



Number: WG53912

National Strategy for Unpaid Carers 2026

Consultation Document

Date of issue: 02 February 2026

Action required: Responses by 13 April 2026

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Overview

The Welsh Government is publishing a draft **National Strategy for Unpaid Carers** for public consultation. This strategy will replace the previous [Strategy for Unpaid Carers](#) published in 2021.

The new strategy sets out the Welsh Government's key priorities and actions to build on progress achieved under the previous plan. It reflects extensive engagement with key stakeholders carried out during 2025.

How to respond

Please respond by completing the [online form](#) or completing this questionnaire and sending it to:

Email: UnpaidCarersPolicy@gov.wales

If you intend to respond in writing, please send completed forms to:

Unpaid Carers Policy Team

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Further information and related documents

This document is also available in [Welsh](#)

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

An Easy Read, BSL, and a Youth Friendly summary are also available.

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UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for Welsh Government consultations and for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation.

Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. The lawful basis for processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task; that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government. (Art 6(1)(e))

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. In the case of joint consultations this may also include other public authorities. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation and that the Welsh Government may be under a legal obligation to disclose some information.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

Your rights

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the UK GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ
e-mail: dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113
Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

Introduction

This consultation seeks your views on the draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers.

Background

Welsh Government published a [National Strategy for Unpaid Carers](#) in 2021, followed by annual delivery plans setting out the objectives for that year. We have also published annual reports setting out what was achieved. These reports are available here: [Strategy for unpaid carers | GOV.WALES](#)

The draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers was co-produced by the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and with the support of its dedicated Steering Group. This group comprises unpaid carers, Carers Wales, Carers Trust Wales and representatives of local health boards and local authorities.

During the summer of 2025, we spoke to a wide range of unpaid carers and relevant organisations. This led to the identification of the key priority areas, and actions that people told us would be most likely to bring about positive change.

We are very grateful to all those professionals who met with us and provided written information. We are particularly grateful to all the unpaid carers who were able to make the time to speak with us.

We spoke to:

- Group of carers arranged by Carers Wales (Abergavenny)
- Group of carers from All Wales People First
- Group of carers from Carers Outreach Bangor
- Group of carers from Carers Trust North Wales
- Group of carers from Carers Trust West Wales
- Group of carers from Credu (Welshpool)
- Group of carers from Mencap Ynys Mon
- Group of carers from Swansea Carers Centre
- Group of unpaid carer representatives on Regional Partnership Boards
- Group of working carers
- Group of young carers at Eisteddfod
- Group of young carers at Wales Young Carers Festival

We also met and/or received written contributions from following organisations:

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Adferiad | Mencap |
| Age Cymru | Mind Cymru |
| All Wales Forum | MS Cymru |
| All Wales People First | Older People's Commissioner |
| Alzheimer's Society | Learning Disability Wales |
| British Deaf Association | Llais |
| Care Inspectorate Wales | Local authority representatives |
| Carers Officers Learning and Improvement Network (COLIN) | Parkinson's Association |
| Carers Trust Wales | Race Equality First |
| Carers Wales | SNAP Cymru |
| Children's Commissioner | Stonewall |
| Chinese In Wales Association | Travelling Ahead |
| Credu | Unison and Wales TUC |
| Dementia Carers Count | Women Connect First |
| Downs Syndrome Association | Young Carers Advisory Board |
| Gypsy Travellers Wales | Young Carers Professional Network |
| Health board representatives | |

Priority areas

As a result of engagement with unpaid carers and other stakeholders in the sector, we identified the following eight key priority areas to reflect what carers have told us is most important.

These are:

The draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers sets out eight key priority areas to support unpaid carers in Wales:

1. **Recognition and awareness:** Increase public and professional recognition of unpaid carers through accessible information, targeted outreach to Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and other marginalised groups, and e-learning for health, social care, and education staff.
2. **Access to services:** Ensure unpaid carers understand their rights and, where appropriate, receive timely, quality assessments of their needs and support plans.
3. **Young carers:** Promote recognition and support for young carers within education and community settings, including access to identity cards. Regular assessments to ensure they are not taking on too much. Promotion of improved mental health and educational experience and outcomes.
4. **Financial hardship:** Provide unpaid carers with information to maximise income and promote benefit uptake.
5. **Paid employment:** Support for unpaid carers to remain, in or return to, paid employment via promotion of employment rights, carer-friendly workplaces and inclusive employment pathways for carers.
6. **Replacement care (respite) and breaks from caring:** Improve access to suitable respite options, including short breaks, working with local authorities to identify gaps and co-produce improvements with unpaid carers.
7. **Mental health and wellbeing:** Enhance carers' mental health support through local review of support groups, carer-informed generic services, and increased professional awareness.
8. **Carers and care planning:** Recognise unpaid carers as partners with local authorities and health boards in the assessment, care planning, and hospital discharge for those they care for.

Assessment of impact of the National Strategy for Unpaid Carers

We have a duty to consider the impact of the new strategy on the people of Wales. It is vital we consider the impact of what we do in relation to children's rights, the Welsh Language and on people with protected characteristics as defined by the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#).

The Equality Act 2010 requires Welsh public authorities to have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. Through the consultation on the National Strategy for Unpaid Carers, we sought to understand how people with different protected characteristics may require specific forms of support, so that the design and delivery of the strategy reflects and responds to their needs.

Over summer 2025, we heard from carers with a wide range of experiences. This included young carers, older carers, carers from ethnic minority communities and carers with sensory and learning disabilities. They asked us to consider barriers they experienced in accessing advice and information and in the recognition of them as unpaid carers. Their insight has contributed toward actions within the draft strategy to improve access and recognition and to ensure support is culturally informed.

We have also used the information in our draft impact assessments to consider both the positive and negative effects of the strategy on unpaid carers in Wales. These are working drafts and will be developed further with your consultation responses. Impact assessments will be published alongside the final strategy.

Equality Impact Assessment

The new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers is expected to have positive equality impacts across Wales. Developed in line with the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan 2025–2029, it aims to reduce inequality, improve access to support and embed a rights-based approach. The strategy responds to what unpaid carers and stakeholders told us, including the experiences of young carers, older carers, carers supporting people with complex needs, and carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. It also considers the needs of underserved groups such as disabled and neurodivergent carers, people with sensory loss, BSL users, migrants and refugees, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and those living in rural or low-income households.

Unpaid carers are disproportionately likely to be female and women as more likely to reduce their working hours or give up employment to provide care, with consequent impact on career progression and household income.

The eight priorities set out in the strategy, improving recognition, widening access to information and assessments, supporting financial security, increasing employment opportunities and improving access to respite, are designed to reduce long-standing inequalities in how carers experience services.

We have not identified any negative equality impacts. The main risks relate to variation in implementation across Wales, particularly if access to information, assessments, training uptake or respite options remain inconsistent. These risks can be reduced through clear national guidance, improved identification of carers, wider carer-awareness training, and continued co-production with unpaid carers.

The strategy also recognises potential barriers that may persist, including digital exclusion, limited connectivity in rural areas, and a lack of translated or accessible formats for carers who do not speak English or Welsh.

Children's Rights Impact Assessment

Young Carers helped us develop a draft Children's Rights Impact Assessment through engagement sessions, representation on the Ministerial Advisory Group and feedback gathered across Wales, highlighting issues such as recognition in schools, emotional pressure, mental health support and financial hardship.

The assessment identifies key risks including identification by services, access to respite, cultural and linguistic barriers and the potential for children to take on inappropriate caring roles. These risks are relevant to the rights of children as defined by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) .

In response, the strategy sets out actions with the intention of strengthening recognition and support for young carers. Actions in the strategy aim to ensure young carers are recognised, protected and supported; while monitoring and future delivery plans will seek to address implementation risks and promote more consistent support across Wales.

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

The draft strategy has been prepared in the context of the Welsh language standards and the More Than Just Words strategic framework. When people are receiving or trying to access care, it is usually when they are at their most vulnerable, so being confident in their own language is important. Wales is a bilingual country where the Welsh language has official status. Legally binding Welsh language standards have been placed on health and social care bodies to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English. These standards complement More Than Just Words which is our plan to strengthen Welsh language services in health and social care. At the core of More Than Just Words is the principle of 'the Active offer' which places a responsibility on health and social care providers to offer services in Welsh, rather than the patient / service user to have to request them. Our vision for More Than Just Words is for Cymraeg to belong and be embedded in health and social care services across Wales so that individuals receive care that meet their language needs, leading to better outcomes, without having to ask for it.

The draft Welsh Language Impact Assessment indicates the new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers is likely to have a positive impact on Welsh speaking carers by

strengthening access to bilingual information, services and support. The strategy aligns with key legislation and frameworks such as the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, Cymraeg 2050, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the More Than Just Words framework, helping to embed the Active Offer and ensure carers receive support in the language they prefer.

We have not identified any negative impacts for the Welsh Language as a result of this strategy and we have considered potential risks to ensure they will be appropriately managed through implementation. Across its eight priority areas, the strategy reinforces early identification of carers' language needs in line with the requirements of the Active Offer with delivery partners, in areas such as mental health, respite, financial guidance, employment advice and care planning. It is expected to strengthen the availability of access to information and advice and support in Welsh for young carers in Welsh medium education. While risks remain around regional variation and the delivery capacity of those who work with unpaid carers, these can be mitigated through delivery partners' responsibilities to uphold Welsh Language Standards and promote the Active Offer. The responses gathered during this consultation will help us identify any further impacts and will inform the final strategy.

Responding to the consultation

Guidance

The questions below relate to the draft strategy and impact assessment information provided.

Section One - The draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers is a separate document available with this consultation document and will inform your responses to the questions in this section.

Section Two - Information on our impact assessments is replicated below and will inform your responses to the questions in this section.

Final Question – This is an opportunity for you to tell us anything that you feel has not been covered in the previous questions.

Please note, you are not required to answer all the questions.

Personal information

Confidentiality

Responses to consultations may be made public on the internet or in a report.

If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

Your name

Your organisation (if applicable)

Contact details and email address

Please indicate your interest in the strategy:

- Unpaid carer
- Member of the public (not an unpaid carer)
- Professional responding as an individual
- Organisational response
- Prefer not to say

Which version of the consultation document have you looked at? Please tick all that apply.

- Draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers
- Draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers (British Sign Language version)
- Draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers (Easy Read version)
- Draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers (Youth Summary)

Section 1

The draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers sets out eight key priority areas to support unpaid carers in Wales;

1. **Recognition and awareness:** Increase public and professional recognition of unpaid carers through accessible information, targeted outreach to Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and other marginalised groups, and e-learning for health, social care, and education staff.
2. **Access to services:** Ensure unpaid carers understand their rights and, where appropriate, receive timely, quality assessments of their needs and support plans.
3. **Young carers:** Promote recognition and support for young carers within education and community settings, including access to identity cards. Regular assessments to ensure they are not taking on too much. Promotion of improved mental health and educational experience and outcomes.
4. **Financial hardship:** Provide unpaid carers with information to maximise income and promote benefit uptake.
5. **Paid employment:** Support for unpaid carers to remain, in or return to, paid employment via promotion of employment rights, carer-friendly workplaces and inclusive employment pathways for carers.
6. **Replacement care (respite) and breaks from caring:** Improve access to suitable respite options, including short breaks, working with local authorities to identify gaps and co-produce improvements with unpaid carers.
7. **Mental health and wellbeing:** Enhance carers' mental health support through local review of support groups, carer-informed generic services, and increased professional awareness.
8. **Carers and care planning:** Recognise unpaid carers as partners with local authorities and health boards in the assessment, care planning, and hospital discharge for those they care for.

Consultation Questions

Question 1: Do you agree the eight priorities outlined in the draft strategy at page 1 are the right priorities?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/ unsure

Question 2: Is there anything you would like to share about any of the priorities listed above? You can comment on as many or as few as you wish.

| | Priority area | Comments/ Feedback: |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Recognition and awareness | |
| 2. | Access to services | |
| 3. | Young carers | |
| 4. | Financial hardship | |
| 5. | Paid employment | |
| 6. | Replacement care (respite) and breaks from caring | |
| 7. | Mental health and wellbeing | |
| 8. | Carers and care planning | |

Question 3: Do you have any further comments, or are there any other priorities you believe should be included in the strategy?

Question 4: There are actions under each priority area. These are listed at P7-23 of the draft strategy document. Is there anything you'd like to say about any of these actions? **You can comment on as many or as few as you wish.**

| | Priority area | Comments/ Feedback: |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Recognition and awareness | |
| 2. | Access to services | |
| 3. | Young carers | |
| 4. | Financial hardship | |
| 5. | Paid employment | |
| 6. | Replacement care (respite) and breaks from caring | |
| 7. | Mental health and wellbeing | |
| 8. | Carers and care planning | |

Question 5: Do you have any further comments, or are there any other actions you believe should be included in the strategy?

Question 6: Do you have any comment on how we can ensure the strategy continues to reflect the experience and priorities of unpaid carers?

Question 7: Do you think more could be done to improve partnership working across organisations involved in supporting unpaid carers?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes, what more do you think could be done?

Section 2

Equality Impact Assessment

The new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers is expected to have positive equality impacts across Wales. Developed in line with the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan 2025–2029, it aims to reduce inequality, improve access to support and embed a rights-based approach. The strategy responds to what unpaid carers and stakeholders told us, including the experiences of young carers, older carers, carers supporting people with complex needs, and carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. It also considers the needs of underserved groups such as disabled and neurodivergent carers, people with sensory loss, BSL users, migrants and refugees, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and those living in rural or low-income households.

Unpaid carers are disproportionately likely to be female and women as more likely to reduce their working hours or give up employment to provide care, with consequent impact on career progression and household income.

The eight priorities set out in the strategy, improving recognition, widening access to information and assessments, supporting financial security, increasing employment opportunities and improving access to respite, are designed to reduce long-standing inequalities in how carers experience services.

We have not identified any negative equality impacts. The main risks relate to variation in implementation across Wales, particularly if access to information, assessments, training uptake or respite options remain inconsistent. These risks can be reduced through clear national guidance, improved identification of carers, wider carer-awareness training, and continued co-production with unpaid carers.

The strategy also recognises potential barriers that may persist, including digital exclusion, limited connectivity in rural areas, and a lack of translated or accessible formats for carers who do not speak English or Welsh.

Question 8: Having read the draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers, what do you think might be the positive impacts on unpaid carers with protected characteristics as covered by the Equalities Act 2010.

Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Question 9: What challenges or risks to unpaid carers with protected characteristics do you think we should consider more fully when producing the final version of the National Strategy for Unpaid carers?

Children's Rights Impact Assessment

Young Carers helped us develop a draft Children's Rights Impact Assessment through engagement sessions, representation on the Ministerial Advisory Group and feedback gathered across Wales, highlighting issues such as recognition in schools, emotional pressure, mental health support and financial hardship.

The assessment identifies key risks including identification by services, access to respite, cultural and linguistic barriers and the potential for children to take on inappropriate caring roles. These risks are relevant to the rights of children as defined by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) .

In response, the strategy sets out actions with the intention of strengthening recognition and support for young carers. Actions in the strategy aim to ensure young carers are recognised, protected and supported; while monitoring and future delivery plans will seek to address implementation risks and promote more consistent support across Wales.

Question 10: Having read the draft Strategy for Unpaid Carers, what do you think might be the positive impacts on young carers and their rights under the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Question11: What challenges or risks to young carers and their rights under the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child do you think we should consider more fully when producing the final version of the National Strategy for Unpaid carers?

Welsh Language Impact Assessment

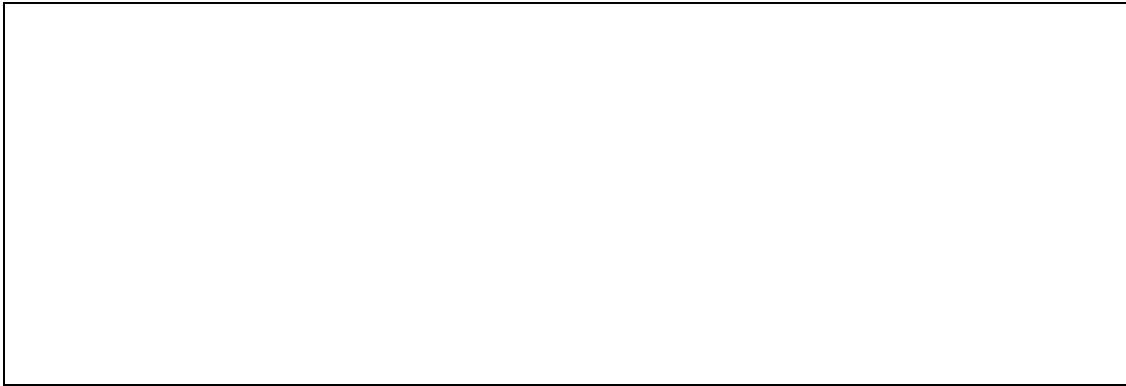
The draft strategy has been prepared in the context of the Welsh language standards and the More Than Just Words strategic framework. When people are receiving or trying to access care, it is usually when they are at their most vulnerable, so being confident in their own language is important. Wales is a bilingual country where the Welsh language has official status. Legally binding Welsh language standards have been placed on health and social care bodies to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English. These standards complement More Than Just Words which is our plan to strengthen Welsh language services in health and social care. At the core of More Than Just Words is the principle of 'the Active offer' which places a responsibility on health and social care providers to offer services in Welsh, rather than the patient / service user to have to request them. Our vision for More Than Just Words is for Cymraeg to belong and be embedded in health and social care services across Wales so that individuals receive care that meet their language needs, leading to better outcomes, without having to ask for it.

The draft Welsh Language Impact Assessment indicates the new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers is likely to have a positive impact on Welsh speaking carers by strengthening access to bilingual information, services and support. The strategy aligns with key legislation and frameworks such as the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, Cymraeg 2050, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the More Than Just Words framework, helping to embed the Active Offer and ensure carers receive support in the language they prefer.

We have not identified any negative impacts for the Welsh Language as a result of this strategy and we have considered potential risks to ensure they will be appropriately managed through implementation. Across its eight priority areas, the strategy reinforces early identification of carers' language needs in line with the

requirements of the Active Offer with delivery partners, in areas such as mental health, respite, financial guidance, employment advice and care planning. It is expected to strengthen the availability of access to information and advice and support in Welsh for young carers in Welsh medium education. While risks remain around regional variation and the delivery capacity of those who work with unpaid carers, these can be mitigated through delivery partners' responsibilities to uphold Welsh Language Standards and promote the Active Offer. The responses gathered during this consultation will help us identify any further impacts and will inform the final strategy.

Question 12: Having read the draft Strategy for Unpaid Carers, what do you think might be the positive impacts on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.



Question 13: What challenges or risks to the Welsh Language do you think we should consider more fully when producing the final version of the National Strategy for Unpaid carers?



Final Question

Question 14: Thinking about this consultation overall, are there any issues that have not been addressed that you think are relevant? If so, please provide details in the space below.



Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this consultation.