



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Carers Ministerial Advisory Group: 25 September 2023

Minutes from the Carers Ministerial Advisory Group Meeting
which took place on 25 September 2023.

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Contents

Attendees

Welcome and introductions

Deputy Minister for Social Services (DMSS)

ADSS Cymru Rapid Review Report

Carers Trust engagement framework

Carer's Leave Act 2023

Welsh Government updates

Any other business

Date for next meeting

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Attendees

Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Social Services (DMSS)
Andy Pithouse, Special Advisor to DMSS
Alwyn Jones, Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG)
Denise Moultrie, Welsh Government
Taryn Stephens, Welsh Government
Andrew Davies, Welsh Government
Claire Morgan, Wales Carers Alliance and Carers Wales
Anna Bird, Hywel Dda University Health Board
Bobbie-Jo Haaroff, Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board (RPB), and Unpaid Carers Rep
Jayne Newman, Unpaid Carers Rep
Anne Seddon, Bangor University
Kim Dolphin, Monmouth County Council, and Chair of Carer Officer Learning Improvement Network (COLIN)
Elizabeth Flowers, Department for the Childrens Commissioner for Wales
Jenny Oliver, Head of People's Experience, Cwm Taff Morgannwg
Kate Cabbage, Director for Wales for Carers Trust
Kath Proudfoot, Representing COLIN
Naheed Ashraf, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Pennie Muir, Regional Project Support Hywel Dda University Health Board
Valerie Billingham, Health and Care Lead Older Peoples Commissioner
Vanessa Webb, Swansea Uni Researcher
Naomi Harper, Flintshire County Council
Rachel Williams, Care Alliance

Apologies received

Iain McMillian, Vale of Glamorgan

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Stephanie Griffith, Social Care Wales
Angela Hughes, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Marie Davies, Powys Teaching Health Board
Claire Roche, Powys Teaching Health Board
Jacob Ellis, Future Generations Wales
Jon Day, Social Care Wales
Sean O'Neill, Children in Wales
Ffion Johnson, Betsi Cadwallader University Health Board

Welcome and introductions

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including the newly appointed unpaid carers representatives, Bobbie-Jo Haaroff and Jayne Newman, attending for the first time.

Deputy Minister for Social Services (DMSS)

The Deputy Minister for Social Services commented on the second Young Carers Festival she attended on 23 August in Builth Wells.

The Deputy Minister for Social Service spoke to many of the over 300 young carers and young adult carers who attended and everyone commented how much they enjoyed and valued all the activities and opportunities for socialising and support. The Deputy Minister for Social Services also met some young people who had been recruited to the Young Carers Advisory Board, with the support of Children in Wales.

Significant investment has been made in the formation of the ID card scheme and we must be doing all we can to raise awareness of young carers in

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education, and other aspects of their lives, so they can benefit from our full support.

The Deputy Minister for Social Services also referred to the national register for unpaid carers. A single list of unpaid carers across Wales was considered potentially very useful and, if it was kept updated, could provide valuable information and aid self-identification. However, on further investigation, we have established it is not possible to collate people's details from existing local authority, health board and carer organisations' lists due to data protection legislation. People did not give permission for their information to be shared when they agreed to go on these lists. Consequently, people would need to individually sign up to a new national list, in addition to lists they are already on. We could not be confident that people would keep their information up to date and this would compromise the accuracy of any data collated as a result. We have now investigated the costs of setting up and running the list. The Deputy Minister for Social Services stated she was of the view that the cost and the more limited functionality of a national list is such that this is not a viable option.

Additionally, Welsh Government officials now have contact details for all lists held by other organisations or agencies and can therefore disseminate information to all known unpaid carers via this means. The Deputy Minister for Social Services stated she wished to hear the views of the MAG before making a final decision about pursuing a national carers' list.

The Deputy Minister for Social Services referred to the rapid review undertaken by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSSC) on unpaid carers' rights during and after the COVID-19 response. The Deputy Minister for Social Services wishes the MAG to take forward an action plan arising from the findings of the rapid review to bring about positive change.

The Deputy Minister for Social Services also welcomed Bobbie-Jo Haaroff and Jayne Newman, as the newest members of the Ministerial Advisory Group.

Group feedback or questions

A question was raised regarding the potential for continuing the funding of £1m that has been provided to support unpaid carers at point of admission or discharge of the cared for person from hospital for 2024 to 2025.

The Deputy Minister for Social Services noted the request and responded she is committed to keeping as much financial investment within the unpaid carers sector as possible. Budget discussions need to take place, and any future year's funding will need to be confirmed through the annual draft budget setting process.

The Deputy Minister for Social Services left the meeting.

ADSS Cymru Rapid Review Report

This document was circulated prior to the meeting, so members had an opportunity to review the report. Welsh Government commissioned ADSSC to undertake this report as recommended by the Health and Social Services Committee in June 2022.

Welsh Government officials confirmed they wished to identify the best way to consider the findings of the report and how they can be used to refresh the existing Welsh Government strategy for unpaid carers.

The rapid review will be published on the ADSSC website shortly. A request was made that group members were made aware once it has been published.

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Group feedback

Some specific comments about wording of the report were made. It was asked that detailed comments to be passed to the chair and Welsh Government officials.

Other points raised included use of languages other than Welsh and English for materials for unpaid carers, contact with social workers, and terminology. It was acknowledged some people do not wish to identify with the term carer or unpaid carer.

The group was supportive of using the findings of the review to refresh the national strategy. It was agreed that a task and finish group would undertake this work.

It was acknowledged that carers' needs assessments was a significant area for improvement and this may benefit from a national subgroup being formed under the MAG. This would be decided following the aforementioned task and finish strategy review group.

Group members referred to the need for more work to recognise people from rural areas or minority groups, who may be less likely to identify or be identified as unpaid carers. It was clarified that increased carer recognition is one of the main principles of the current strategy and Carers Wales and Carers Trust Wales are funded to deliver the 'Carer Aware' campaign.

Action point

Representation from this MAG to be sought for a task and finish group to review the strategy currently in place and compared with the recommendations from the

rapid review. Task and finish group to be facilitated by Welsh Government officials.

Carers Trust engagement framework

Kate Cabbage

This is delivered through funding from Welsh Government. Carers Trust hold a range of events that create opportunities for carers' voices to be heard and gather information that supports the wider work of this group.

Recent events have focussed on Priority 4 of the strategy, "supporting unpaid carers in education and the workplace". The events took place during the summer and were aimed at hearing and learning from parent carers as they are a group that had not been directly engaged with as part of previous work.

Consistent views were given by those who attended on the challenges being faced. A main area of focus was access to education. Many people perceived inflexibility in approaches to inclusion policy, and that a proportion of disabled and neurodiverse children are not able to access appropriate education facilities.

Wait times for assessment or diagnosis is a barrier to getting the right support and additional learning provision. Parent carers often noted a difficulty accessing breaks from caring. The further key finding was difficulties for parent carer in maintaining full time employment, which has a negative impact on family income.

Group feedback

There was a question raised about the ability of schools to be flexible. Kate

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Cubbage responded that in her view suitable resources for schools are there, however they may not be aware. It was acknowledged these are longstanding issues. An offer was made for Kate Cubbage to meet with Children's Commissioner's Office to address these issues.

Action point

Welsh Government officials will raise with colleagues in Welsh Government Education department to ensure the views of parent carers are represented at the appropriate groups and taken into account.

Carer's Leave Act 2023

Claire Morgan

An overview of the act was provided, which received Royal Assent in May 2023. The act makes provision for up to a week's unpaid leave for employees with caring responsibilities and applies to England, Scotland and Wales. The law will come into effect during 2024, no date yet confirmed.

The PowerPoint presentation and 'Are You Ready' leaflet have full details.

Group feedback

Members asked about how employers will be made aware of this. Claire Morgan confirmed a leaflet entitled 'Are you Ready' will be circulated to group members with further information, and that work is underway to inform employers to raise awareness before this law is implemented.

Welsh Government updates

Short Breaks Scheme

Denise Moultrie

This scheme was established last year with a 3-year funding commitment of £9m which was provided to RPBs. Funding for 2022 to 2023 was provided during the year so operation of schemes was not for a full 12 months up to 31 March 2023.

Welsh Government have received six out of seven RPB end of year reports on how the funding has been utilised. A more detailed reporting template is being discussed for the current financial year to ensure that a consistent and comparable data and narrative is obtained. More detailed discussions with RPBs can take place following this.

Group feedback

A point was raised questioning whether the RPB reports identify gaps in provision, different types of respite, so that funding can be tailored to specific areas. Denise Moultrie confirmed that each RPB has a responsibility to assess their own area and any current gaps and identify creative ways to address their situation. It was also confirmed that a gap analysis has been provided by Carers Trust to ensure a clear picture is obtained across all RPBs.

Diversity and equality of access were raised as important issues with regard to access to short breaks.

Young Carer ID Cards

Denise Moultrie

Reports have been received from 20 local authorities regarding the roll out of Young Carers' ID cards during 2022 to 2023. A total of 2,366 cards were issued to young people. All local authorities have committed to working with schools to promote the card, as well as GP surgeries and pharmacies.

At least 550 of those were young carers that were previously unknown to social services. Some local authorities reported they were successful in identifying young carers via this scheme, while approximately half reported identified few, or no, previously unknown young carers via this scheme.

Some local authorities had secured discounts with local businesses, while this was not the case in other local authorities.

Generally, the card does seem to be working well where it is in use. It can help young people navigate school, collect medicine and so on, however, the main challenge is raising awareness of the card. Welsh Government have met with internal colleagues within Education policy to investigate some of the barriers and intend to explore these with local authority education and social services departments.

This matter could be raised with the Young Carers Advisory Board for them to consider, in a addition to other action to address. Formal links between the MAG and the newly formed Young Carers Advisory Board need to be confirmed.

Group feedback

Discussion on means of refresh and re-promotion of ID cards in schools. Carers Trust Wales offered to reconvene national meetings with local authorities to help address any barriers and to reissue resources for schools that were developed at the outset of the scheme.

Action point

Welsh Government officials and chair to explore formal links between the MAG and the newly formed Young Carers Advisory Board.

Welsh Government officials to pursue education and social services leads in local authorities regarding barriers to wider roll out of cards, and to work with Carers Trust Wales regarding existing supporting resources.

Register for unpaid carers

Denise Moultrie

At the previous MAG meeting, data protection issues in relation to the creation of a register were outlined. Since this time, Welsh Government has approached Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) who advised that depending on the level of security required, a cost to implement and maintain a system in the first year would cost between £100,000 and £250,000.

As described by the Deputy Minister for Social Services in her earlier address to the MAG, a national list would require individuals to independently sign up and keep their details up to date. Re-iteration of the views of the Deputy Minister for

Social Services on utility of the list and value for unpaid carers.

Group feedback

A question on use of anonymised data was raised. Welsh Government officials confirmed that a further request by the MAG for Welsh Government to develop a census on unpaid carers by extracting anonymised aggregated data from the local authority is still being considered and is a separate workstream. This can be discussed at subsequent meeting.

A group member asked about support available for someone who is a carer and has been in prison.

The chair checked with the group that it was content to support the view of the Deputy Minister for Social Services that a national carers register was not a viable option, as it could not gather information from other carers' lists, would not reliably reflect the number or characteristics of unpaid carers in Wales and could not be justified in terms of costs. Welsh Government officials have developed alternative means of communicating with unpaid carers on existing lists and continued to explore anonymised data extraction from local authorities.

Action point

The new task and finish group to be established to review the action plan, to also look into how we work with and communicate with minority and difficult to reach communities.

Any other business

Care Inspectorate Wales' reports were raised by a group member who queried the level of public and service user involvement in the inspection process. Welsh Government officials were aware that requesting views of the public and service users was part of inspection methodology. [Details of the Care Inspectorate Wales inspection process are available via their website.](#)

Date for next meeting

A meeting is currently in place for January 2024. Date to be confirmed.

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