



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers minutes: 17 February 2022

Minutes from the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers meeting held on 17 February 2022.

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Attendees

Name	Organisation
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Arwel Ellis Owen	Chair
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Julie Morgan	Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services
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Kim Dolphin	Chair of the COLIN, Monmouthshire Council
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Pennie Muir	Hywel Dda Health Board
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Angela Hughes	Cardiff and Vale Health Board
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Jon Day	Social Care Wales
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Claire Morgan	Carers Wales
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Simon Hatch	Carers Trust Wales
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Angela Hughes	Cardiff and Vale Health Board
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Johanna Davies	West Glamorgan RPB
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Amanda Phillips	Vale of Glamorgan Council
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Dianne Seddon	Bangor University
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Jenny Oliver	Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board
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Junaid Iqbal Public Health Wales

Vanessa Webb Swansea University

Kate Young All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers

Sean O'Neill Children in Wales

Rhiannon Ivens Deputy Director Inclusion and Corporate Business, Welsh Government

Rachel Lewis Head of UCOPRE Branch, Welsh Government

Ben O'Halloran Carers Policy Officer, Welsh Government

Apologies

Name	Organisation
Anna Bird	Hywel Dda Health Board
Valerie Billingham	Older People's Commissioner's Office
Kathy Proudfoo	Vice chair of the COLIN, Bridgend Council
Ffion Johnstone	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

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Introductions, apologies and previous minutes

It was agreed that the previous meeting minute is a correct and fair representation of the views expressed.

Deputy Minister for Social Services

The Deputy Minister thanked members for their contributions to the Unpaid Carers Delivery Plan published in November 2021. With the plan in place, it is important that the MAG has the depth and reach to hit the ambitious targets set out in the document. This group, alongside a refreshed Engagement Group, ensures there is a broad range of engagement with carers and professionals.

The Deputy Minister noted this would be Arwel's last meeting as the independent chair of the group and thanked him for giving up his time and lending his experience to the group through a challenging two years.

Following the Deputy Minister's contribution, members mentioned the growing body of evidence highlighting how the negative financial impact on unpaid carers has increased during the pandemic. Carers Allowance needs to be increased to help mitigate some of these financial issues.

The Deputy Minister responded that Welsh Government does not control carers allowance but continues to lobby the UK Government on this issue.

In addition to the above, it was noted by third sector bodies that there is poor communication between local authorities and unpaid carers especially in relation to the return of support services. The All Wales Forum are still receiving calls from parents carers who cannot return to work because support services are not back in place. Unpaid carers are aware of the pressure on social care at the

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moment and some are reluctant to ask for help because they do not want to put additional pressure on the system. It would be helpful to encourage honest communications from local authorities on what unpaid carers can expect in terms of support in their area over the next 6 months.

Respite Options Paper

A paper was shared with members on how the respite support can be progressed in 2022-23. Members were asked to consider the four options and highlight the option they think would work best.

- Option 1 - allocate all funding to Regional Partnership Boards
- Option 2 - Welsh Government operating as the coordinating body and the process would be similar to the Sustainable Social Services Grant process.
- Option 3 – allocate all funding to third sector body to coordinate fund. This option would involve a call for applications to be the coordinating body. The selected third sector body would be allocated the full £3m funding to coordinate the project. The benefits of this option is a third sector body can take on a role that Welsh Government and Regional Partnership Boards may lack capacity.
- Option 4 - a hybrid approach with a third sector body adopting a coordinating role and WG allocating the bulk of funding to LAs and/or RPBs.

See attached paper 1 for more detail on options.

The following points were made by members.

Option 3

- Option 3 is a tried and tested process in Scotland. The work around

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Respite is another point to consider, this process does not just have to fall on LAs or RPBs but the private sector can be involved.

- Option 3 would provide a clearer demarcation of roles and responsibilities.

Option 4

- From an RPB perspective, it is helpful to have the top down view when creating strategies and programmes, however local nuances can sometimes be missed. It is also hard to achieve parity across the whole region with a top down approach. National third sector bodies working with local authorities and RPBs would work much better as it flips the model around to make this a bottom up process.
- However it was suggested that emphasising a more local model may come at the expense embedding a national approach. Option 4 opens the possibility of communication issues between the various organisations involved in the process.

Combination of Option 3 and 4

- Members did suggest a blend of options 3 and 4 might work best. The roles of LAs and RPBs would need to be clearly defined if this was selected.
- The offer of respite should not be a postcode lottery based on a commissioned provider and their ability to provide. Could this respite offer provide unpaid carers with funding to access the respite they need across county or country borders?

Action: Officials will draft a paper on the most popular option.

Discussion on Carers Register

Officials emphasised this is the beginning of the conversation on this topic and

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asked whether a task and finish group should be set up to take this forward.

Carers Wales is calling for a register of unpaid carers. They feel it would be very helpful and are interested in using GP surgery records to start collecting the data. The majority of unpaid carers are identified in health settings so a register might ensure that this happens consistently.

Using GPs will be critical but schools and pharmacies will need to be involved too. Perhaps a primary care model could be considered.

It is important to note that many unpaid carers are already encouraged to register with their GP but some are sceptical of their names being kept on a database. Communication around what exactly a register would mean to unpaid carers and what it would be used for has to be clear. It needs to be noted that the process of removing carers from the register once they have stopped caring needs to be carefully considered.

Officials have had conversations with colleagues and the Disability Register has not been as successful as planned with the key issue being people do not want to be on a register.

Members agreed that clear communication, correct language use and building trust around the register is vital.

Action: A task and finish group will be set up to work on what a register would look like and whether it would add value.

Update on Carers Engagement group

The Carers Engagement Group has been a success over the past two years. Going forward it would be beneficial for the group to have a less formal structure and be open to engagement on a broader scale. With funding agreed for

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2022-23, officials are working with Carers Trust Wales to draft an Engagement Framework. Conversations are still ongoing around how this framework can be used to engage with young carers.

The plan is to diversify the network with more focus groups and outreach events. How this framework will sit alongside the MAG is also being considered, with unpaid carers possibly sitting on the MAG and members of the group going to Engagement Framework meetings.

Action: The Engagement Framework proposal will be shared at the next MAG meeting.

Next steps with the MAG

No comments were received from MAG members on the terms of reference for the group so it is assumed there is agreement they are still fit for purpose. This group already has a strong membership and a good spread of expertise and coverage.

However attendance is being noted and it has been identified there needs to be an increase in representation from local authorities.

It was suggested that there will need to be education representation on the group going forward. Perhaps a subgroup can be set up to take forward priority four which focuses on supporting unpaid carers in education and employment.

Action: Officials will draft a proposal on a possible subgroup, focussing on priority four, to send to MAG members for comment.

Update on Carers' Charter

Members felt that the draft represented the views of working group members well.

If there is general agreement from the MAG on the charter document, the next steps are to create a summary version, which can be used by younger people. All versions will be designed to ensure they are appealing and accessible. The younger people's version needs to be written carefully so it can be understood by children but also not alienate those people who are closer to being adults.

Some suggested alterations to the document were put to officials. For example, the wording relating to a local authority's responsibility to meet the unpaid carer's eligible needs should be strengthened. What the charter means to an unpaid carers should be made clear. A list of organisations that can help and support unpaid carers should be included in the charter document. Perhaps a clearer separation needs to be made between the Welsh language section of the charter and the section on all other languages. It is important to draw reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Child.

There was agreement among some members that this charter should come with the caveat that is a living document and can be subject to further iterations.

Officials have funding for this work so it can be used to create versions of the document in British Sign Language, Braille and possibly using animations at a later date.

Action: Officials will take the comments received today and create a final document to send to the MAG. This will be done by the end of February with the design being commissioned in March

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Carers Trust South East Wales (CTSEW) request to join the MAG.

All three third sector representatives voiced their concerns about this request to join being approved. Members were against offering CTSEW membership of the group for the following reasons:

- CTSEW is ending its affiliation with Carers Trust on April 1st to establish a new independent organisation. No details of this new organisation's aims, scope of work or strategic mission have been provided on which to base the decision.
- Members were keen to offer membership to national third sector organisations only. (There are currently no regional third sector organisations on the group). As CTSEW are a regional organisation, it does open the door to other regional third sector organisations asking to join which could make the MAG membership unwieldy.

The above points were agreed upon by other members present. Accepting this request without due consideration could upset the structure and cause an imbalance.

It was suggested that the applicant from CTSEW be advised to join Wales Carers Alliance route before being accepted onto the MAG.

Any other business

The launch of the new Citizens Voice Body is an ideal opportunity to increase the voice of carers.

Over 120 carers attended the Carers Summit last week. Feedback was collected

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on topics such as hospital discharge, home adaptations and coproduction. Carers Wales will be producing a report and a video on the information collected at the events.

Members gave their thanks to Arwel for chairing the group over the past two years and Arwel stated it had been a privilege and the work this group has done has been hugely important for the sector.

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