



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING

Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers minutes: 26 January 2021

Minutes from the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers meeting held on 26 January 2021.

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Attendees

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Arwel Ellis Owen

Chair

Vanessa Webb

Swansea University

Marie Davies

Powys THB

Rhian Webber

Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

Bethan Jones Edwards

Denbighshire Council (ADSS)

Esyllt Crozier

Social Care Wales

Simon Hatch

Carers Trust Wales

Claire Morgan

Carers Wales

Elizabeth Flowers

Children's Commissioner's office

Valerie Billingham

Older People's Commissioner's office

Vicki Lloyd

Age Cymru

Sean O'Neill

Children in Wales

Dianne Seddon

Bangor University

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David Hughes

Merthyr LA

Kathy Proudfoot

Vice chair of COLIN – Bridgend LA

Kim Dolphin

Chair of COLIN – Monmouthshire LA

Johanna Davies

West Glamorgan RPB

Angela Hughes

Cardiff and Vale UHB

Anna Bird

Hywel Dda UHB

Kate Cabbage

Carers Trust Wales

Welsh Government officials

Rachel Lewis

Head of Older People and Carers Branch

Ceri Griffiths

Senior Policy Manager, Older People and Carers

Ben O'Halloran

Carers' Policy Officer

Apologies:

Alwyn Jones - Wrexham LA (ADSS)

Jon Day - Social Care Wales

Kate Young - All Wales Forum

Jane Tremlett - Carmarthenshire Council / West Wales RPB

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1. Welcome and previous meeting minute – Arwel E Owen (chair)

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked members for attending this meeting during such extraordinary times, emphasising that now is the time to focus on the improving the lives of unpaid carers. The Chair highlighted the pressures carers are under by quoting from the Carers UK report 'Unseen and Undervalued'.

Sean O'Neill was welcomed. He replaces Lynne Hill, representing Children in Wales and the Young Carers' network.

The minutes from the previous meeting in July 2020 were reviewed and agreed. The focus initially in the pandemic was on a range of concerns but particularly obtaining PPE for unpaid carers. At the present time concern is focused on access to vaccines for unpaid carers.

A number of important surveys and pieces of research have been undertaken and published since the pandemic started. The **Children's Commissioner all Wales survey for young people took place in the first half of 2020 and the report is available**. A new **children and young people's survey is open**, looking at how children are coping with the extended lockdown.

These surveys are very helpful for informing policy. Members are encouraged to share these reports with each other and Welsh Government, including sending to the MAG secretariat in Older People and Carers branch.

The Older People's Commissioner published the '**Leave No-one Behind**' report which covered a range of issues that have affected older people during the

pandemic.

The Young Carers ID card national project is progressing. Seventeen local authorities were awarded funding for work in 2020-21. They are due to submit brief updates on their progress at the end of January. Ceredigion LA had a successful online launch, attended by the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services. The core elements of the project requirements have to be delivered by local authorities, for example the national logo and basic information details such as name, photo, issuing body. Young carers' issues have attracted media interest in the past month with coverage by both BBC and ITV. Both the Deputy Minister and Simon Hatch had been interviewed.

There was a brief discussion about young carers who interpret on behalf of the person they care for, particularly when using a language other than English or Welsh. It was agreed that a young carer should not be expected by any health professional to 'interpret'. Primary care should use professional interpreters and other appropriate forms of support where the person cared for or the carer has need for support in communicating with the GP / practice staff.

2. National Plan for Carers' public consultation – verbal update Ceri Griffiths, Older People and Carers branch

Welsh Government have received well over 80 responses. The overall number will be higher because some submissions were collective responses from carers representative groups or health boards. Others were submitted by region including multiple local authorities and other organisations. A formal Welsh Government consultation summary document will be drafted following analysis of the replies, to be published as soon as possible. This will be followed by the national plan itself.

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The overview was a brief factual summary of the key themes emerging from the comments submitted for each question. It was based on only a small sample however as many responses were submitted just ahead of the 20 January deadline.

Impact of COVID-19

Key concerns highlighted included an increase in caring hours, the negative impact on health and wellbeing and carers feeling lost and forgotten. Issues around accessing primary care and the withdrawal of services such as closure of day centres and face to face support, were flagged as major concerns.

There were some good examples of how organisations have adapted to the challenges presented by the pandemic but for many resuming services where suspended, particularly face to face provision, is key. Many responders said there needs to be an increase in Carers Allowance and more clarity in communication.

Carers should be prioritised for the vaccine. The digital divide needs to be closed for many adult but also young carers. More needs to be done to provide respite.

Protected characteristics

Amongst the responses the needs of carers and cared for with hearing loss, from a Black or Minority Ethnic background, LGBTQ, different religious and cultural needs were raised. There were references to older carers who are looking after adult children and those with learning and physical disabilities.

Priorities

The majority of responses suggest small amendments to the wording of the existing three national priorities. Most of those sampled appear to agree with the addition of the suggested fourth priority – for carers in education and employed carers.

There were calls for greater recognition of carers in primary care settings and increased funding across all sectors. Carers also want there to be recognition that caring is more than a full time job. More psychological support is needed.

There shouldn't be a postcode lottery when it comes to carers accessing Information Advice and Assistance. Improvements need to be made to the DEWIS information database. Important information needs to be communicated to carers as quickly as possible.

There needs to be better recognition of carers by employers, and more opportunities for carers to access advice and training to get back into work. There were some examples of good practice shared such as the [Carers Wales Learning for Living e-learning programme for carers](#)

Carer's charter

The majority of those sampled appear to agree that a carer's charter should be created. There were some caveats e.g. how will it successfully ensure a benchmark that providers and others aim for, and achieve.

Welsh language

One of the replies had clearly raised the importance of the existing legal duties

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on local authorities and others to deliver the “active offer” regarding the Welsh language, to ensure people can use their language of choice in health, social care and other settings.

3. Discussion of initial responses to carers plan consultation – all members

The aim is to finalise the text of the carers plan before end of March. The plan will be drafted alongside the consultation summary response document. That is the desired timeline, however officials are facing additional pressures responding to the current wave of Covid so there may be changes in the timeframe and work pushed back.

Sean O’Neill highlighted that Children in Wales had hosted a detailed discussion with young carers and their feedback had been included in their organisation response. The emergence of many of the same themes amongst the sampled responses was briefly discussed, and the number of replies submitted to the consultation was welcomed by all members. It was agreed that the identification of positive case studies and activity is important. David Hughes spoke briefly of activity in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough.

Several MAG members suggested that they could provide a small task and finish group to assist officials with drafting specific parts of the new national plan.

4. Carers’ engagement group activity – verbal update - Kate Cubbage, CTW

When the MAG was being created there were discussions as to whether individual carers would be a part of the group. The previous Deputy Minister

Huw Irranca-Davies had agreed to the creation of a MAG but with support from a group which would facilitate wider carer cohort and individual carer membership.

The group has a broad representation of carers who are all connected to wider networks. The recruitment process, with Welsh Government, was fair and transparent. The group also has members from front line professionals, health, local authority and third sector. It met for the first time in January 2020 and members were able to share their experiences and get to know one another.

The engagement group week of carers' discussion sessions in mid-October 2020 reached nearly 100 participants from across Wales, all taking part to understand people's experiences during the current COVID-19 pandemic. During this week members of the MAG co-chaired events with members from the Engagement group.

Members are working on a paper to present to the MAG outlining their thoughts about the national carers' plan. It has been a difficult year but commitment to maintaining the membership is still really high. Members want to build on what they have already delivered to help inform the discussions going forward. Arwel encouraged members to view the visual [minutes prepared as a result of the Engagement week sessions](#).

It was emphasised that the key focus of the Engagement group is to support the MAG and the products will all be shared with the Chair of the MAG, and amongst the MAG membership.

5. Any other business

Officials are presently discussing finances in support of carers. Health board reps asked officials if there was any confirmation of the £1million annual funding for health boards to support carers. Officials confirmed they would come back on

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this as soon as they know more.

The chair asked about the ICF annual funding report. Several members stated longer term funding would be required for implementation of the plan. Short term annual funding makes planning very last minute and with ICF set to end after March 2022, members wish to hear about any future programmes.

It was agreed that a member of the Social Services Directorate ICF team will be invited to the next meeting. Unpaid carers remain a priority group within ICF funding in 2021-22. In the Teams meeting chat the link to the [Welsh Government's annual draft budget for 2021-22 published on 21 December was shared](#), and the [Finance Minister and Trefnydd's oral statement on 12 January](#).

A link to the public online blogs to assist with development of a new Welsh Government Digital Strategy for Wales has been shared prior to the meeting. A deadline for comments on the blog was flagged - 31st of January but there would be further discussions so members are encouraged to engage in future dialogue with the relevant departments of Welsh Government.

It was clarified that the previous young carers rights day which was previously scheduled for end of January has been renamed as [Young Carers Action Day](#) and is now on 16th March.

6. Close of meeting / date of next meeting

The date for the next MAG meeting will be circulated as soon as possible. It is likely be early – mid March.

Members were reminded that the next Senedd elections are scheduled for early May. The pre-election period will therefore commence around late March/early

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April 2021. (The date is 9th March 2021 starting at 10:30).

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