important that citizen engagement occurs at a range of different levels and not just around the RPB table with a few 'expert citizens.'

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 26 There is a need for a long-term, sustainable and streamlined funding arrangement for third sector organisations delivering essential services to carers under the Act. We believe that funding should be provided on a three-yearly basis as a minimum. The Welsh Government must move towards this as a matter of priority.

Response – Accept in principle

Our existing Third Sector Sustainable Social Services (SSS) grant scheme has been very successfully operating on a three year cycle, from 2016 and was extended by a year so now ends 31 March 2020. It has provided funding to a diverse range of organisations, including carers' organisations to deliver activity that supports the implementation and embedding of the key principles of the 2014 Act. This has included raising awareness of carers' rights under the 2014 Act.

Following on from our current successful scheme we opened a new Third Sector SSS grant scheme for applications, during summer 2019. Bidding organisations were notified of the outcome before end of 2019. The next three year scheme, which will contain three carer-specific projects, will commence from 01 April 2020.

Austerity over the past 10 years has had a significant negative long term impact on our ability to plan and fund multiyear grants or programmes, however, we have consistently sought to protect health and social care spending.

Looking ahead at our ability to plan for the longer term, a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was announced by HM Treasury at the end of August 2019. At the time of writing, this full multi-year Spending Review is now due to take place later this year.

At present, the UK Government has delivered a Spending Round for one-year only. We recognise and are therefore sympathetic to calls from our public sector partners for budgeting over a longer period, in order to support forward financial planning. It is always our ambition to provide long-term clarity over budgets, whenever possible, however, this must be balanced with realistic and sensible planning assumptions. The UK Government's austerity agenda coupled with the uncertainty regarding Brexit constrains our ability to do this.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 27 - The Welsh Government should provide a comprehensive and accessible list of available funding sources for support for carers to be delivered by the third sector. This should be done as soon as practicable.

Response – Accept

A mapping exercise was undertaken by officials in 2018 and details of the sources of funding available under each Regional Partnership Board footprint and where these entered the system, were issued in September 2018. This exercise did not include all funding to third sector bodies who provide services relating to carers, either nationally or locally. However we will look to expand on this exercise to provide a fuller account of funding streams and we are looking into how we can improve the accessibility of Welsh Government grants, including raising awareness, particularly to the third sector.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 28 The Welsh Government should consider making available a single funding stream for carers' services. This should replace the current system of individual grants. It should be accompanied by a monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure it is delivering value for money

Response – Reject

The vast majority of funding we provide to local government for social care, including carers, is delivered through the un-hypothecated local government settlement.

The £4.5 billion settlement is considered by local authorities alongside other sources of income such as specific grants and locally-raised income from council tax, fees, sales and charges and is spent according to local needs and priorities.

Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs) are used to distribute settlement funding to local authorities with nearly 30% of total SSA being distributed on the social care part of the formula.

Local authorities, as autonomous and democratically accountable bodies, are statutorily responsible for managing their financial affairs.

We believe that local authorities are best placed to judge the local needs of their communities and to fund services accordingly. The funding system we have in place

gives them the flexibility to make those decisions. We offer considerable flexibility to authorities to exercise autonomy and responsibility in managing their finances.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 29 The Welsh Government must take a stronger lead on a national approach to data collection on carers to ensure that appropriate and meaningful data is collected across all sectors in a coordinated and consistent way. We believe this should be a function of the Ministerial Advisory Group, which should develop national guidelines to determine what data needs to be collected, how it should be collected and how it will be used following collection. The data should be published, and should be used to inform future service and financial planning. We believe that the Performance and Improvement Framework is an important part of this work, and we ask that the Deputy Minister provides us with an update on progress.

Response - Accept

We recognise the importance of having effective and meaningful information and statistics and have therefore spent considerable time on 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 development of the new national action plan, which is being led by the Carers MAG, will be considering a wide range of elements that can inform the content of the future plan, including existing data, what future data will be collected, as well as research evidence such as the Measuring the Mountain project, which published its Phase 1 report in summer 2019. Bringing together an overview of the data and material that can inform how we work across sectors to improve the information, advice and support for individual carers.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 30 We endorse the recommendation from Estyn in its report of May 2019 that the Welsh Government should produce reliable, nationally collected data to help identify young carer.

Response - Accept

We welcomed Estyn's Thematic review report "Provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units across Wales". We remain committed to collecting data, which in due course will provide valuable information to enable us to better address the educational and support needs of young carers.

Some data on assessments for young carers is currently collected and published annually. From April 2020 onwards, the quantitative data component of the Performance and Improvement Framework has a section on young carers which includes information on IAA and assessments.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 31 - The Welsh Government must provide an update on progress of implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System within 6 months

Response – Accept

There are currently 14 organisations that have gone live on WCCIS, with 18 signed contracts in place. There are approximately 11,500 users using WCCIS across Wales. Wrexham went live in November 2019. Hywel Dda University Health Board have committed to a launch for Community Nursing and for integrated Social Care teams within the Ceredigion Authority area in December. Swansea Bay University Health Board are currently finalising a Full Business Case for the implementation of WCCIS.

Welsh Government has recently committed additional funding to support the national programme, regional deployment by Local Government, and NHS implementation of WCCIS functionality. This funding is being made from the Digital Priorities Investment Fund and the Integrated Care Fund, as part of additional A Healthier Wales funding.

The Welsh Audit Office (WAO) is currently reviewing WCCIS and its report is expected in mid-2020. The Welsh Government welcomes the review and is working with the WAO to identify areas within the WCCIS programme that can be supported to further accelerate and assure roll-out.

Financial implications – none. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.