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# Strategy for Unpaid Carers: Delivery Plan

## Impact Assessments

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### Hyperlinks to impact assessments

[Children's Rights Impact Assessment](#)

[Equality Impact Assessment \(summary\)](#)

[Welsh Language Impact Assessment](#)

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## Introduction

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### Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the WFG Act') gives a legally-binding common purpose – the seven well-being goals – for national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies. It details the ways in which specified public bodies must work, and work together to improve the well-being of Wales.

- A globally responsible Wales
- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

The WFG Act provides for better decision-making by ensuring that those public bodies take account of the long-term, help to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, take an integrated and collaborative approach, and considers and involves people of all ages. This supports existing commitments related to the Welsh language, equalities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Together, the seven well-being goals and five ways of working provided by the WFG Act are designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is a way of doing things rather than an end in itself. The WFG Act makes sustainable development the core principle that guides how a public body operates.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act places further duties on local authorities to embed a preventative approach by considering the long-term impact of their actions. Public bodies and those entities identified in the WFG Act are required to adopt a more integrated approach to both service design and delivery. They must

also work in partnership with individuals and communities. These core principles and legislative requirements underpin the Unpaid Carers Strategy for Wales and its Delivery Plan.

It is important to recognise however, the difference between the well-being of Wales, and the well-being of individuals. Sustainable development connects the environment in which we live, the economy in which we work, the society in which we enjoy and the cultures that we share, to people and their quality of life. The use of the term 'well-being' in the WFG Act and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ('SSWB Act') are complementary. The meaning of "well-being" in the SSWB Act applies only for the purpose of that Act. "Well-being" in the SSWB Act is defined in relation to a 'person', whereas "well-being" in the WFG Act is in relation to our economy, society, environment and culture across Wales. The SSWB Act focuses on one sub-set of the population of Wales, namely people who need care and support, and carers who need support.

Below are links to guidance on the WFG Act.

<https://gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-guidance>

<https://llyw.cymru/llesiant-cenedlaethaur-dyfodol-canllawiau>

## **What is the Welsh Government considering and why?**

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, defines a carer as someone who provides unpaid care to an adult, or disabled child. The cared for person may be a family member or a friend, who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. A carer could be a husband caring for his wife, a parent caring for their child who has care and support needs, or a child caring for their parent or sibling.

As part of our commitment to improving the lives of all ages of carer in Wales, in October 2020 the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services launched our public consultation for a new Strategy for Unpaid Carers. The consultation set out our proposed direction for the new strategy, and included proposals to add a new fourth national priority focusing on employed carers and those in education. It also included a proposal to create a new Charter for Unpaid Carers. The [consultation document and a summary of the responses](#) we received are available on our website.

In developing the new strategy we took careful consideration of the public consultation responses as well as wider engagement with unpaid carers of all ages and their representatives. This engagement took place via the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Engagement Group. Both of these groups also guided the development of the Delivery Plan and will help Welsh Government monitor implementation.

The new [Strategy for Unpaid Carers](#) was launched in March 2021 and represents our continuing commitment to improving the recognition of, and support to, unpaid carers in Wales. It sets out our revised national priorities for unpaid carers, including the addition of a new priority on education and employment.

### **Priority One: Identifying and valuing unpaid carers**

All unpaid carers must be valued and supported to make an informed choice about the care they provide and to access the support they need whilst caring and when the caring role comes to an end.

**Priority Two: Providing information, advice and assistance**

It is vital that all unpaid carers have access to the right information and advice at the right time and in an appropriate format.

**Priority Three: Supporting life alongside caring**

All unpaid carers must have the opportunity to take breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their own health and well-being and have a life alongside caring.

**Priority Four: Supporting unpaid carers in education and the workplace**

Employers and educational / training settings should be encouraged to adapt their policies and practices, enabling unpaid carers to work and learn alongside their caring role.

The strategy also committed to the development of a Charter for Unpaid Carers intended to agree best practice guidance and to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Welsh Government, local authorities, local health boards, third sector organisations and unpaid carers.

**Charter for Unpaid Carers**

The charter will help unpaid carers to self-identify and understand their rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It will support local authorities to deliver their duties under the Act and clearly set out good practice standards that ensure unpaid carers are involved as equal partners and have a voice in policy development, planning, research and training.

Working with the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers we convened three working groups to produce a supporting delivery plan and the new Charter. Membership of the groups was extended to unpaid carers and organisations working with or for unpaid carers in Wales. The aim of the Charter will be to ensure that all unpaid carers, including young carers, receive the level of support that they are entitled to from professionals, services and organisations.

The Charter is being developed and will be published for further discussion with unpaid carers. The [Delivery Plan](#) was published on 25 November 2021.

**Long term**

The 2011 Census shows that around 12% of the population of Wales are unpaid carers, and Social Care Wales estimates that this figure could increase to 16% by

2037. These figures include anyone caring for as little as an hour a week and most people who spend only very limited time on caring will not require any additional support. However, Wales also has the highest proportion of older carers and of carers providing more than 50 hours' care a week (results from the 2021 Census were unavailable at the time of writing).

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of carers in Wales has increased as many more people have taken on the role of an unpaid carer for the first time. Last year, Carers UK estimated that there are 196,000 new unpaid carers in Wales since the start of the pandemic. It also reported that 4 in 5 unpaid carers (81%) were providing more care than before lockdown. Each of our renewed four national priorities takes into account the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of unpaid carers and reflects that these experiences will shape support needs over the months and years ahead.

We have worked with the Ministerial Advisory Group on Carers and its supporting Engagement Group to develop the Delivery Plan to support the implementation of the new Strategy for Unpaid Carers. The plan considers the long term needs of unpaid carers in Wales. As we plan ahead, we will revisit the Delivery Plan to ensure it is responsive to any demographic or societal changes that impact the lives of unpaid carers.

## **Prevention**

Supporting carers is a preventative measure both for the individual carer and for the sustainability of health and social care services.

Early intervention and prevention is critical and the strategy responds to the need to embed the preventative aspects of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 more effectively in public services and move key providers of services, including the third sector, towards an improved model of support for unpaid carers. Addressing these key issues now will help to prevent more unpaid carers, and the people they care for, reaching crisis point before accessing vital support services. This will, in turn, reduce the pressure on NHS and social services.

Our [Strategy for an Ageing Society](#) aims to create an age friendly Wales that supports everyone to live and age well. This programme of work will align with the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and Delivery Plan, and benefit people caring today and future generations of unpaid carers.

## **Integration**

The Strategy and supporting Delivery Plan provide a focus for ensuring that support for unpaid carers is embedded across other policy areas in the Welsh Government. For example, joint work will continue with Welsh Government departments including Education and Public Services, and Employability and Skills policy areas so that future carers' policy and actions are developed with the impact on all ages of unpaid carers in mind.

A wide range of Welsh Government policy areas also interact with the unpaid carers' policy; for example wellbeing and mental health, including policy on loneliness and isolation; the Fair Work agenda, education and training, economic policy, local

government finance; and support for those on low incomes. This is simply by virtue of all unpaid carers existing in all socio-economic groups in society.

It is also important to recognise the ongoing work and links to existing Welsh Government's commitments and plans, such as [Action on Disability: A Right to Independent Living](#) and adoption of the social model of disability, the [Substance Misuse Delivery Plan](#), and the [Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan](#) and commitment to supporting schools to [develop a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing](#). For young carers this includes continuing to be recognised as a more vulnerable learner group.

Any action to support unpaid carers and their families cannot be considered in isolation from policy and practice aimed at the person with care needs. It is frequently stated that improvements in identifying and delivering the support needs for individuals with care and support needs, will benefit their unpaid carer. However, many carers may also experience their own health issues and therefore have care and support needs in their own right.

In line with the vision set out in '[A Healthier Wales](#)', the Welsh Government plan for creating an integrated health and social care system, we are continuing to work towards a whole-system approach to health and social care which focusses on keeping people well by anticipating health needs, preventing illness, and reducing the impacts of poor health, as well as helping people to remain well in their own homes or receive care closer to home.

In order to help set out the vision for Welsh Government and others to plan for recovery from Covid 19, it published the [Social Care Recovery Framework](#) in July 2021.

The introduction of a [National Framework for care and support](#), setting standards for commissioning practice, reducing complexity and rebalancing commissioning to focus on quality and outcomes will also better enable the sector to achieve the vision set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The supporting Carers' Delivery Plan sets out a number of specific cross-government actions, emphasising the importance of the contribution of other government departments to improving outcomes for unpaid carers through their policies and programmes. For example:

- Ensure the needs of unpaid carers are considered in the delivery of Digital Strategy for Wales.
- Ensure that unpaid carers are considered in wider policy development and implementation relating to mental health.
- Ensure the needs of unpaid carers are considered in the development of income maximisation policy and a Welsh benefits system.

These are not limited to those actions of the Welsh Government but can also be dependent on the actions and legislative plans of UK central Government in Whitehall and opportunities for achieving the Welsh Government's objectives can be explored via UK legislation, where necessary and appropriate.

## **Collaboration**

Collaboration with partners in the public and third sectors is critical if the best possible support is to be provided to unpaid carers in our communities.

Whilst local authorities have a duty under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, to identify and respond to the eligible needs of unpaid carers, there can be many additional factors outside of this which are critical in improving the health and wellbeing of unpaid carers. The Delivery Plan includes actions which will require the efforts of our delivery partners across the public, third and private sectors.

Public bodies and others have a duty to adopt a more joined approach to service design and delivery as embodied in the 2014 Act with the creation of the Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs). The successful implementation of the strategy and its delivery plan will require public bodies in local government, health and social services and others, to work together to determine the most effective delivery mechanisms for carer support services, informed by their Population Needs Assessments.

RPBs have been responsible for the development and use of the Integrated Care Fund, since its creation, and since 2018 they have been required to increase and target expenditure on unpaid carers, who are one of the priority beneficiary groups. Whilst the ICF will end on 31 March 2022, a new regional funding programme has been developed and a new multi-year programme will commence from 1 April 2022, and will continue to include a need to identify and address the needs of unpaid carers of all ages. This will again provide the opportunity for a wide range of organisations including the third sector to work in co-production with public bodies.

Though the development of a Charter for Unpaid Carers we are moving towards and supporting a shared understanding of the rights of unpaid carers and the level of service they should receive, particularly during the common scenarios that carers encounter such as hospital discharge or emergency admission.

#### Welsh Government grant funding to support unpaid carers

Our third sector partners play a vital role in delivering essential services to unpaid carers in Wales. As well as providing £2.6 million over three years (2020-23) to Carers Wales, All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers, Carers Trust Wales and Age Cymru via our Third Sector Sustainable Social Services Grant Scheme, we continue to work with Carers Wales as corporate members of the Welsh Employers for Carers programme. We also continue to provide £1m annually to local health boards and their third sector carer partnerships, as well as funding to work co-productively with all 22 local authorities and Carers Trust Wales on the national Young Carers' ID card project.

## **Involvement**

Carers must be considered and treated as equal partners in the development and delivery of services designed to support them, building on the principles of 'voice and control' embedded in practice through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The strategy commits us to developing a range of solutions that enable local authorities to deliver timely, effective statutory assessments that are responsive to the individual needs of unpaid carers.

When developing our Strategy for Unpaid Carers, we sought feedback from a wide variety of voices and experiences, including carers themselves. Their replies informed our plans going forward and the future shape of our national carers'

priorities. Unpaid carers were also represented at the three working groups convened to develop the actions in the Delivery Plan and the content of the Charter.

We also facilitate regular engagement with unpaid carers, professionals and policy makers. In 2020/21, we funded Carers Trust Wales to lead on the development of, and recruitment to, the National Engagement Group for Carers to support the Ministerial Advisory Group on Unpaid Carers. Members of the engagement group include unpaid carers and the frontline staff who support them from across all regions of Wales. We also fund Children in Wales to host the Young Carers' Network of professional young carers' officers and social workers. These mechanisms ensure the voice of the unpaid carer informs policy development and delivery and will continue to be funded in 2021/22.

Another important channel is the local authority Carers Officers Learning and Improvement Network (COLIN) which acts to represent both the voice of local authority carers' teams, but also a conduit for information and engagement with different carers' projects and activities. Welsh Government also funds via the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector grant scheme (2020-23), bi-annual meetings of the seven Regional Partnership Board carer representatives.

Work is underway to strengthen the voice of both carers' and citizen representatives via the 'Regional Partnership Boards: User, Carer, Third Sector and Provider Members Task and Finish Group', created in autumn 2021. It will develop a charter for all members of RPB boards; have co-production as a key principle as well as examine role descriptions for all RPB board members, including statutory partners and RPB chairs, rather than just those of user, carer, third sector and provider members. This work will continue into 2022.

## Impact

The Strategy and its Delivery Plan have been developed based on engagement with unpaid carers and their representatives via the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and the carer Engagement Group, as well the feedback received via the strategy's public consultation process.

There is also much evidence regarding the experiences of unpaid carers in Wales, including the recent and continuing impact of the pandemic and lockdowns. The strategy and supporting delivery plan draw on the learning from a range of findings in research and evidence papers produced by academics and third sector carer organisations.

The Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport committee opened its inquiry 'The Impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to Carers' in 2018. The Committee's report, [Caring for our future](#), was published in 2019 and the then Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, MS, responded to the 31 recommendations. The renewed national priorities and the Charter build on the Deputy Minister's responses to that Committee's inquiry.

The strategy responds to this evidence by providing high-level direction around what is needed across the public sector to develop person-centred and resilient services for unpaid carers, and is committed to improving the recognition of, and support to, unpaid carers in Wales. The strategy, alongside the actions in the delivery plan, provide a clear message to the public and stakeholders regarding the next steps we

will take to ensure carers are supported more effectively. This includes action to achieve consistency in levels of support between different health boards and local authorities.

## **Costs and savings**

Carers Wales estimated prior to the Covid pandemic, that unpaid carers save the Welsh economy £8.1 billion every year. This was, pre-2020, almost as much as the entire annual health and social care budget of £9m from Welsh Government. Following the outbreak of the pandemic in the UK in early 2020, Carers Wales research found the vast majority of Wales' estimated 683,000 unpaid carers saved the Welsh NHS £33 million every day of the pandemic.

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/policy-resources-for-professionals/policy-library/covid-19-briefing-impact-on-unpaid-carers-in-wales>

The Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Delivery Plan will be delivered using existing funding sources, but we will consider the need for additional Welsh Government direct funding to support unpaid carers as it arises and where opportunities to access new sources of social care or Covid recovery funding.

Given unpaid carers' entitlements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, unpaid carers are already able to access and receive support from mainstream health and social services budgets. It remains the case that the vast majority of funding of services and activity to support unpaid carers will derive from the annual Local Government funding settlement – the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). Within this allocations for social services are identified, but as referenced above, with many other areas affecting unpaid carers for example, housing support, council tax, access to education, many other local government budgets will also have an effect on addressing the needs and supporting unpaid carers of all ages.

We have worked closely through the mechanism of the Carers' MAG and the Engagement Group, including with local government and health boards to agree actions that will help us to achieve the commitments in the strategy.

Welsh Government direct carers' project funding provides additionality to statutory services funding, for example, we are providing £2.6 million over three years (2020-23) to Carers Wales, All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers, Carers Trust Wales and Age Cymru, via our Third Sector Sustainable Social Services Grant Scheme.

We will continue to fund the national young carers ID card project with £150k in 2021-22, working in coproduction with local authorities and Carers Trust Wales.

In 2019/20, £7.891m was spent via the Integrated Care fund (ICF) directly on projects and services to support unpaid carers. The 2019-20 ICF annual report, published on 24 March 2021, showcases how unpaid carers are benefitting from this fund. The report for 2020-21 will be published shortly.

## **Mechanism**

We published the Delivery Plan in November 2021 setting out clear actions, timescales and measures for monitoring progress.

Welsh legislation is not required.



A regulatory impact assessment is not required.

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## Children's Rights Impact Assessment

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### Summary

Ministers are required to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child when exercising any of their functions.

The flowchart set out in the [Children's Rights Scheme 2014](#) has been completed and has determined that a full Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is required on the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Delivery Plan.

Work on a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) commenced during the development of the Strategy for Unpaid Carers (published in March 2021) and continued during the drafting phase of the Delivery Plan. The findings from the CRIA as it progressed informed the content of both the Strategy and the Delivery Plan. It identified a number of areas where actions would be needed in the Delivery Plan to ensure children and young people receive the full intended benefits of the Strategy. We will continue to review emerging data and research related to the experiences of young carers in Wales over the life of the Delivery Plan, to inform new actions as the Plan evolves and coexisting policies to support unpaid carers of all ages.

The evidence and data gathered indicate that overall the Strategy and Delivery Plan will have a positive impact on the lives of young carers up to the age of 18. There is considered to be no negative impact on children's rights associated with the Plan.

### Consultation with children and young people

In developing the Strategy for Unpaid Carers, we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including individual carers, to inform the development of our cross-government strategic plan and the refresh of our national priorities for carers.

We worked closely with the Ministerial Advisory Group on Carers to draft the consultation document for the Strategy and engaged with unpaid carers, including young carers, via the third sector organisation Children in Wales and Carers Trust Wales.

The consultation was published on the Welsh Government website. Information on how to respond was widely distributed and shared via social media and via e-mail. A [young people's version](#) of the consultation was produced by Children in Wales. An [Easy Read version](#) of the consultation was also produced. We received 91 responses to the consultation and a [Summary of Responses](#) is published on the Welsh Government's website.

As well as proposals for a new priority focussing on commitments to improve the experiences of young carers in education and training, the consultation included a specific question regarding the overall challenges for young carers. There were 48 responses to this question.

We received a number of responses from organisations representing children and young people, including Children in Wales, who facilitated workshops with young carers, and Children's Legal Centre Wales. The general themes arising from the responses included:

- Difficulty communicating with professionals because they are young and their caring role is not recognised.
- Many young carers need help to identify as carers and seek timely support. Respondents spoke of a lack of general and professional training for employees in health and other sectors to raise awareness of young carers and the issues they face.
- Services for young carers don't always meet demand and many set a minimum age, for example aged over 8, in order to access local authority or commissioned services.
- Young carers were not routinely involved in consultations or decision-making that involved the person they care for.
- Key transition points in a young carer's life, for example; moving into post 16 education. Processes needed to be in place to enable the smooth delivery of support during the young carer's transition into becoming a young adult carer, whether they remained in education or were seeking employment.
- Whilst great emphasis was placed on the importance of the school role in supporting young carers, with school teachers and other school staff able to deliver positive support and interventions, there remained a risk that a young carer may not achieve their potential.

How the Strategy and supporting Delivery Plan respond to these issues is set out in more detail below.

## **Potential impact of the proposal on children and young people (up to age 18)**

Young carers are those under the age of 18 who provide unpaid care for an adult or disabled child in need of support. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out very clear rights for all ages of carer, and this includes young carers. Under the legislation a 'carer' is 'a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult, or disabled child'. The word 'young carer' does not appear in the legislation but the term "child carer" does appear, albeit not in the definitions. A "child" means a person who is aged under 18, so a "child carer" would be a carer aged under 18.

Young carers are involved in the emotional and practical care of family members and friends, including parents, grandparents and siblings, where siblings have care needs, and/or because parents are unable to meet their needs. Their responsibilities may include domestic chores, financial responsibilities, emotional and psychological support, childcare, and assistance with mobility, pain or discomfort, helping with medication or personal care such as hygiene (Clay et al., 2016).

Data on young carers can be challenging to extrapolate as many data sets define a young carer as under 16, and there can be an overlap between the classification of young carers and young adult carers. In the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales

Act's associated Codes of Practice, in Part 3 about carrying out a carers' needs assessment for a young person, a young adult carer is referenced as being aged from 16 – 25 years.

According to the UK Census in 2011 Wales has the highest proportion of young carers and young adult carers in the UK. In 2011, there were a total of 29,155 young carers and young adult carers comprising:

- 7,544 young people under 16, and
- 21,611 young people aged 16-24.

Of the 7,544 young carers under 16, 1,613 children were providing more than 20 hours of care per week. 801 were reported as providing more than 50 hours of care per week. Research suggests that there are likely to be many more unidentified young carers and this number has undoubtedly increased during the first year of the pandemic, particularly while those with caring responsibilities were unable to access school because of national lockdowns. Some however found it actually benefitted their caring relationship by having more time to spend with the person they care for.

Young people often find caring very rewarding, bringing emotional and psychological benefits. But it can equally place a strain on young carers' educational and social participation. This is explored in more detail below.

### **Impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan on children and young people who provide unpaid care**

*Many of the commitments and actions under Priority 4 have a specific focus on young carers. In many cases, the actions under Priority 4 will work together with the actions under the other three priorities. There are also other areas where actions will contribute the commitments of multiple priorities. We have included these under each priority where appropriate.*

#### **Priority 1: identifying and valuing unpaid carers**

##### ***Themes:***

- **Valuing unpaid carers**
- **Raising awareness of unpaid carers**
- **Working with local authorities to improve carers' assessments**

The commitments and actions under this priority are likely to have a positive impact on children and young people who undertake a caring role.

#### **Barriers experienced by young carers**

Not being recognised as a young carer can result in difficulties, for example when collecting medication for those they care for, or in accessing transport or shopping. Many find their situation most difficult in the school environment when teachers or other school staff don't understand or fail to take account of some of the practical and emotional pressures. They may also experience bullying or fear being stigmatised if other people know about their caring role.

Research has suggested that substantially more young people than the 2011 Census shows are likely to have caring responsibilities. Possible explanations for under-identification include lack of awareness among education and other professionals, including health services; and young carers' reluctance to seek support due to fears around social services intervention or even fear of bullying from their peers or other children in schools and social settings. This can often arise when young carers are caring for adults with drug or alcohol dependency. There is a fear amongst both the parents and the young carer that the child might be removed from the family, or they will experience "interference" from social workers.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 created a legal duty on local authorities to carry out needs assessments for unpaid carers and to meet their eligible support needs. In 2018, the Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport (HSCS) Committee undertook an inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers of all ages in Wales. Evidence provided by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS) noted that many young people themselves do not recognise the pressures of being a carer as it is just their 'norm'. Children and young people particularly did not identify as carers when there was another adult carer in the house. Our consultation correlated with these findings, with young carers reporting a lack of recognition by others outside of school or the home.

Social Care Wales commissioned the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) to carry out a desk review of evidence relating to unpaid carers' needs assessments in Wales. The review focussed on the barriers and enablers to accessing a carers' needs assessment as well as the experiences of those who have had an assessment. It found that most of the literature and evidence in relation to carers' needs assessments relates to adults rather than young carers. As such, SCIE concluded it is still unclear what a carers' needs assessment is like for young carers, (and this may have changed since the start of the pandemic), particularly given the impact on education and the role that could play in the identification and support of young carers. This can mean that information or support directed at unpaid carers doesn't appear relevant to young carers.

The Estyn Thematic Review – Provision for young carers in secondary schools, colleges and Pupil Referral Units across Wales, (2019) found there is a lack of reliable data to identify how many young carers there are in schools, PRUs and colleges across Wales. Many providers do not know which of their pupils and learners have a caring role. A consequence of this is that the provision for young carers at secondary schools, colleges and PRUs varies widely. Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that are most effective in meeting the needs of young carers have robust systems to identify these learners. There are a small range of awards schemes that provide secondary schools, colleges and PRUs with useful resources and toolkits to shape their provision to meet the needs of young carers. However, too many providers fail to access these. The review made 8 recommendations including one for Welsh Government which advised the acquisition of more reliable national data on young carers.

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/provision-young-carers-secondary-schools-further-education-colleges-and-pupil>

## **Intended positive impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan**

The commitments and actions under Priority 1 seek to raise awareness amongst unpaid carers of all ages of how self-identification can lead to financial, emotional and practical support.

Schools Award programmes have been successful in improving awareness of young carers, where school staff are more informed about the needs of young carers in providing practical and emotional pastoral support. Initiatives which raise awareness amongst healthcare professionals and health settings, for example GP surgeries, about young carers have also been successful in identifying young carers and referring them to other services for assessment and support. Actions under this priority include sharing good practice and learning across local authorities of such schemes so that they can be developed and rolled out more widely.

### Actions

- Review the availability and impact of existing accreditation schemes, such as the Investors in Carers scheme, Carer Friendly scheme and Young Carers in School programme and identify gaps and explore options to develop and share best practice.
- Via the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant, fund and provide Carer Aware training, working with staff at all levels of social care and health systems to raise awareness of rights, share good practice, and encourage coproduction.

The need for tailored communications to reach and support young carers in particular has also been recognised in the Delivery Plan. Actions under Priority 1 are intended to raise public awareness about the valuable contribution of unpaid carers of all ages. We will also continue to work with young carers and their representatives to challenge any stigma associated with their caring role.

### Actions

- Work with unpaid carers with a diverse range of lived experiences, and representative organisations to ensure messaging is accessible to a broad range of people. For example in Welsh, in ethnic minority languages, in British Sign Language, audio or braille, easy read, and in formats that are accessible for children and young people.
- Work with stakeholders to think creatively about how we can promote messages in places where a broad range of unpaid carers will access them. For example, learning environments, youth/ social clubs, local shops and private businesses, community centres etc.
- Work together to establish a set of language principles for use around all aspects of unpaid care, support and awareness raising. As part of this action we will:
  - Ensure that the principles capture the fundamental need for many people to be able to access services in Welsh.
  - Ensure that the principles reflect the need to ensure communication is user-friendly for unpaid carers with a broad range of lived experiences, language requirements and with accessible communication needs.
  - Avoid stigmatising language and prioritise where possible the caring relationship between the carer and those they care for (e.g. family member, friend, neighbour).

Advocacy and empowerment can include co-production and involving young carers in shaping of services and policy. Enabling young carers to support service design can provide a greater awareness amongst professionals, and can also build young carers resilience and confidence.

Priority 1 includes the commitment to invest in mechanisms that support unpaid carers to have their voices heard at national, local and regional levels. We will do this

by reviewing the membership of the Wales-level Carer Engagement Group to ensure young carers are represented. The engagement group sits alongside the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and acts as a mechanism to ensure the carer voice and experience is heard there. Welsh Government has also accepted the recommendation from the Children's Commissioner for Wales to develop more direct and frequent mechanisms for communicating with young carers and young adult carers to hear about their concerns, positive experiences and share information.

Local authorities will also be encouraged to share examples of best practice regarding their regional and local carer engagement panels or steering groups so that the inclusion of the carer voice and experience, including young carers, is integral to the development and delivery of services. This includes the recommendations previously made in 2019 by the Estyn Thematic review report.

#### Actions

- Review the membership of the Carer Engagement Group to ensure it includes representation from a diverse range of carer experience.
- Share examples of best practice regarding existing regional carer engagement panels or steering groups that facilitate the inclusion of the carer voice and experience in the development and delivery of services.
- Review the lessons learnt from the Regional Partnership Board spotlight event in June 2021 and explore how the suggestions made to support unpaid carer representatives can be implemented.
- Continue to fund and deliver carer representation training and carers' self-advocacy training via the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant.

The commitment under Priority 1 to develop a range of solutions that enable local authorities to deliver timely and effective needs assessments of course extends to young carers. We will be considering the findings and recommendations from the SCIE study and reports commissioned by Welsh Government from Carers Trust Wales about the needs and experiences of young carers. There are also other data sets and research, to fill the evidence gap related to young carers' experiences of needs assessments, and to guarantee that young carers are able to access their right to an assessment that is responsive to their needs.

#### Action

- Use the findings from the SCIE research commissioned by Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales' Data Development Project, and data from the Performance and Improvement Framework to determine what specific actions are needed to improve the take up carers needs assessments.

### Priority 4

The commitments and actions under Priority 4 emphasise the importance of identifying young carers within education and training settings so that they can be made aware of, and helped to access their rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Schools play a key role in identifying young carers as school staff are in constant contact with young people. Schools are well positioned to identify young carers and refer onto other services and inform families of their rights. The commitment under Priority 4 to **encourage local authorities to support state funded schools to identify young carers aims to improve awareness of young carers and enable school staff to be more informed about their needs, so that they can help young carers to access practical and emotional support. Actions in the Delivery plan to help us achieve this commitment include:**

#### Actions

- Promote individual school young carers champions and promote best practice, for example as identified by the 2019 Estyn Thematic Review.
- Develop a network of school champions across regions. Encourage champions to take a 'whole school' approach.
- Promote cultural change and raise awareness of young and young adult carers amongst education professionals and their needs for help and support, and signposting to local authority and commissioned carers' services.
- Further education and higher education opportunities to support access to learning by young carers and young adult carers: Use existing resources to help promote identification of carers by education bodies and providers, and identify needs amongst professionals for new information materials / online resources or training.

Young Carer ID cards enable young carers to identify themselves to schools and other services, as well as highlighting carer responsibilities in an emergency. Ensuring the successful roll out of our national Young Carer ID Card Scheme sits as an action under Priority 4 and is intended facilitate more young carers identifying with this status and to improve recognition amongst professionals and the wider population including children and young people.

- Promote identification of young carers via Welsh Government and local authority co-produced national Young carers ID card project, including awareness raising, training and national resources produced by Carers Trust Wales: <https://carers.org/young-carers-and-education/ycid>. This includes promoting awareness of the card in schools and colleges.

## **Priority 2: providing information, advice and assistance (IAA)**

### ***Themes***

- **Raising awareness of ways to access information, advice and assistance**
- **Addressing the digital divide**

The commitments and actions under this priority are likely to have a positive impact on children and young people who provide unpaid care.

### **Barriers experienced by young carers**

Receiving appropriate information, advice and assistance at the right time can mean the difference between young carers maintaining their wellbeing and achieving their personal outcomes, or reaching crisis point. Carers of all ages are also less likely to need a more formal assessment and assistance if they have been able to access help and informal support earlier in the caring journey. Preventative support to promote carers wellbeing as well as those of individuals with care needs, is a fundamental aspect of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act.

Young carers who are unable to access adequate information or support can find themselves struggling with poor physical or mental health, difficulties balancing school work and caring, or being unable to carry on with some aspects of their caring role. Some may also wish to cease their caring responsibilities but don't know how to achieve this.

There is unfortunately limited research regarding the effectiveness of the current provision of IAA to young carers under the age of 18. Our consultation responses revealed that support services are too often seen to focus on adults and are not always age-appropriate.

In June 2020, Carers Trust Wales surveyed 366 carers aged between 12 and 25 to understand their experiences of living and caring during the pandemic. They reported that 14% of young carers who responded to the survey (those under the age of 18) would like more information and practical advice or tips to help them cope, and 1 in 5 young carers would like support to help them stay healthy. The survey also found that, despite the impact social distancing measures have had on the ability of services to work directly with young and young adult carers, 69% of young carers who accessed services before the pandemic continued to receive the support they need from them.

As part of its 2018 inquiry, the Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee reported that carers' needs assessments for young carers were not routinely taking place across Wales, and of limited awareness of carers' needs assessments among the young carers who attended the inquiry's young carer workshops.

A number of responses to our consultation reported that young carers can experience insufficient access to digital devices to access and complete their school work, participate in online learning, or access support. Some young carers may also have to share devices with family members and siblings. This should have reduced in scale since the start of the pandemic with the return to school following long periods of national or local lockdowns. Welsh Government also committed millions in funding to all pupils in Wales up to age 16, to ensure they had access to a digital device to carry on with school studies during lock downs. FE colleges also sought to provide support including digital support for vulnerable students, however, for those carers not in school settings they may still have difficulties and most often it is the cost of the data package which is the impediment. A digital divide remains therefore.

### **Intended positive impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan**

Provision of appropriate IAA provides the vital first steps of a preventative approach and Priority 2 aims to ensure that unpaid carers of all ages have access to the right information and advice at the right time, and in an appropriate format. Welsh Government and our delivery partners will be very conscious of the need to consider the needs of young carers when implementing and monitoring actions to improve IAA, to ensure IAA is accessible and tailored to them. There are more stringent requirements on bodies providing information intended for direct consumption by children, as well as the need to ensure it uses the rights forms of language, is produced in easy read versions or for those with learning or physical disabilities, in alternative formats. This is the same as for adult carers.

Examples under Priority 2 include:

#### Actions

- Review existing local and national information and support hubs and phone lines in order to explore options to promote and share best practice more widely. Examples include, the Carers Wales national advice line, the Gwent Carers Hub and the Ceredigion Carers Information Service.
- Share best practice on how organisations are providing resources, guidance and signposting in locations that are accessible to a wide range of unpaid carers, including individuals who are less likely to identify as unpaid carers. Work with partners and organisations in receipt of the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant to fill any gaps identified where some cohorts of unpaid carers may not be being reached.

Technological support as a way to deliver information, advice and assistance to young carers can include apps, websites, and phone and text lines. Social media



networks can also provide an online community where advice and support can be offered, and information can be shared easily. There are examples of technology being used across Wales to provide local and specific, up-to-date information to young carers, and to build social media networks of peer support with avenues of accessing specialist support. These were adopted and developed much more intensely in response to the pandemic in order to adapt to the restrictions and closure for public safety reasons of face-to-face services including statutory young carers' services in each local authority.

The Delivery Plan aims to build on these to further the reach of such schemes.

#### Action

- Share best practice on local schemes providing equipment, resources and IT skills and support to help unpaid carers make use of technology in order to maintain their own wellbeing and those they care for.

#### Priority 1

There is a significant overlap with providing appropriate IAA and the identification young carers. The aims under Priority 1 to improve the recognition and identification of young carers will undoubtedly assist in the provision of age-appropriate signposting and support. As well as helping professionals and practitioners to identify young carers, actions related to training will ensure they have the knowledge to inform and guide families through the support available to them.

#### Actions

- Review the wealth of training options currently offered across Wales, identify gaps and explore options to develop and share examples of best practice to support professionals in a variety of different settings. As part of the review, explore the inclusion of modules on Welsh language needs, and the importance of identifying and meeting the needs of marginalised and seldom-heard groups, and young carers.
- Explore options for including mandatory pre and post qualification training and Continuing Professional Development for health and social care workers to help them identify and meet the needs of unpaid carers.

#### Existing support

A number of statutory and voluntary services already provide excellent support for young carers, including those who do not meet social care support thresholds. Carer support services are funded by local authorities which have a statutory duty to provide carer services, and can be delivered by the third sector or in-house using local authority employees. Support provided includes mentoring, counselling, peer support groups, befriending, provision of a dedicated key worker, homework and study groups, and days out/ social activities. Three levels of support are provided by young carers' services:

- Information via a website, newsletters and access to a controlled social media forum, so that young carers know where to turn if their support needs increase.
- Registration with the organisation as a member, but not actively attending a group or accessing services.
- Active registration with the organisation, attending projects, trips, activities and accessing one to one support.

National, regional and local funding for schemes that support young carers will continue throughout the life of the Strategy and Delivery Plan. Nevertheless, we

recognise that further consideration will be needed on gathering information on the effectiveness of these services to ensure they continue to improve and meet the IAA needs of young carers.

### **Priority 3: supporting life alongside caring**

#### **Themes**

- **Improving access to short breaks and respite**
- **Extending access to psychological support**

The commitments and actions under this priority are likely to have a positive impact on children and young people who provide unpaid care.

#### **Barriers experienced by young carers**

Many young carers are unlikely to need help from formal services because they manage their caring role without too much difficulty. This is especially so for people whose time spent on caring is relatively small. Of the 7,544 carers aged 0-15 identified through the 2011 Census, approximately 78% provided 1-19 hours of care per week. 802 provided 50 hours per week or more of care, which represents 0.14% of children in Wales.

Nevertheless, although caring can often be a fulfilling and rewarding role, it can also be hugely demanding and young carers can neglect their own needs and wellbeing. Carers of all ages more often than not put the needs of the person they care for first, which can result in them reaching crisis point, particularly if preventative health measures have been put off. Young carers often report stress due to worrying about their cared for person's wellbeing.

Research has found that young carers often talk about feeling tired and under pressure. Many experience traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income or housing, and seeing the effects of an illness or addiction on the person they care for. All these things alongside the pressures of school or college and the social isolation experienced by many, can lead to stress, anxiety and depression (Carers Trust Wales, 2018). Research carried out by Carers Trust Wales and the University of Nottingham in 2013 found that almost a third of young carers surveyed (29%), reported that their own physical health was 'just OK', and 38% reported having a mental health problem.

Carers Trust Wales' more recent survey in 2020 found that 37% of young carers said their mental health was worse than it was before the pandemic began, and 20% of young carers were struggling to access any emotional support. 1 in 5 young carers were unable to take any break from their caring role. Breaks can be very beneficial for young and young adult carers, giving them time to recharge and do things they enjoy. 15% of young carers made it clear that spending time away from the person they cared for had helped them to be able to cope during lockdown.

Families with young carers are more likely to experience poverty, therefore it is important that short break options to support the social lives of young carers do not require personal contributions. Transport can also be a barrier for young carers accessing these options. (LGA, 2018).

#### **Intended positive impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan**

The Strategy and Delivery Plan recognise that respite and flexible short break options can be a vital part of the care and support young carers require to cope with their caring role and can temporarily reduce caring responsibilities. The commitments and actions under Priority 3 to improve access to short break options will allow young carers to enjoy social opportunities with their peers or families, improve the balance in their lives between caring responsibilities and enjoying childhood and family relationships outside of a caring role.

Respite and activities are positively viewed by young carers and their families and often described as opportunities to give children their childhood back (Donnellan, 2017). We will look at how we can implement the recommendations of the report '[What a difference a break makes: a vision for the future of short breaks for unpaid carers in Wales](#)' and ensure that short break options are available that are age-appropriate and support young carers to achieve positive wellbeing outcomes.

#### Action

- Review the recommendations and 12 principles in the report '*What a difference a break makes: a vision for the future of short breaks for unpaid carers in Wales*' and work together to agree a route for implementation.

Whole family breaks give families and young carers time to bond and offer an opportunity to spend time together in a leisure context where any disability needs are accommodated for, removing stress from the holiday experience (Whitley and Wooldridge, 2017). Taking a whole family approach and being able to accommodate health needs of the cared for person can help young carers feel they do not need to worry about the impact of taking a break from caring.

Respitivity is a Scottish Government funded project which has been running since 2015. The model encourages carers' centres to build relationships with local businesses, such as hotels, B&Bs, restaurants and other leisure providers, to encourage the donation of a range of free gifts, breaks and experiences to unpaid carers in the area. We will be exploring how the Scottish Respitivity model of working with tourism and hospitality sectors in Wales to offer short breaks, can be replicated in Wales.

#### Action

- Develop a Welsh model of respitivity, drawing on learning from Scotland and All Wales Forum of Parents and Carer's Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant funded project 'Caring Communities of Change'.

Young carers value opportunities to socialise, especially in a peer support settings with other young carers who understand and can relate to their own experiences. Our short breaks grant to local authorities in 2021/22 is providing much needed innovative services to young carers to allow them to have a break from their caring role. As well as offering face-to-face group respite with their peers, local authorities are also using the grants to provide cinema tickets and facilitate days out for young carers, including transport. At-home activities such as arts and crafts are also being funded through the grant.

#### Action

- Fund and deliver short break options to meet the spike in demand as lockdown restrictions are eased. Provide much needed traditional sitting and replacement care services, work across sectors and with local communities to develop more innovative approaches.

The benefits of emotional support include building young people's resilience to cope with the demands of caring responsibilities, and also acknowledges that there can be emotional difficulties associated with being part of a family which is affected by mental health, disability or substance misuse.

Under Priority 3, we will also continue to invest in a range of psychological support and to explore how emerging new models of support for unpaid carers, including young carers, during the pandemic can lead to improvements in the delivery of services in the future.

#### Actions

- Ensure that unpaid carers are considered in wider policy development and implementation relating to mental health.
- Raise practitioner awareness of the local psychological support available so that they can offer services to unpaid carers to meet the outcomes identified following a carers' needs assessment.

#### Priority 1

Again, there is an overlap between providing young carers with appropriate emotional support and the recognition and identification of young carers, particularly in schools where the staff are in constant contact with children and young people. Much of the activity under the Welsh Government's Together for Mental Health Plan is focused on the needs of young people, including increased funding to help school pupils access school based counselling or CAMHS provision.

For example, pastoral support in schools can be used to help young carers to access support for emotional wellbeing, as well as referring on to counselling services. Some schools in Wales provide lunchtime clubs specifically for young carers. The actions under Priority 1 related to accreditation schemes and training for practitioners will contribute to supporting young carers with the emotional impact of their caring role.

### **Priority 4: supporting unpaid carers in education and the workplace**

#### **Themes**

- **Encouraging local authorities to support state funded schools to identify young carers**
- **Working with employers and their representative bodies to promote carer friendly workplaces**
- **Promoting financial resilience**

The commitments and actions under this priority are likely to have a positive impact on children and young people who provide unpaid care.

#### **Barriers experienced by young carers**

All of the national priorities and their proposed actions relate equally to unpaid carers of all ages and backgrounds. However, most young carers under the age of 18 are at school or attending college and therefore need to balance their learning and personal development with their caring responsibilities. 2011 Census figures show that there is at least one young carer in every class, however more recent research

suggests that the real figure is closer to four in every class (Carers Trust Wales, 2018).

The impact of juggling caring responsibilities with learning on young carers has been well documented. Responses to our consultation raised problems with school attendance and completing homework, feelings of isolation, loneliness and stress, and in some households, young carers may also struggle with a lack of suitable space in the home to study.

In 2019, the Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiry reported that 27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss school or experience educational difficulties, and young carers on average cut short or miss 48 days of school a year.

In 2013, research conducted by the Children's Society found that young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level. There is a one in three chance that a young carer in year 9 will become NEET (not in education, employment or training) between the ages of 16 and 19, compared to a one in four risk for those without caring responsibilities.

More recent evidence published by Public Health Wales and Swansea University (2021) shows that young carers continue to be less likely to be in full time education, miss more school days, are more likely to have lower educational attainment levels, experience worse mental wellbeing and be at a higher risk of disengaging from learning.

Carers Trust Wales (2020) have reported that as a result of the pandemic and lockdown, 45% of young carers surveyed said that they were unable to spend enough time on their schoolwork, and 58% felt that their education was suffering. Problems with school attendance or attainment can impact on the future of young carers. It can be difficult for young carers to think about the future when their focus is on more immediate concerns.

Many young carers report a lack of understanding by friends and peers about what it means to be a young carer. Young carers are also more likely to be bullied, with a quarter of young carers reporting they have been bullied at school because of their caring role. For many young carers, a lack of support and understanding at school had a detrimental impact not just on their ability to achieve academically, but also on their wider health and wellbeing. (HSCS Committee, 2019)

### **Intended positive impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan**

The commitments and actions under Priority 4 emphasise the importance of identifying young carers within education and training settings so that they can be made aware of and helped to access their rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Priority 4 also recognises the need for a strong connection between schools and their local young carers' services so that young carers are fully supported. Many schools have initiatives in place to raise awareness of young carers and to provide support where it is needed. For example, some schools have identified a lead for young carers to oversee the support young carers receive and signpost to young carers services. Actions have been developed under this priority to ensure good practice examples like this are applied more consistently. For example:

#### Actions

- Promote individual school young carers champions and promote best practice, for example as identified by the 2019 Estyn Thematic Review.
- Develop a network of school champions across regions. Encourage champions to take a 'whole school' approach.
- Promote cultural change and raise awareness of young and young adult carers amongst education professionals and their needs for help and support, and signposting to local authority and commissioned carers' services.
- Use existing resources to help promote identification of carers by education bodies and providers, and identify needs amongst professionals for new information materials / online resources or training.

Facilitating education opportunities that are flexible and adapted to the caring commitments of young carers is also critical in supporting young carers to remain in education, training or employment. Due to constraints on their time, young carers may feel that these opportunities are beyond their reach.

#### Actions

- Use national plans and mechanisms such as the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) to help identify young carers as being vulnerable learners and at increased risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).
- Encourage organisations to offer flexible learning, modular study and micro-credentials which benefit unpaid carers

Opportunities to earn qualifications in skills that young carers may have developed through their caring role can also empower young people and increase their access to future employment. Caring for family members can prepare young people with transferable skills such as (Demushi, 2015):

- communication and translation
- nurturing and empathy
- multitasking
- time management
- advocacy

We know from feedback that many unpaid carers want to have their skills acquired through their caring role to be recognised by others. Learning for Living is designed to help unpaid carers to identify and articulate the unique skills they have gained from their experience of caring. This accredited course is designed for all ages of carer and will give those completing the course a "digital badge" which can be used with their current employer, or when seeking a new job.

#### Actions

- Promote Carers Wales accredited e-learning course 'Learning for Living' for unpaid carers to identify transferable skills gained through caring; and other relevant learning provision.
- Work with representative national bodies including HEFCW, Colegau Cymru and Open University and Welsh universities to encourage all ages of carer to access skills development courses / professional development opportunities

Priority 4 also aims to improve the financial resilience of unpaid carers, recognising that unpaid carers of all ages are at greater risk of experiencing poverty. For example, small grants can remove financial barriers for young carers and provide access to fundamentals of life such as driving lessons, revision materials, clothes, or household items. Simplicity in applying for financial support is paramount because sometimes young carers may be unwilling to ask for support in filling out complex

applications.

#### Actions

- Promote and support carers in accessing a range of welfare benefits, financial support information and services.
- Promote Welsh financial support mechanisms for students and awareness of support schemes, including student loans, as well as support such as university bursaries for unpaid carers.

Under Priority 2 we will also:

- Ensure the needs of unpaid carers are considered in the development of income maximisation policy and a Welsh benefits system.

### **Charter for Unpaid Carers**

The commitment in the strategy to create a Charter for Unpaid Carers aims to reduce disparity in terms of the support available to unpaid carers between different health boards and local authorities.

The Charter for Unpaid Carers is likely to have a positive impact on children and young people who provide unpaid care. The aim of the Charter will be to ensure that all unpaid carers, including young carers, receive the level of support that they are entitled to from professionals, services and organisations. The Charter is still being developed and will be published at a later date than the Delivery Plan.

The rights contained in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 apply to all ages of unpaid carer, including those of children. Whilst we are creating a single Charter document (which will be available online and in other formats including paper), it is important that the Charter can be understood and used by children and young people as well as adults.

In order to ensure the experiences of young carers are reflected in the Charter, the co-production process will include their voices, working with organisations which represent them as well as seeking opportunities for direct contact with young and young adult carers.

### **Impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan on children and young people who do not provide unpaid care**

While the intentions of the Strategy and Delivery Plan are clearly aimed at improving support for unpaid carers, including those under 18 years of age, it is important to acknowledge the potential positive impacts for children and young people who do not provide unpaid care themselves.

The onset of a disability, illness, addiction or mental health challenge is a major life event that can affect all members of the household regardless of whether they are responsible for meeting care needs, including children and young people.

The impacts can include the subsequent changes in household income as a result of higher expenditure and lower earnings, and the increased risk of entering poverty. Social exclusion may also be experienced depending on the situation that has led to the care needs. This links to wider initiatives and conversations tackling the stigma associated with disability, addiction and mental health needs. And the emotional

impact, stress and worry of living with someone with care needs cannot be underestimated.

Each of our renewed four national priorities and the Charter for Unpaid Carers aim to support all ages of unpaid carers to access their entitlements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, provide financial support and schemes to alleviate financial hardship, and ensure they are able to maintain their health and emotional wellbeing. Reducing the challenges that adult sibling or parent carers face in their care role can help to reduce the level of care that children undertake, and have an indirect positive effect as a result of a less stressful family environment.

## **UNCRC articles most relevant to the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and supporting Delivery Plan**

All children, including young carers, have rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These rights should not be restricted just because a child lives within a family where someone needs care and support.

We are confident that the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its Delivery Plan will not lead to a discriminatory application of the Convention. The rationale for the proposals contained within the Strategy and Plan is that they are in the best interests of children and young people who provide unpaid care.

Below is a table of the UNCRC articles that are considered the most relevant to the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and the supporting Delivery Plan.

<b>Article</b>	<b>Links to the Strategy and Delivery Plan for Unpaid Carers</b>
<p><b>Article 2: Non-discrimination</b></p> <p>The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.</p>	<p>Young carers are at greater risk of being disadvantaged educationally and socially due to living in a home where someone is disabled or long-term sick.</p> <p>The Strategy and Delivery Plan will be implemented with attention paid to the needs and rights of young carers, even if this is not explicitly stated in the action.</p>
<p><b>Article 3: Best interests of the child</b></p> <p>The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.</p>	<p>Young carers deserve concern. The Strategy and Delivery Plan, and the policies and budgets required to deliver them are intended to support them in achieving their developmental goals and rights under the UNCRC.</p>
<p><b>Article 4: Implementation of the Convention (making rights real)</b></p> <p>Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.</p>	<p>Public services have a role to play in supporting young carers to reach their potential. Actions in the Delivery Plan include sharing of good practice across local authorities, health boards and the third sector to improve services for young carers across Wales.</p>



### **Article 5: Parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities**

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up, so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.

### **Article 12: Respect for the views of the child**

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

### **Article 15: Freedom of association (setting up or joining groups)**

Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Public services have a role to play in supporting families to nurture young carers and help them protect young carers in the family from assuming inappropriate duties. This may include providing support to other family members to reduce the risk of inappropriate caring which harms their development.

Actions in the Delivery Plan will improve support to unpaid carers, including parent carers. Reducing the challenges they experience will have a positive impact on young carers in the family.

The commitments and actions under Priority 3 also recognise that respite and short breaks can be a vital part of the care and support young carers require to support a life alongside their caring role.

Young carers should be fully involved in decisions relating to those they care for, particularly those that affect their own health and wellbeing (for example: decisions about how much care they provide and who else should be involved in supporting the family). Where a young carer cannot advocate for themselves regarding their desired outcomes in a needs assessment, they can ask a family member e.g. parent, or a professional advocacy service to support them.

Actions to improve carers' needs assessments, as well as raising awareness of the needs of young carers among schools, statutory services and through hospital discharge are intended to help support and involve young carers in decisions about the person they care for.

Welsh Government will also continue to invest in engagement with young carers to inform our policy and practice

Research has found that peer support groups are a valued source of support for young carers.

The Strategy and Delivery Plan recognise that respite and short breaks can be a vital part of the care and support young carers require to support a life alongside their caring role. Priority 3 in particular acknowledges that respite can take many forms, including time to 'switch off' and enjoy time with family and friends, take up a hobby or exercise class, pursue education and training or go on a short break with the person they care for or on their own.

### **Article 16: Right to privacy**

Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life, including protecting children from unlawful attacks that harm their reputation.

### **Article 17: Access to information from the media**

Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

### **Article 24: Health and health services**

Every child has the right to the best possible health.

Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

### **Article 26: Social security**

Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

### **Article 27: Adequate standard of living**

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

### **Article 28: Right to education**

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 29: Goals of education

We are confident that none of the commitments contained in the strategy affect a child's right to privacy.

For young carers this includes their rights, including their right not to provide care they do not wish to provide, and information on how they can be supported.

Priority 2 aims to ensure that all unpaid carers have access to the right information and advice at the right time and in an appropriate format.

The implementation of actions to improve information, advice and assistance (and carers' needs assessments) will take into account the needs of young people to ensure it is accessible and tailored to them. Further consideration will be given on gathering information specifically on the experiences of young carers to facilitate this.

The Strategy and Delivery Plan aim to support unpaid carers of all ages to improve their health and wellbeing outcomes through a range of commitments, most notably priorities 3 and 4.

The commitment in the Strategy to create a Charter for Unpaid Carers aims to reduce disparity in terms of the support available to unpaid carers, including young carers, between different health boards and local authorities.

Young carers may experience poverty and social isolation or exclusion due to their family's financial circumstances.

For example: Households that contain a disabled adult experience higher rates of poverty. The average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer.

Priority 4 includes actions to improve the financial resilience of unpaid carers and their families.

Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level and there is a one in three chance that a young carer in year 9 will become NEET (not in education, employment or training) between the ages of 16 and 19, compared to a one in four chance for those without caring responsibilities and this can result in unemployment, reduced earnings, poor health

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

#### **Article 31: leisure, play and culture**

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

and depression.

Improving access to education and training for young carers is integral to Priority 4. The actions under this priority also respond to the need for a strong connection between schools and their local young carers' services so that young carers are fully supported.

Young carers' responsibilities can prevent them socialising with other children or young people.

The actions under Priority 3 are likely to have a positive impact on children and young people with caring responsibilities. The Strategy recognises that respite and short breaks can be a vital part of the care and support young carers require to cope with their caring role.

## **Effect of the Strategy and Delivery Plan on different groups of children**

An analysis of the impact of caring on children and young people has been undertaken as part of the suite of impact assessments that form the Integrated Impact Assessment. The key findings have been set out below.

As set out above, the Strategy for Unpaid carers and its Delivery Plan are likely to have a positive impact on children and young people who provide unpaid care. Nevertheless, consideration of the needs of different groups of young carers will form a vital component of implementation to ensure the intended benefits are realised for all young carers.

### Young carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities

Carers UK (2011) highlighted research that found young carers from ethnic minority communities in England take on caring roles that are beyond their age. Many are taking on the role of interpreters or translators in visits to the doctors or the hospital where they are privy to hard hitting information like long term or life ending illnesses, for example, malaria, HIV or AIDS, cancer and psychosis. This experience was repeated in response to our consultation.

At the Ministerial Advisory Meeting for Unpaid Carers in January 2021, members discussed the needs of 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.

Carers UK concluded that these additional responsibilities have resulted in young carers from ethnic minority communities underachieving in education and suffering from poor mental and physical health.

Carers UK have also highlighted research showing that young carers are reluctant to come forward due to unwanted interventions, particularly the fear that they will be put into care or the family will be separated.

#### Young carers from economically disadvantaged households

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2015) has reported that young carers may experience poverty and social isolation or exclusion due to their family's financial circumstances. According to the Children's Society (2013) the average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer.

Changes in the household's income and in work patterns (including one or both parents becoming unemployed) increase the risk of poverty for young carers. Households that contain a disabled adult experience higher rates of poverty and that more than a third of children living with a disabled adult live in low income households (Parckar, 2008). More than half of families with a disabled child are living in or on the margins of poverty (Joseph Roundtree Foundation, 2000), which is likely to affect the experience of young sibling carers.

When there is a sudden deterioration in a family member's condition or they have an accident, the fall in disposable income from changes in employment or higher expenditure can be significant (Commission for Rural Communities, 2009).

In June 2020 Carers Trust Wales surveyed 366 carers aged between 12 and 25 to understand their experiences of living and caring during the pandemic. They found that 9% of young carers (up to the age of 18) surveyed found it difficult to access basic things like food and medicine.

#### Young carers living in rural areas

There is limited research that specifically analyses the experiences of young carers living in rural locations in Wales. Nevertheless, the available research suggests that young carers in rural areas carry out similar caring tasks but may face additional challenges such as more dispersed facilities and services.

Research in 2009 carried out by the Commission for Rural Communities in England reported a number of findings that are likely to be applicable. For example,

- For many young carers, living in rural areas compounded the limited access to social and economic opportunities because of the lack of public transport and their parent's mobility problems.
- Living in a rural area presents additional barriers for those who have become disabled and their families, as well as affecting the way in which children experience the onset of disability. The level of social exclusion is compounded by remoteness and the corresponding lack of transport and distance from services, as well as oft-times discriminatory attitudes from local communities.
- The extra costs associated with providing community care services over large sparsely populated rural areas led to inflexible home care scheduling that did not always fit around needs of the whole family.
- Rural areas in general have fewer contact points for advice and information and the families interviewed for the study were often unaware of the support available to them. Some young people were left to find out about services for

themselves. Accessing information through alternative sources such as the internet is particularly difficult in rural areas, not only because of limited broadband coverage but also because the cost may be prohibitive. Internet access also varies significantly between regions.

- Some families may be reluctant to come forward because they are afraid of being stigmatised. They may also feel that doing so will compromise their privacy, which is more likely to be the case in smaller communities.
- Lower numbers of service users mean specialist providers do not consider a service viable in rural areas which results in local services having shorter opening hours, or being located further away. The refusal to give appointments or make home visits, as well as rigid opening hours and long response times were all mentioned as problems in the case of GP and hospital services. This meant that the young people had to arrange transport or take care of their parents while they waited for professional help. The lack of transport services meant that individuals had to rely on friends and family to take them to appointments. Sometimes there was no choice but for the young person to take them.

### Children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs can include violence, abuse, and growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems. Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect how the body responds to stress. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood.

In Wales the term ACEs has been in use for over 20 years to describe a set of ten specific events and circumstances. Studies from across the world have consistently demonstrated a strong association between ACEs and poorer outcomes across the life course. This includes the studies in Wales from Public Health Wales, which were influential in the Welsh Government's decision to prioritise action on ACEs during the Fifth Assembly term. The review has demonstrated the existence of a robust body of consistent evidence underpinning ACEs and strong support for the Welsh Government's decision to prioritise action on ACEs. The review has demonstrated how the recognition of ACEs has become well embedded across Welsh Government policy and, pleasingly, how the Welsh Government's adoption of ACEs has influenced the development of UK Government policy in some non-devolved areas.

<https://gov.wales/review-adverse-childhood-experiences-ace-policy-report.html#section-64137>

However, this is an area where limited research is available with regards to young carers specifically. We do know that there are young people supporting parents or family members with substance use problems and mental health conditions. Around 40% of carers across the UK have high levels of anxiety or depression, with young carers known to have a higher than average prevalence of self-harm. (Royal College of General Practitioners, 2014).

The Commission for Rural Communities in England (2009) referenced the impact of caring on children who could be 'in need' or 'at risk' of neglect or abuse.

- Only a few of the young people in the study were receiving support through children's services and the overwhelming majority had parents with alcohol or mental health problems. These young people were more likely to have spent time

living away from their parents or to have experienced living with domestic violence. It is unlikely that children receiving support this way were conceptualised as 'young carers' but rather as children 'in need' or 'at risk' of neglect or abuse.

- This concurs with other research. The National Survey of Young Carers found that just over a tenth of the 6,000 young carers that they surveyed had been assessed under the Children Act (1989). The authors of the survey hypothesised that, because just under a quarter of those assessed had parents or other relatives with drug or alcohol problems, there may have been child protection concerns that led to children's services involvement, rather than because of concerns over their vulnerability as carers.
- Ofsted (2009) also found that, while councils assessed young people when there were clear child protection concerns, they did not consistently consider other 'young carers' as meeting the criteria for a social care assessment.

#### Young carers in education or at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

Research by Carers Trust Wales in 2018 found that risk factors for becoming NEET included being a young carer. Young carers are more likely than the national average to be NEET between the ages of 16 and 19.

Young carers are more likely to be bullied in school, to have missed days of school and have fallen asleep in school in the preceding week.

In terms of attainment, research has found that on average young carers' attainment was lower at a group level than that for their peers who did not undertake unpaid care (Webb, 2016).

During the pandemic in 2020, Carers Trust Wales survey of young carers found that 45% of young carers who responded reported that they were not able to spend enough time on their schoolwork and 58% felt that their education was suffering. 42% of young carers would like more support with their education.

However, for some young carers, studying proved to be a valuable opportunity to focus on something other than caring. Almost 1 in 5 found that studying helped them to cope. Young people identified that lockdown had given them more time to learn skills, with siblings or those they care for. 44% of young carers had learnt a new skill such as cooking, during that time. 1 in 10 young carers also described that support from school or an individual teacher has helped them to cope with life since the Coronavirus.

#### Young female/ male carers

Both young women and men are carers. Previous research has found that girls were more involved in caring tasks - particularly as they got older. A survey of young carers in contact with support services in the UK (Dearden & Becker, 2004) found that 85% of female young carers carried out domestic tasks, compared to 69% of boys. Furthermore, they established that almost twice as many female young carers in the sample carried out intimate care compared to male young carers. Many of the young women spoke about having more responsibilities than their brothers.

More recent research published by Public Health Wales in 2021 found that males and females in the 16-22 age group are equally likely to be young carers. However, analysis of the census data suggests that young female carers are more likely to

report poorer wellbeing than their male counterparts.

### Disabled young carers

Research has found that young carers in England are 1.5 times more likely to have a special educational need or disability themselves, with over 2000 reporting 'bad' or 'very bad' health problems (Hounsell, 2013).

### Children who are Welsh speakers

The language rights of children are strengthened by the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 from the National Assembly for Wales which gives further effect in Wales to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention protects the rights of children to use their own language.

As many Welsh-speaking children are first language Welsh speaker or spend much of their time using Welsh for example if they are in a Welsh language school, (particularly primary age young children), the strategic framework for Welsh language in health, social services and social care identifies children and young people as a group who have greater need for Welsh language services. Where children or young people want or need their unpaid carer services provided to them in Welsh, they should be provided.

As with adults, young carers and young people should be given the "Active offer" when accessing health and social care services, which is to have the choice of language preference identified with them, and to provide services in their language of choice. They should not need to ask for services in Welsh. This is embedded in the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014, as well as being a necessity amongst Welsh public services to which the Welsh Language Standards are applied.

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## Equality Impact Assessment

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### **Summary**

A full and in depth Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out on the Strategy for Unpaid Carers. This was submitted for consideration by the Deputy Minister for Social Services alongside the Strategy - MA/JM/1259/21.

A summary of the EIA for the Strategy was also published on the Welsh Government website: [Strategy for unpaid carers: equality impact assessment | GOV.WALES](#)

The EIA for the Strategy provides a detailed analysis of research and evidence regarding unpaid carers who may have experience of one or more protected characteristic, and the potential impact of the Strategy's commitments.

This EIA for the Strategy's supporting Delivery Plan does not seek to duplicate that work. Instead, we have considered where the EIA for the Strategy identified potential barriers to achieving its intended benefits and how the actions in the Delivery Plan propose to mitigate or take into account those barriers.

## **How does the policy eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act?**

The actions within the Delivery Plan are not discriminatory or otherwise unlawful under the Equality Act and it is unlikely the Delivery Plan will have a discriminatory effect. Nevertheless, Welsh Government will monitor the implementation of the plan and remain alert to new evidence suggesting that discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.

## **How does the policy advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?**

The EIA for the Strategy describes how it will help to 'remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic'. A number of areas were identified as requiring further consideration within the Delivery Plan. These include:

### **Improving the identification of unpaid carers who are older, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, and/ or male.**

The evidence analysis has shown that carers who are older, male or from ethnic minority communities are less likely to identify with the term 'carer'. This may mean that information or support directed at unpaid carers doesn't appear relevant to those family and friends who provide support.

The commitments under Priority 1 seek to address this by raising awareness amongst unpaid carers of how self-identification can lead to financial, emotional and practical support, as well as raising public awareness of the valuable contributions of unpaid carers.

The need for tailored communications to reach and support carers from a variety of backgrounds has been recognised in the Delivery Plan. This will be achieved by working with carers and their representative organisations to ensure that messages are accessible and relevant. Where these messages are circulated is as important as what they communicate in terms of reaching those less likely to identify themselves as unpaid carer. We will be considering where messages are placed so that they are available in locations that are accessible to a diverse range of people. We are also conscious of the need to improve awareness of the support available to people who provide care and support even if they do not identify with the term 'unpaid carer'. We will work with stakeholders in the public and third sector as well with carers themselves to co-produce language principles that are recognised by a wider audience and reflects their personal experiences of providing care.

#### Actions

- Work with unpaid carers with a diverse range of lived experiences, and representative organisations to ensure messaging is accessible to a broad range of people. For example in Welsh, in ethnic minority languages, in British Sign Language, audio or braille, easy read, and in formats that are accessible for children and young people.
- Work with stakeholders to think creatively about how we can promote messages in places where a broad range of unpaid carers will access them. For example, learning environments, youth/ social clubs, local shops and private businesses, community centres etc.



- Work together to establish a set of language principles for use around all aspects of unpaid care, support and awareness raising. As part of this action we will:
  - Ensure that the principles capture the fundamental need for many people to be able to access services in Welsh.
  - Ensure that the principles reflect the need to ensure communication is user-friendly for unpaid carers with a broad range of lived experiences, language requirements and with accessible communication needs.
  - Avoid stigmatising language and prioritise where possible the caring relationship between the carer and those they care for (e.g. family member, friend, neighbour).

### **Improving the health and wellbeing of older carers and disabled carers.**

The evidence analysis has demonstrated the detrimental effect of caring duties on some carers' health and wellbeing, with older carers at higher risk than younger carers. Disabled carers also face particular challenges to their health and wellbeing that are often exacerbated by their caring role.

The Strategy aims improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all unpaid carers through a range of commitments, most notably under Priority 3, supporting a life alongside caring. This recognises that respite and flexible short break options can be a vital part of the care and support unpaid carers require to manage their caring role and can temporarily reduce caring responsibilities. Commitments under this priority include understanding how break options can be redefined to meet individual need and exploring innovative approaches to break options. It is likely that older and disabled carers will equally benefit from the commitments in the Strategy, and a number of actions are included in the Delivery Plan that will help to support the wellbeing of older and disabled unpaid carers.

**'What a difference a break makes'**, funded by Welsh Government and developed in partnership with Carers Trust Wales and academics at Swansea and Bangor Universities, sets out a vision for short breaks in Wales. The document will be fundamental in shaping our next steps towards making sure that all carers can access appropriate respite. It includes 12 key principles, co-produced with carers, which underpin a future approach to developing short break options in Wales. One of these principles is to provide personalised, flexible and responsive break options that reflect the diversity of the carer population. In practice, this means that break options recognise important factors relating to diversity and inclusion, for example, age, disability, language and culture.

The Delivery Plan also recognises how existing schemes are supporting the health and wellbeing of unpaid carers in Wales by offering a short period of rest from their caring role, as well as activities for the individual being cared for. For example; in Gwynedd, co-working between Older Adults and Learning Disabilities Services has been used to create bespoke support to individuals, allowing carers to have a break. This includes individuals having access to activities and classes during their day care session.

#### Actions

- Review the recommendations and 12 principles in the report *'What a difference a break makes: a vision for the future of short breaks for unpaid carers in Wales'* and work together to agree a route for implementation.
- NEWCIS to promote their successful model of a short breaks fund to localities across Wales.

- Fund and deliver short break options to meet the spike in demand as lockdown restrictions are eased. Provide much needed traditional sitting and replacement care services, work across sectors and with local communities to develop more innovative approaches.
- Fund and deliver activities that offer a short break from caring and support wellbeing. Current examples include the Carers Wales Me Time sessions and Carers Wales online Wellbeing Hub.

**Improving the accessibility, quality and appropriateness of services that support unpaid carers in their caring role, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic carers, Gypsy and Irish Traveller carers, carers with different religions or beliefs, older carers and LGBT carers.**

The evidence analysis found a number of barriers reported by unpaid carers with one, or a combination, of these protected characteristics. Some barriers were not unique to these unpaid carers but did tend to be experienced more strongly or differently by them, revealing an inequality of service delivery and outcomes.

The rights contained in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 apply to all unpaid carers. The commitment in the Strategy to create a Charter for Unpaid Carers aims to ensure that all unpaid carers receive the level of support that they are entitled to from professionals, services and organisations. The Charter is still being developed and will be published at a later date than the Delivery Plan. Whilst we are creating a single Charter document, it is important that the Charter is accessible to and used by a diverse range of people. In order to ensure the experiences of carers with protected characteristics under the Equality Act are reflected in the Charter the co-production process will endeavour to include voices from these communities and their representative organisations.

Under Priority 1, as well as helping professionals and practitioners to identify unpaid carers, actions related to training will ensure they have the knowledge to inform and guide families through the support available to them. It will be important that training provides the opportunity to learn how to identify and respond to the needs of unpaid carers from diverse groups so that services are well equipped to offer the best support possible.

Actions

- Review the wealth of training options currently offered across Wales, identify gaps and explore options to develop and share examples of best practice to support professionals in a variety of different settings. As part of the review above, explore the inclusion of modules on Welsh language needs, and the importance of identifying and meeting the needs of marginalised and seldom-heard groups, and young carers.
- Encourage organisations to appoint a carers champion, and support them in their role via existing and proposed resources and training.

Advocacy and empowerment can include co-production and involving unpaid carers from all backgrounds in shaping services and policy. Enabling unpaid carers to support service design can provide a greater awareness amongst professionals, as well as ensuring those services are developed with consideration of their needs at the forefront. Priority 1 includes the commitment to invest in mechanisms that support unpaid carers to have their voices heard at national, local and regional levels. We will do this by reviewing the membership of the Wales-level Carer Engagement Group to ensure it represents carers from a diverse range of backgrounds. The engagement group sits alongside the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and acts as a mechanism to ensure the carer voice and experience is heard there.

Local authorities will also be encouraged to share examples of best practice regarding their regional and local carer engagement panels and steering groups, so that the inclusion of the carer voice and experience is integral to the development and delivery of services.

#### Actions

- Review the membership of the Carer Engagement Group to ensure it includes representation from a diverse range of carer experience.
- Share examples of best practice regarding existing regional carer engagement panels or steering groups that facilitate the inclusion of the carer voice and experience in the development and delivery of services.
- Review the lessons learnt from the Regional Partnership Board spotlight event in June 2021 and explore how the suggestions made to support unpaid carer representatives can be implemented.
- Continue to fund and deliver carer representation training and carers' self-advocacy training via the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant.

The EIA for the Strategy describes how it will 'take steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it'. A number of areas were identified as requiring further consideration within the Delivery Plan. These include:

#### **Reducing the barriers faced by older carers when accessing statutory support services, including mental health support.**

Our evidence analysis found a number of reasons why some older carers were hesitant to approach social services, and therefore less likely to receive support in their caring role.

Commitments in the Strategy seek to encourage unpaid carers to seek support at the right time for their circumstances, to ensure information and advice is accessible, and to guarantee that unpaid carers have their eligible needs met. Many of the actions under Priority 1 regarding identifying and recognising unpaid carers and training for practitioners, Priority 3 to support unpaid carers access a short break from their caring role, as well as the proposed Charter for Unpaid Carers aim to reduce barriers to accessing statutory services for all carers, including older carers. Nevertheless, implementation of the Plan will require conscious consideration of the particular worries and concerns for older people.

The importance of support to help unpaid carers maintain their emotional resilience and wellbeing while caring is recognised in the Delivery Plan. As well as promoting preventative wellbeing activities, raising awareness of the availability of more intensive psychological support will also aim to be improved.

#### Actions

- Ensure that unpaid carers are considered in wider policy development and implementation relating to mental health.
- Raise practitioner awareness of the local psychological support available so that they can offer services to unpaid carers to meet the outcomes identified following a carers' needs assessment.
- Fund and deliver activities that offer a short break from caring and support wellbeing. Current examples include the Carers Wales Me Time sessions and Carers Wales online Wellbeing Hub.

## **Improved access to information, advice and assistance for older carers or disabled carers.**

The evidence analysis found particular barriers for older and disabled carers in accessing information, advice and assistance (IAA). Provision of appropriate IAA provides the vital first steps of a preventative approach and Priority 2 aims to ensure that all unpaid carers have access to the right information and advice at the right time and in an appropriate format.

Older carers have told us that information is not always accessible and some people feel angry about the increasing trend for only making information available online. Welsh Government and our delivery partners will be very conscious of the need to consider the needs of older carers and disabled carers when implementing and monitoring actions to improve IAA, to ensure IAA is accessible and tailored to them.

There is also a significant overlap with providing appropriate IAA and the identification of unpaid carers. The aims under Priority 1 to improve the recognition and identification of carers will undoubtedly assist in the provision of person-centred signposting and support. As well as helping professionals and practitioners to identify unpaid carers, actions related to training will ensure they are able to enhance their knowledge to inform and guide families through the support available and appropriate to their circumstances.

### Actions

- In terms of services and messaging for unpaid carers, ensure there are accessible alternatives for individuals who are unable or unwilling to access digital services.
- Work with unpaid carers with a diverse range of lived experiences, and representative organisations to ensure messaging is accessible to a broad range of people. For example in Welsh, in ethnic minority languages, in British Sign Language, audio or braille, easy read, and in formats that are accessible for children and young people.
- Review existing local and national information and support hubs and phone lines in order to explore options to promote and share best practice more widely. Examples include, the Carers Wales national advice line, the Gwent Carers Hub and the Ceredigion Carers Information Service.
- Share best practice on how organisations are providing resources, guidance and signposting in locations that are accessible to a wide range of unpaid carers, including individuals who are less likely to identify as unpaid carers. Work with partners and organisations in receipt of the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant to fill any gaps identified where some cohorts of unpaid carers may not be being reached.

The EIA for the Strategy describes how it will help to ‘encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low’. A number of areas were identified as requiring further consideration within the Delivery Plan. These include:

### **Encouraging employers to be more responsive to the needs of working age unpaid carers, particularly those who are disabled, from ethnic minority communities or who may have different needs because they are either male or female.**

The evidence analysis found that barriers to employment for unpaid carers tended to be different depending on their circumstances, and that diverse and tailored

approaches were needed in order to improve access to suitable employment opportunities.

Employers in Wales have a role to play ensure that working carers do not experience negative implications if they identify themselves as a carer. Unpaid carers should have access to meaningful support or adjustments to help them balance their responsibilities. The Strategy includes commitments to encourage employers to adapt their policies and practices, enabling unpaid carers to work and learn alongside their caring role.

#### Actions

- Use the Welsh Government's social partnership mechanisms to engage with the public, private and third sectors, including trade unions, to improve awareness and engagement in supporting unpaid carers in the workplace.
- Explore opportunities presented by future and new legislation, for example, proposals by the UK Government for new Flexible Working practices.
- Increase accessibility and membership of the Employers for Carers scheme, including raising awareness with working carers and their managers to know what support is available within organisations

Nevertheless, we recognise that further work will be needed as implementation of the Plan progress to identify whether more targeted activity is needed to address the specific barriers to employment for unpaid carers with certain protected characteristics.

### **Improvements to the respite and care services on offer to support working age unpaid carers.**

The evidence analysis found that a key barrier to working age unpaid carers accessing suitable employment was insufficient social care services, and in particular unreliable respite provision.

Commitments and actions in the Strategy and Delivery Plan, some of which have been outlined above, to improve access to respite and short breaks are intended to help carers in their life alongside caring, including facilitating opportunities for employment. Priority 4 also recognises the role employers have to play in providing flexible and considerate workplaces for unpaid carers. For example:

#### Actions

- Encourage employers in all sectors to implement carers leave policies (links with Employers for Carers activity).
- Encourage all public bodies to have a carer's policy, develop a wellbeing statement, and offer their employees a Carers' Passport scheme.
- Encourage public sector employers and others to identify a lead member of staff to promote unpaid carers initiatives and raise awareness of the impact of caring responsibilities on employees.

Nevertheless, there is further scope to explore how we can specifically address the barriers for working age carers identified by the evidence in relation to the availability, consistency and reliability of care services for the person being cared for. This can be explored in more detail during the implementation of the Delivery Plan and there may be opportunities to link in with the Rebalancing Care and Support agenda. The introduction of a strategic National Framework for care and support,

setting standards for commissioning practice, reducing complexity and rebalancing commissioning to focus on quality and outcomes will better enable the sector to achieve the vision set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

### **How does the policy foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?**

The Delivery Plan is not specifically intended to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people who share a protected characteristics. Nevertheless, the EIA has not identified any element in the Plan which would cause friction between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The EIA has not identified any impacts associated with the implementation of the Plan that may disproportionately negatively impact a particular protected group. In addition, the actions under Priority 1 do commit to addressing the stigma associated to the caring role, particularly when experienced by young carers.

### **How will you demonstrate the impact of this policy once implemented?**

We have clearly set out the actions and timescales for the successful implementation of the Strategy for Unpaid Carers in the Delivery Plan. The development of the plan has been led with advice and input from Working Groups, our Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Carers Engagement Group.

Our commitment to collecting and learning from the findings of research and data collection ensures that policies aimed at improving the experiences of unpaid carers are well-informed. Performance metrics will also help us to identify where the Strategy and supporting Delivery Plan are not achieving intended improvements and what action we need to take to improve implementation. Continuing to seek out research and data related to the experiences of carers with these protected characteristics, as well as engaging with stakeholders from these groups, will form a vital component of implementation to ensure the intended benefits are realised for all unpaid carers.

This EIA will be updated to analyse the potential impacts of the Delivery Plan on people with protected characteristics as monitoring information is collected. The EIA will be routinely reviewed to assess the actual impacts of the Plan and identify where mitigating action may be necessary to address any unintended negative impacts or to improve equality outcomes.

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## **Welsh Language Impact Assessment**

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### **Summary**

There are no negative impacts on the Welsh language resulting from the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Delivery Plan.

Activities taking place under the umbrella of the Strategy and Delivery Plan have scope to encourage improvements in the provision of information, advice and assistance, and short breaks services for unpaid carers in the Welsh language. The commitments under Priority 1 in the Strategy (identifying and valuing unpaid carers) reference the Welsh Language Strategy and the Active Offer.

The Charter for Unpaid Carers is also an important mechanism for clarifying expectations around the level of service and support unpaid carers should receive in line with their entitlements under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The Charter will also be a lever in ensuring organisations meet their legal duties to carers with regards to the Welsh language and the Active Offer.

The Delivery Plan explored opportunities to promote the Welsh language and as a result there is an action to proactively encourage the learning and use of the Welsh language as a short break from caring option.

## Introduction

The [Strategaeth ar gyfer gofalwyr di-dâl/ Strategy for Unpaid Carers](#) provides high-level direction around what is needed across the public sector to improve and develop person-centred information, advice, support and services for unpaid carers. It is supported by a Delivery Plan which sets out the actions the Welsh Government and our partners in the third and public sector will take to achieve the commitments in the Strategy. The new Strategy and its supporting Delivery Plan aim to secure the delivery of rights for unpaid carers created by our Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and its core principles.

The [Welsh Language Standards](#) are a set of legally binding requirements which apply to the Welsh Government. Under the Standards the Welsh language must be treated no less favourably than the English. The policy making standards under Part 4 section 29 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 require us to ensure that our policy making creates the best outcomes for the wellbeing of the Welsh language and users of the language. They require us to do three things:

- consider the effects or impacts of our policy decisions on the Welsh language (both positive and negative);
- consider how to increase positive effects, mitigate or reduce adverse effects and take all opportunities to promote the use of Welsh; and
- seek views on the effects on the Welsh language when engaging or consulting and to seek the view of Welsh speakers and users of the language.

These three matters have been considered for this Welsh Language Impact Assessment on the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its Delivery Plan.

### Context

For the year ending 31 March 2020 the Annual Population Survey reported that

- 28.3% of people aged three and over were able to speak Welsh. This figure equates to 855,200 people.
- 16.1% (486,100) of people aged three and over reported that they spoke Welsh daily, 4.8% (144,600) weekly and 5.9% (178,300) less often.

- 1.5% (46,600) reported that they never spoke Welsh despite being able to speak it, with the remaining 71.7% not able to speak Welsh.
- 32.7% (987,800) reported that they could understand spoken Welsh, 25.4% (767,700) could read and 23.2% (702,500) could write Welsh.

According to Stats Wales, as of March 2019, approximately 14,000 local authority staff in central management and support, social work and domiciliary services could speak Welsh.

[Cymraeg 2050 A million Welsh speakers](#) and the related [Work Programme for 2017-2021](#) is the Welsh Ministers' strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the use of the Welsh language. The Cymraeg 2050 Strategy sets out the Welsh Government's long-term approach to achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Delivery Plan were not primarily designed to contribute to the achievement of the objectives under the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. Where services are provided by the third or private sector rather than local authorities or health care services, the Strategy and Delivery Plan aim to take a proportionate approach to the Welsh language requirements of the Active Offer<sup>2</sup>, placing the emphasis on what matters to the individual receiving unpaid carer services.

[More Than Just Words](#) is the Welsh Government's strategic framework for developing Welsh language services in health and social care. One of the key principles of this is the Active Offer which means providing services in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. We have embedded the Active Offer throughout the Social Service and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. An individual's well-being, their wishes and feelings, and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them are at the heart of this Act. Our Codes of Practice require local authorities to make sure Welsh language services are offered to Welsh speakers without them having to request it. That means building rights into planning and delivery. Welsh language standards for the health boards and trusts support the drive to develop Welsh language services in health and social care provision.

## Consultation and engagement

The Welsh Language Standards require us to seek views on the effects on the Welsh language when engaging or consulting on policy, and to seek the view of Welsh speakers and users of the language.

The development of the Strategy has been progressed with the input of members of both the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers, and the Carers' Engagement Group. Both groups include unpaid carers from across Wales. Going forward we plan to review membership of these groups to ensure stronger representation of Welsh speakers and the Welsh language. The independent chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group, Arwel Ellis Owen, is a Welsh speaker and former chair of Social Care Wales and the Care Council and the Social Care Wales Boards. We will be

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<sup>2</sup> An 'Active Offer' simply means providing a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. The Welsh language should be as visible as the English language.



drawing on his wealth of experience to consider how we may further promote the Welsh Language through the implementation of the Strategy for Unpaid Carers and supporting Delivery Plan.

In March 2020, a specific workshop was held asking members of the Ministerial Advisory Group to suggest important topics and practical aspects affecting carers' day-to-day experiences. These suggestions informed the content of the public consultation document. Subsequent meetings of the Ministerial Advisory Group in 2020 discussed the draft consultation document prior to publication. These discussions are available to view at:

- [Grŵp Cynghori'r Gweinidog ar gyfer Gofalwyr | LLYW.CYMRU](#)
- <https://gov.wales/ministerial-advisory-group-carers>.

The Carers Engagement Group held five discussion and feedback sessions to engage with individuals beyond the membership of the group and their thoughts were published by Carers Trust Wales in both languages to encourage engagement with both Welsh and English speakers.

- <https://carers.org/around-the-uk-our-work-in-wales/grp-ymgysylltu-cenedlaethol-ar-gyfer-gofalwyr-a-wythnos-ymgysylltu>.

Again, these discussions informed the development of the consultation and the final Strategy.

The Welsh language was not raised as a concern or a priority by either group. However, it should also be noted that the consultation was developed in co-production with these groups during the early pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic, and so the immediate impact of the crisis was at the forefront of the minds of unpaid carers and public bodies. Nevertheless, we do acknowledge more could have been done to raise the Welsh language as a dedicated item for discussion. As a result we took steps to ensure the Welsh language was considered more proactively during the development of the Delivery Plan.

The public consultation document (published in [Welsh](#) and [English](#)) for the new Strategy for Unpaid Carers included specific questions requesting views as to the potential impact on the Welsh language (questions 30 and 31). The consultation was launched on 20 October 2020 with a closing date of 20 January 2021. 91 responses were received, including a response from the Welsh Language Commissioner. As identified in the summary of responses, there were 41 responses to question 30, and 25 replies to question 31 which specifically asked about potential opportunities and negative impacts on the Welsh language:

- <https://llyw.cymru/cynllun-cenedlaethol-i-ofalwyr>
- [consultation-on-a-carers-national-plan-for-wales-summary-of-responses.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Overall, the views of the respondents were that Wales is a bilingual nation and people should and need to be able to communicate in the language of their choice, therefore the new Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its supporting Delivery Plan provide an opportunity to reflect these important social, cultural, health and legal aspects. Delivery of services through a carer's language of choice was raised as an issue with regard to provision and access to information and services. The provision of care through the Welsh language was seen as very important where the person

being cared for has dementia. Services must be designed to meet the needs of the person, and for them to receive treatment and care through the medium of Welsh. A number of replies, including that of the Welsh Language Commissioner, emphasised the importance of the existing Active Offer.

Having reviewed this feedback, the text of the published Strategy was drafted to clearly indicate that Wales is a bilingual nation and therefore people should, and need to, be able to communicate in the language of their choice when accessing services to support them in their caring role.

In addition to considering the consultation feedback regarding the Welsh language when developing the Strategy, the process of compiling a Welsh Language Impact Assessment helped to identify the areas that we would need to respond to when developing the actions in the Delivery Plan, to ensure that the Plan positively influenced the accessibility of services in the Welsh language.

## **Potential impact of the Strategy and Delivery Plan on the Welsh Language**

The Welsh Language Standards require us to consider the effects or impacts of our policy decisions on the Welsh language (both positive and negative) and to consider how to increase positive effects, mitigate or reduce adverse effects and take all opportunities to promote the use of Welsh.

Below is an assessment of each national priority for unpaid carers and the related commitments and actions in the Strategy and Delivery Plan in relation to those requirements.

### **Priority 1: identifying and valuing unpaid carers**

#### ***Themes***

- **Valuing unpaid carers**
- **Raising awareness of unpaid carers**
- **Working with local authorities to improve carers' assessments**

There can be barriers to people identifying themselves as unpaid carers, meaning that the information available intended to support them doesn't appear relevant. It is important that information and messaging regarding support for unpaid carers is prominently presented in Welsh to ensure it is accessible to people who speak Welsh as a main or first language. Displaying Welsh and English side-by-side may also assist those learning the language, thereby providing an opportunity to promote the use of Welsh.

The commitments and actions under Priority 1 seek to raise awareness amongst unpaid carers of all ages of how self-identification can lead to financial, emotional and practical support. This includes ensuring messages are presented in Welsh.

#### Action

- Work with unpaid carers with a diverse range of lived experiences, and representative organisations to ensure messaging is accessible to a broad range of people. For example in

Welsh, in ethnic minority languages, in British Sign Language, audio or braille, easy read, and in formats that are accessible for children and young people.

- Work together to establish a set of language principles for use around all aspects of unpaid care, support and awareness raising. As part of this action we will:
  - Ensure that the principles capture the fundamental need for many people to be able to access services in Welsh.
  - Ensure that the principles reflect the need to ensure communication is user-friendly for unpaid carers with a broad range of lived experiences, language requirements and with accessible communication needs.
  - Avoid stigmatising language and prioritise where possible the caring relationship between the carer and those they care for (e.g. family member, friend, neighbour).

Not being recognised as an unpaid carer among health and social care professionals as well as in other services provided in the community can result in difficulties, for example when the person they care for is discharged from hospital, collecting medication, or in accessing transport or shopping. Services must be designed to meet the needs of the individual which includes receiving treatment and care through the medium of Welsh. Older people, people with learning disabilities or mental health issues, some young people and those living with dementia can experience difficulties in communicating their thoughts and emotions if not using their language of choice.

Measuring the Mountain is an evaluation project that took place over three years (2018-2020) to analyse people's experiences of care and support services, including those of unpaid carers. Stories among young carers 12-14 described a range of services that had been supportive, highlighting some of the broader opportunities that were available to support someone.

*I received support from [organisation] for emotional well-being. In my opinion it helped me a lot with coping with what I was going through. At first I was very nervous and scared but as it progressed it allowed me to open up and feel safe and secure. **It made me feel comfortable that she spoke both English and Welsh to me.** I feel it helped me have a different view on life and understand the issues better. Overall positive experience.*

The commitments and actions under Priority 1 seek to raise awareness amongst professionals who are most likely to have contact with unpaid carers across the statutory, private and third sectors, so that they can respond to their needs in line with a person-centred approach. Actions in the Delivery Plan are intended to raise awareness of the Welsh language needs of unpaid carers.

#### Action

- Review the wealth of training options currently offered across Wales, identify gaps and explore options to develop and share examples of best practice to support professionals in a variety of different settings. As part of the review, explore the inclusion of modules on Welsh language needs, and the importance of identifying and meeting the needs of marginalised and seldom-heard groups, and young carers.

Advocacy and empowerment can include co-production and involving unpaid carers in shaping of services and policy. Enabling carers who use and rely on the Welsh language to support service design can provide a greater awareness amongst professionals, as well as ensuring those services are developed with consideration of their needs at the forefront.

Priority 1 includes the commitment to invest in mechanisms that support unpaid carers to have their voices heard at national, local and regional levels. We will do this by reviewing the membership of the Wales-level Carer Engagement Group to ensure it represents Welsh-speaking carers. The engagement group sits alongside the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers and acts as a mechanism to ensure the carer voice and experience is heard there. Local authorities will also be encouraged to share examples of best practice regarding their regional and local carer engagement panels or steering groups so that the inclusion of the carer voice and experience, including carers who speak Welsh, is integral to the development and delivery of services.

- Review the membership of the Carer Engagement Group to ensure it includes representation from a diverse range of carer experience.
- Share examples of best practice regarding existing regional carer engagement panels or steering groups that facilitate the inclusion of the carer voice and experience in the development and delivery of services.
- Review the lessons learnt from the Regional Partnership Board spotlight event in June 2021 and explore how the suggestions made to support unpaid carer representatives can be implemented.
- Continue to fund and deliver carer representation training and carers' self-advocacy training via the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant.

For many Welsh speakers, language is an integral element of achieving their care and support. The SSWb Act's definition of well-being includes 'securing rights and entitlements'. For unpaid carers who are Welsh speakers, securing rights and entitlements will mean being able to use Welsh to communicate their support needs as equal partners. The commitment under Priority 1 to develop a range of solutions that enable local authorities to deliver timely and effective needs assessments extends to offering assessments in Welsh. Social Care Wales recently commissioned the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) to carry out a review of evidence relating to unpaid carers' needs assessments in Wales. The review focussed on the barriers and enablers to accessing a carers' needs assessment as well as the experiences of those who have had an assessment. Unfortunately, the review did not cover the accessibility or quality of needs assessments carried out in Welsh. We will need to consider how to fill this evidence gap and whether more work needs to be done to guarantee that carers are able to access their right to an assessment in Welsh.

#### Actions

- Use the findings from the SCIE research commissioned by Social Care Wales, Public Health Wales' Data Development Project, and data from the Performance and Improvement Framework to determine what specific actions are needed to improve the take up carers needs assessments.
- Work with SCW and local authorities to determine what further guidance and resources are needed to support the social care workforce with carers' needs assessments. This could include a review of existing sources of good practice guidance for professionals carrying out assessments, for example Rhondda Cynon Taff Carer Conversations guidance.

## **Priority Two: providing information, advice and assistance (IAA)**

### **Themes**

- **Raising awareness of ways to access information, advice and assistance**

## • Addressing the digital divide

Provision of appropriate IAA provides the vital first steps of a preventative approach and Priority 2 aims to ensure that unpaid carers have access to the right information and advice at the right time and in an appropriate format.

People choose to receive health and social care services in Welsh because that is their preference and right. For others, however, it is more than just a matter of choice, it is a matter of need. This is especially true for the elderly, people with dementia or a stroke, or young children who may only speak Welsh. Many people can only communicate and participate in their care or the care of a loved one effectively through the medium of Welsh. Service providers therefore have a responsibility to meet these Welsh language needs when compiling and providing IAA.

In 2018, the Fifth Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport (HSCS) Committee undertook an inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers of all ages in Wales. This included responses regarding the experiences of Welsh speakers accessing care and support services. Carers Trust Wales and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales highlighted the importance of being able to access information through the medium of Welsh. The Older People's Commissioner said "when you're in a caring situation, and it can be really difficult and you might be at a point of crisis, it's so important that you're able to access services in the Welsh language if that's what you want to do."

Welsh Government and our delivery partners will be very conscious of the need to consider the needs of Welsh-speakers when implementing and monitoring actions to improve IAA, to ensure IAA is accessible and tailored to them.

Actions under Priority 2 include sharing good practice across organisations and sectors. For example; health, social services and social care organisations promote the use of the 'Working Welsh' logo on staff uniforms, lanyards and e-mail signatures to enable people to identify Welsh speakers and start communicating through the medium of Welsh. This enables people to identify who can communicate in Welsh using a visual marker.

### Actions

- Review existing local and national information and support hubs and phone lines in order to explore options to promote and share best practice more widely. Examples include, the Carers Wales national advice line, the Gwent Carers Hub and the Ceredigion Carers Information Service.
- Share best practice on how organisations are providing resources, guidance and signposting in locations that are accessible to a wide range of unpaid carers, including individuals who are less likely to identify as unpaid carers. Work with partners and organisations in receipt of the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant to fill any gaps identified where some cohorts of unpaid carers may not be being reached.

We acknowledge there is a need to ensure information in Welsh is presented in a way that does not result in barriers for those with sensory impairments. For example, Measuring the Mountain found that the accessibility of information was raised most frequently by people with visual impairments, with one respondent commenting:

*"I have real difficulty getting information in a format I can make use of - the priority seems to be adhering to the Welsh language act whilst keeping paper use to a minimum such that information is jammed onto one side of paper in one language, or printed in alternating languages, usually in tiny print, or in a format that won't work*

*with my screen reader e.g. a pdf - screen-reader tech does not respond well to a mixture of languages. I would prefer there to be no Welsh in the information that I get so that it can be presented in a way that's actually accessible to me but that doesn't seem to be an option."*

Further work will be needed on gathering information about the effectiveness of IAA in meeting the needs of a broad range of people, and to explore how potentially competing requirements can be met in a way that does not exacerbate existing barriers.

### **Priority 3: supporting life alongside caring**

#### **Themes**

- **Improving access to short breaks and respite**
- **Extending access to psychological support**

The Strategy aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all unpaid carers through a range of commitments, most notably under Priority 3, supporting a life alongside caring. This recognises that respite and flexible short break options can be a vital part of the care and support unpaid carers require to manage their caring role and can temporarily reduce caring responsibilities. Commitments under this priority include understanding how break options can be redefined to meet individual need and exploring innovative approaches to break options.

Short breaks and opportunities for a rest from caring can include sport, leisure or cultural activities, as well as more traditional forms such as replacement care or an overnight sitting service for the person being cared for. As with other forms of support provided by the public sector, short break options will fall under the legal requirement of the Active Offer under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Commissioning processes must ensure that all services for unpaid carers are compliant with legal requirements in respect of the Welsh language. Where third sector short break activity is funded via public sector grants, the delivery organisation must meet the Welsh language conditions of the funding offer.

**[What a difference a break makes'](#)**, funded by Welsh Government and developed in partnership with Carers Trust Wales and academics at Swansea and Bangor Universities, sets out a vision for short breaks in Wales. The document will be fundamental in shaping our next steps towards making sure that all carers can access appropriate short breaks. It includes 12 key principles, co-produced with carers, which underpin a future approach to developing short break options in Wales. One of these principles is to provide personalised, flexible and responsive break options that reflect the diversity of the carer population. In practice, this means that break options recognise important factors relating to diversity and inclusion, for example, age, disability, language and culture.

#### Actions

- Review the recommendations and 12 principles in the report '*What a difference a break makes: a vision for the future of short breaks for unpaid carers in Wales*' and work together to agree a route for implementation.

- Fund and deliver short break options to meet the spike in demand as lockdown restrictions are eased. Provide much needed traditional sitting and replacement care services, work across sectors and with local communities to develop more innovative approaches.
- Fund and deliver activities that offer a short break from caring and support wellbeing. Current examples include the Carers Wales Me Time sessions and Carers Wales online Wellbeing Hub.

The Delivery Plan also recognises how schemes offering a short period of rest from a caring role could include opportunities for learning Welsh or improving existing skills, thereby providing an opportunity to promote the Welsh language.

#### Action

- In order to promote the use of the Welsh language in Wales, offer opportunities for learning or improving Welsh language skills as a form of short break activity.

### **Priority 4: supporting unpaid carers in education and the workplace**

#### **Themes**

- **Encouraging local authorities to support state funded schools to identify young carers**
- **Working with employers and their representative bodies to promote carer friendly workplaces**
- **Promoting financial resilience**

The commitments and actions under Priority 4 emphasise the importance of identifying young carers within education and training settings so that they can be made aware of and helped to access their rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Priority 4 also recognises the need for a strong connection between schools and their local young carers' services so that young carers are fully supported.

Employers in Wales have a role to play ensure that working carers do not experience negative implications if they identify themselves as a carer. Unpaid carers should have access to meaningful support or adjustments to help them balance their responsibilities. Priority 4 includes commitments to encourage employers to adapt their policies and practices, enabling unpaid carers to work and learn alongside their caring role.

Priority 4 also aims to improve the financial resilience of unpaid carers, recognising that unpaid carers of all ages are at greater risk of experiencing poverty.

We have not identified any potential negative impacts on the Welsh language arising from the commitments and actions contained in the Strategy or Delivery Plan. We remain open to exploring opportunities for promoting the use of Welsh and for cultivating positive impacts on the Welsh language through Priority 4 as implementation of the Plan progresses.

### **Charter for Unpaid Carers**

The commitment in the Strategy to create a Charter for Unpaid Carers aims to reduce disparity in terms of the support available to unpaid carers between

different health boards and local authorities.

Ensuring the safety, dignity and respect of Welsh speakers is at the heart of providing health and social services in Welsh. Local Health Boards and Local Authority Social Services Departments have a statutory responsibility to ensure that peoples' well-being outcomes are supported, and that their care and support needs, including their language need, are accurately assessed and met. Many people can only communicate and participate in their care and support as equal partners effectively through the medium of Welsh and service providers therefore have a responsibility to meet these care needs.

The Codes of Practice under the SSWb Act require local authorities to ensure Welsh language services are built into service planning and delivery and that services are offered in Welsh to Welsh speakers without them having to request it as required by the Active Offer.

The aim of the Charter will be to ensure that all unpaid carers receive the level of support that they are entitled to from professionals, services and organisations. This includes their entitlements under the Welsh Language Standards. The Charter is still being developed and will be published at a later date than the Delivery Plan.

In order to ensure the experiences of Welsh speakers are reflected in the Charter, the co-production process will endeavour to include their voices.