



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT

Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers minutes: 23 April 2020

Minutes from the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers meeting held on 23 April 2020.

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Contents

Attendees

Introductions

Deputy Minister

Welsh Government updates

Discussion

Action points

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Attendees

Arwel Ellis Owen

Independent Chair

Julie Morgan AM

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

Matthew Jenkins

Welsh Government

Rachel Lewis

Welsh Government

Ceri Griffiths

Welsh Government

Rachael Lovett

Welsh Government

Ben O'Halloran

Welsh Government

Kevi Sparrey

Monmouthshire CC, COLIN

Kathy Proudfoot

Bridgend CC, COLIN

Bethan Jones Edwards

Denbighshire County Council/ ADSS

David Hughes

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Simon Hatch

Carers Trust Wales

Claire Morgan

Carers Wales

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Vicki Lloyd

Age Cymru

Kate Young

All Wales Forum

Esyllt Crozier

Social Care Wales

Dianne Seddon

Bangor University

Elizabeth Flowers

Children's Commissioner's Office

Valerie Billingham

Older People's Commissioner's Office

Angela Hughes

Cardiff and Vale UHB

Tony Kluge

Swansea UHB

Anna Bird

Hywel Dda LHB

Introductions

The Ministerial Advisory Group for Carers met by video-conference with Arwel E Owen in the Chair.

Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister provided a brief update on the Coronavirus Act and

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associated guidance, the official response to the letter from Wales Carers Alliance (WCA) on the current issues facing carers, and assured members of her personal commitment to supporting carers throughout this crisis.

Members took the opportunity to feed back to the Deputy Minister on the work being undertaken in their areas to support carers, and some of the issues being identified.

The key points discussed were as follows:

- officials are aiming to publish a response to WCA's letter by the middle of next week
- there is a consistency across Wales and across different third sector organisations in the concerns they are seeing from carers
- there are difficulties for charities with staff who are furloughed. This is impacting their ability to provide services to carers, such as the provision on information and advice
- there is a lot of technical guidance being published at the moment. There must be attempts to make sure the information is accessible
- representatives from two health boards and a local authority set out some of the positive work being undertaken in their areas to support carers. These included phone calls to carers for conversation and signposting, schemes for food and medicine collections, and financial aid
- most services have been very flexible and adapted their ways of working. It is important to recognise and commend the good work that is going on as well as identifying the issues
- the need to think about carers when planning exit strategies was raised

The Deputy Minister responded generally to the points raised and thanked members for their contributions. She assured members that Welsh Government wants to do all it can in the circumstances that we're in.

The Deputy Minister departed the meeting.

Welsh Government updates

Welsh Government officials provided an update on action being taken to support carers in response to the pandemic. This included:

- work is ongoing to secure additional resource to the sector. This has so far included the Third Sector COVID-19 Response fund (£24m), the Local Authority Hardship fund (£30m), and the Social Care for Adult Services fund (£40m) to support social care providers with additional costs arising from COVID-19
- there is still a firm commitment to the national carers plan, although the context has changed. The consultation document has already been prepared but will need to be revisited to take into account the implications of COVID-19
- officials are in discussions with colleagues regarding PPE for unpaid carers and will be raising the issue Public Health Wales. Similar discussions are taking place regarding testing
- the Deputy Minister aims to meet the deadline for an update on progress against the Health, Social Care, and Sport Committee recommendations regarding the impact of the Social Services and Well-being Act on carers
- officials are considering what can be done to ease anxieties at this time, for example drafting online guidance for carers and local authorities
- funding has been confirmed for Cares Trust Wales to take forward the Engagement Group work

Discussion

Members discussed in more detail the work being undertaken in their areas to support carers and some of the issues being identified.

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- families are experiencing nervousness about letting others (for example care workers) into the household due to the risks posed. This might be short term issue that relaxes as lockdown is eased. We are mindful that for many we are not seeing a pattern of local authorities having to re-prioritise care packages to the extent that we thought might happen
- the Children's Commissioner has developed an information hub for children and young people with information about the virus. There was an appeal for members to get in touch with any information that would be suitable for inclusion for young carers
- Carers Trust Wales, Carers Wales, Community Pharmacy Wales and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Wales is working on communications and resources regarding carers' access to medication, with support from Welsh Government. A similar approach is in the pipeline for retailers
- Carers Week will be taking place between 8 - 14 June. Partners will deliver the week remotely
- a member raised the issue of direct payment packages being paused, and confusion around what to do if you have a Direct Payment personal assistant who has to shield (for example). Officials confirmed that this issue will be picked up via the response to WCA's letter
- Carers UK will be releasing its report 'Caring behind closed doors'. It reports on the findings from a rapid survey of carers asking how they are coping with the COVID-19 crisis. Over 4,000 carers responded nationally and the data has been disaggregated to a Welsh level.
- Young carers, especially those who will be turning 18 during this time, may be falling off a radar and not taking up options beyond their caring role. What are the options beyond 18, how are we reaching them? The current situation requires us to think strategically in medium term of unintended consequences. The situation could become a barrier for their life beyond caring role.

Action points

Action 1: Members to provide information to the Children's Commissioners office regarding young carers that would be suitable for inclusion on the Children's Commissioner's information hub for children and young people.

Action 2: Members asked to continue to send feedback to the Older People and Carers team regarding examples of good practice and any issues relating to the provision of support for carers.

Action 3: Officials to make enquiries regarding the situation for carers crossing the age threshold to 18+.

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