



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT

# Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers minutes: 2 July 2020

Minutes from the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers meeting held on 2 July 2020.

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# Contents

## Attendees

Welcome and online introductions – Arwel E Owen (chair)

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

Discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on carers and planning on recovery

Next steps

Action points

Close of meeting / date of next meeting

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# Attendees

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Julie Morgan AM	Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services
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Arwel Ellis Owen	Independent Chair
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Kim Sparrey	Chair of COLIN – Monmouthshire LA
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Kathy Proudfoot	Bridgend CC, COLIN
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Simon Hatch	Carers Trust Wales
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Claire Morgan	Carers Wales
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Kate Young	All Wales Forum
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Lynne Hill	Children in Wales
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Elizabeth Flowers	Children's Commissioner's Office
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Rhian Webber	Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
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Valerie Billingham	Older People's Commissioner's Office
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Jane Tremlett	Carmarthenshire Council
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Alwyn Jones	Wrexham Council (ADSS)
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Sue Pearce	Powys THB
Hannah Brayford	Aneurin Bevan UHB
Angela Hughes	Cardiff and Vale UHB
Jon Day	Social Care Wales
Esyllt Crozier	Social Care Wales
Anna Bird	Hywel Dda LHB
Bethan Jones Edwards	Denbighshire County Council/ ADSS
David Hughes	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
	Welsh Government officials
Matthew Jenkins	Deputy Director, Partnership & Co-operation, SSID
Rachel Lewis	Head of Older People and Carers Branch
Ceri Griffiths	Senior Policy Manager, Older People and Carers
Ben O'Halloran	Carers' Policy Officer

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## **Welcome and online introductions – Arwel E Owen (chair)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the second online MAG meeting and commented that although there was very positive coverage of Carers Week (w/c 08 June) in the media – there is always more to do to raise the profile and wider society's understanding of carers and everything they do. The Chair also mentioned the Wales / Scotland online respite and short breaks webinar held on 07 May which was very informative. Welsh academics and organisations are positively working on this key issue, which affects many carers.

Several members briefly highlighted the activity taking place in their areas or by their organisations and partners, to support carers at this difficult time. Emotional support telephone helplines had particularly high take up and carers welcomed an opportunity to talk about their situation, not just seek advice and information.

## **Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services**

The Deputy Minister gave a brief overview of how the situation affecting carers has moved on since the last meeting on 23 April. She was pleased to see that the role of unpaid carers was now in the public eye more than it had been previously and at the start of the pandemic. She understands the added pressures carers are going through at this time and gave thanks to all those who work to support them. Welsh Government has published specific carers' guidance and more recently, guidance for carers and access to PPE.

It is important to capture the new ways of working that have emerged from the crisis with so many organisations working together, to provide swift and effective responses. The discussions would now start to focus on moving safely out of lockdown, with unpaid carers being right at the heart of the conversation.

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Members took the opportunity to address questions and feedback to the Deputy Minister on:

- Concerns were raised about use of the term “carer” during the Covid crisis because in the public’s mind there is association more with paid social care staff. Therefore need to address the cultural misunderstanding and perhaps have a clear definition on the difference between the two groups of carer.
- Planning must take into account potential issues likely to arise in the next 9-12 months, including winter pressures. Also need to consider immediate and specific challenges we can tackle in the short term.
- Focus on the positive initiatives that have come out of the crisis. Need to retain the examples of good practice and consider which could feed into the national plan. Also, how we can adapt current service provision.
- Need to rebuild confidence in carers to engage when more services resume. Many are scared to access the help and services that are out there but need respite and more hands on support.
- Several members highlighted the added pressure that many young carers are under. There is some emerging evidence that closing of schools has increased caring responsibilities for some young carers, and being unable to access school prevented them having a form of respite.
- Need to carefully consider the community setting. How do we embrace the community spirit we are seeing in many areas of society but also factor in that there some areas report a reduction? (Young carers were eligible under the WG’s vulnerable learners definition to access hub settings during lockdown alongside key workers children, if they wished to and it was appropriate).
- The DM confirmed that the Strategy for an Ageing Society public consultation is postponed temporarily due to Covid. Both that, and the new carers plan have key links with the WG’s published Loneliness and Isolation strategy. Therefore need to progress both the national carers’ plan and Ageing Society consultations forward as soon as possible.

The Deputy Minister departed the meeting.

# Discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on carers and planning on recovery

Matt Jenkins provided a brief overview from the perspective of Welsh Government. In the context of public services the Coronavirus pandemic has been really challenging and there won't be a return to normal in the immediate future. It is important that data can inform conversations to help us understand the direction that the policy area is moving. Financial resource will be a big issue going forward. There is potential for the creation of a financial hardship fund for unpaid carers.

- Members expressed major concerns about the psychological wellbeing of carers. Current circumstances for many carers are unsustainable and will have long term negative impact.
- The role of technology in enabling the continuation of services and the creation of new forms of delivery should be included in the national plan for carers.
- The Older People's Commissioner's office is working on a report that will feed into Welsh Government work, based on their findings from older people during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Children's Commissioner's office undertook a survey of children in Wales where approximately 24,000 people responded. They are currently analysing these and looking for specific issues such as those being reported by young carers.
- Carers Trust Wales are also awaiting results from the Carers Trust UK young carers survey which asked for information about the issues worrying and affecting young carers, arising from Covid 19.
- There was agreement that there should be 2-3 upon specific actions for the MAG to tackle in the short term. Examples included supporting mental health, helping carers care at home and individual carers and their own emergency and contingency planning.

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## Next steps

- There was agreement that the national plan and consultation document need to be progressed over the summer. Further discussion of the plan will take place at a future meeting.
- The issues affecting young carers, not just their caring responsibilities, but future prospects for employment at age 18 and beyond need further exploration.
- The 2-3 specific actions are to be considered and can be worked on outside of the MAG meeting so they can be agreed upon and put into place.

## Action points

- Officials to circulate link to the Wales / Scotland Short Breaks / Respite webinar to MAG members.
- Anna Bird to send the summary of responses to their recent West Wales Carers Strategy consultation to secretariat, for circulation to members.

## Close of meeting / date of next meeting

Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and presence and the meeting came to a close. The date for the next full MAG meeting will be circulated shortly.

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