National Strategy for Unpaid Carers

2026

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Hello

All across Wales people are supporting friends or family members and caring for them. People do this for many reasons:

- an illness
- a disability
- mental health issues
- problems with alcohol or drugs.

That support makes a big difference to people's lives, and they don't get paid for it. They are unpaid carers.

Carers can be any age, even young people.

Young Carers

A young carer is anyone under 18 who helps look after someone at home such as a parent, brother, sister or another family member.

Caring might include practical help, looking after others, or giving emotional support.

Many carers don't see themselves as carers, they're just doing what feels right for their family.

Caring can affect time, energy, school, work, friendships and how someone feels.

All unpaid carers deserve to be recognised, listened to, and supported.

The Welsh Government wants all unpaid carers to get the help and support they need, when they need it.

So, during 2025 and 2026 we asked unpaid carers what mattered to them and how we could support them better. We used what they told us to help develop this National Strategy for Unpaid Carers.



Our vision

We want Wales to be a place where all unpaid carers:

- are recognised
- are valued and respected
- are listened to and involved in decisions
- get the right support
- have time for themselves alongside caring.

This strategy has **7 main priorities**. Each priority comes with actions to improve unpaid carers' lives.

1. Recognising carers

Many unpaid carers don't get the right help and support because services don't know what they do. Some people don't see themselves as carers.

Outcome ★ People understand who unpaid carers are and why their role matters – more carers get help and support.

Actions »

We will run an information campaign to help more people understand who unpaid carers are and what rights they have. This information will be shared with local groups, schools, health services and communities. It will:

- be easy to read and understand
- respect people's beliefs and culture
- be available in different languages.

We will also offer training to help people learn about unpaid carers and what they do.

Outcome ★ Professionals, like teachers, social workers and health workers are better at spotting and supporting unpaid carers.

Actions »

We will:

- work with councils, education and health services so they understand unpaid carers and help them find support
- make sure health and social care staff can get the right information and training.
- make sure more staff can get training about unpaid carers. This includes health, social care, housing, police and community staff. There will also be online training for pharmacists.

Health Boards will make sure hospital staff spot unpaid carers, record their details and give them information, advice and support.

Outcome ★ Staff working in places like GP surgeries, dentists or pharmacies know how to spot unpaid carers and help them find support.

Actions »

We will work with GP surgeries to help them spot and record who is an unpaid carer, and tell carers where they can get help and support.



2. Getting support from services

We want unpaid carers to be able to get information, advice and support when they need it.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers understand their rights.

Actions »

We will:

- update and share the Carers' Charter
- look at laws and rules to see if carers' rights need to be made stronger
- share information about carers' rights.

ⓘ **Carers' Charter** – explains what unpaid carers should expect from services in Wales.

Outcome ★ More unpaid carers get a needs assessment.

Actions »

Councils will:

- give carers clear information about assessments
- train staff so they understand how to do needs assessments
- check and change support when carers' needs change.

ⓘ **Carer's needs assessment** – a check to find out what help and support a carer needs.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers get the right support.

Actions »

We will use information about what carers need to help plan and improve support services across Wales. Councils will:

- give unpaid carers support plans and information about the help available
- tell carers about Direct Payments and how to use them.

ⓘ **Direct Payments** – money some carers can get to manage their own support.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers have training.

Actions »

Councils and other groups will:

- offer carers training about supporting people with dementia, serious illnesses or end of life care
- work with carers to create more training where needed.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers help plan and improve services.

Actions »

We will look for more ways to involve and listen to carers.



3. Young carers

Young carers get the support they need so they can be young people too, with time for school, friends, their well-being and their future. Many young carers say they want more of a voice in decisions that affect them. All 7 priorities in this strategy apply to young carers too.

Outcome ★ Young carers know their rights.

Actions »

We will work with young carers to make sure they have clear information about their rights and the Young Carers Covenant.

We will:

- create a new Welsh Government Carers' Charter for Young Carers
- share information about young carers' rights
- encourage more groups to sign and support the Young Carers Covenant
- work with young carers to check websites and information are clear, correct and easy to use.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – a list of children's rights.

The Young Carers Covenant – says young carers should be recognised, listened to, supported and included in decisions.

Outcome ★ Young carers have a say and help plan services.

Actions »

We will:

- make sure young carers are listened to and involved in local decisions
- make sure they can take part in decisions that affect all of Wales.

Outcome ★ Councils help protect young carers so caring does not harm their health, learning or future.

Actions »

Councils will:

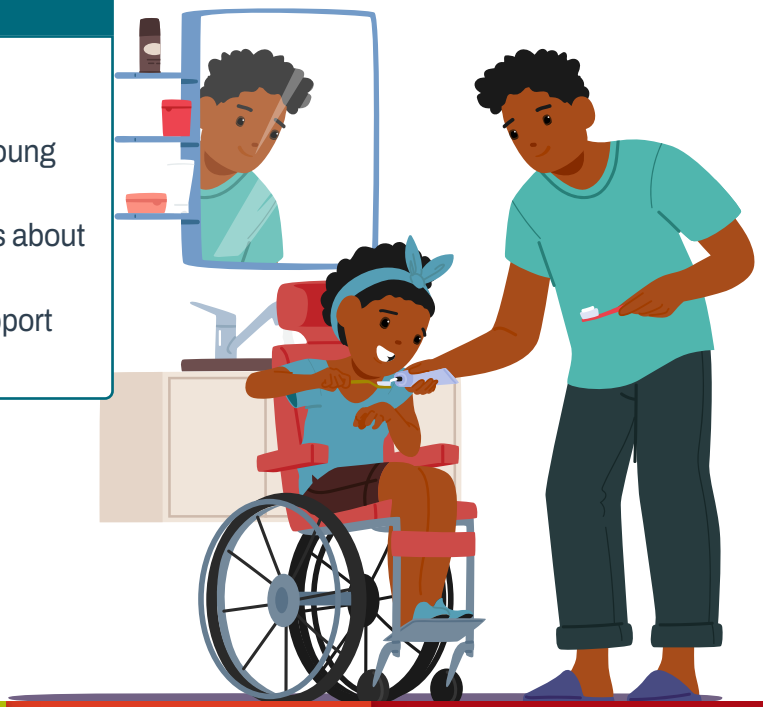
- give young carers assessments and support
- check young carers are not given too much responsibility
- get the right information from services so they can support young carers properly
- give young carers the help they need and make sure it's written in their support plan. This will be reviewed regularly so they can change support if needed.

Outcome ★ Young carers are recognised, understood and supported at school and college.

Actions »

Schools and colleges will:

- have policies to help identify and support young carers
- make sure staff know how to raise concerns about young carers
- help staff understand young carers and support their learning and well-being.



Outcome ★ We will use information about young carers to improve support.

Actions »

We will:

- find ways to compare young carers' well-being and school progress with other young people
- learn about their time in education, training and work
- look at what they do after leaving school.

Outcome ★ Young Carer ID Cards are recognised by health staff and other professionals.

Actions »

Councils will:

- run and promote Young Carer ID card schemes
- work with schools so young carers know about and use their ID cards.

Young Carer ID Card – a card that helps young people show that they are a young carer at school or when using services.

Outcome ★ Young carers get help with their mental health and well-being.

Actions »

We will:

- make sure young carers can get mental health and well-being support
- use clear information about young carers' well-being to plan better support.

Councils will make sure young carers can get the right support, at the right time.

Outcome ★ Young carers know how to get help with money.

Actions »

Councils and carer groups will:

- help young carers get financial advice and support
- make sure young carers know about the Carers Support Fund.

Schools and colleges will think about how your caring role can sometimes affect your studies or attendance. They will consider this when making decisions about Education Maintenance Allowance.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) – money to help some young people stay in education.

Outcome ★ Young carers get time to rest, relax and have a break from caring.

Actions »

Councils will check that young carers aren't doing too much and give them breaks from caring.

We will make sure young carers know about the Short Breaks Scheme and how to get a break from caring.



4. Money and paid work

Many unpaid carers earn less because they work fewer hours or have to stop working. Some carers don't know what benefits they can get. It's often hard to balance work and caring.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers get support to stay in education.

Actions »

Councils will think about what carers want to do at school, college or in training when planning the support they need.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers know what money and benefits they may be able to get and where to get help.

Actions »

We will:

- include unpaid carers in campaigns and information about benefits, money and costs
- help unpaid carers find advice about benefits and money
- keep giving advice about benefits and money through the Carers Support Fund.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers get help to stay in work, find work or do well in their jobs.

Actions »

Councils will:

- make sure checks include whether carers want to work and what help they need
- check support plans show what services are needed while carers work.

We will:

- give job support services information about unpaid carers, the skills they develop through caring and their rights at work
- include carers in projects that help people find or return to work.

Outcome ★ Employers understand unpaid carers and their rights at work.

Actions »

We will:

- share information about carers' rights
- help employers understand these rights and the benefits of employing carers
- give employers information on supporting carers at work
- look at how well schemes help employers make workplaces more 'carer friendly'.



5. Taking a break (respite)

It's hard for many carers to get a break from caring. Carers say they need breaks that are flexible and reliable.

Respite care – when someone else looks after the person you care for, so you can rest, do your own things or have time off.

Outcome ★ **Unpaid carers can get breaks from caring that meet their needs and the person they care for.**

Actions »

We will:

- make a plan to help more carers get breaks, including overnight breaks, help in emergencies and breaks for people caring for someone with dementia
- find out where breaks are needed and improve support
- keep funding the National Short Breaks Scheme until 2029
- ask carers to help check and improve respite services.

Outcome ★ **Unpaid carers know what breaks they can get and how to ask for them.**

Actions »

Councils will give carers clear information about breaks and how to ask for them.



6. Mental health and well-being

Caring can make people feel tired, worried, and alone. Many unpaid carers are not sure about their future and need help when they stop caring.

Mental health – how we feel and think. It affects our mood, our relationships and everyday life.

Outcome ★ **Unpaid carers get help with their mental health, including early help and support in a crisis.**

Actions »

Health Boards will work to make mental health support better. This includes helping people get support early or on the same day when needed.

Carer groups and local services will help carers with their feelings and well-being.

Outcome ★ **Unpaid carers who are struggling with their mental health and at risk of suicide or self-harm are spotted and given support.**

Actions »

We will:

- make sure unpaid carers are included in plans to reduce suicide and self-harm
- have online training so staff can notice when someone is at risk of suicide and support them
- make sure staff think about suicide risk when they carry out unpaid carers' support assessments.

Suicide – when someone ends their own life.

Self-harm – when someone hurts themselves on purpose, often because they are struggling with difficult feelings.

Outcome ★ **Unpaid carers get help to move on in life after they stop being a 'carer'.**

Actions »

We will:

- check what information and help is available, and create more information if something is missing
- make sure people know about support after someone dies
- create clear information to help carers find support.



7. Carers in care planning

Unpaid carers are listened to and included in decisions about the person they care for, where appropriate. They get clear information and support when care needs change, when someone comes home from hospital, or when they are very ill or die.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers are listened to, treated as part of the team and involved in planning support for the people they care for.

Actions »

Councils will involve unpaid carers when checking, planning and reviewing care.

Health Boards will:

- involve unpaid carers in care and treatment plans and reviews, if the person getting care agrees
- make sure staff know to ask for permission and how to keep information private.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers help plan what happens when the person they care for goes home from hospital.

Actions »

Health Boards will:

- make sure staff include unpaid carers in planning how someone leaves hospital
- make sure unpaid carers have clear information and support.

We will improve guidance so health staff know they must consult carers and check they are willing and able to provide care.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers' views help improve health and care services.

Actions »

Health Boards, councils and other care services will listen to carers when making decisions that affect them.

Outcome ★ Unpaid carers help plan care near the end of someone's life and can get support after that person dies.

Actions »

Health Boards, councils and care services will:

- explain carers' rights and what support they can get
- involve carers in planning care near the end of someone's life
- tell carers where to get help after someone dies.



Thanks for reading this

How we'll know it's working

We will keep checking how well the strategy is working and what needs to improve.

If it's working well, we should see:

- ✓ More carers being recognised and knowing where to get help.
- ✓ More carers getting support, including breaks from caring.
- ✓ More young carers being spotted and supported at school and college.
- ✓ More unpaid carers having a say in decisions.
- ✓ More carers getting help with money, work and education
- ✓ Better mental health and well-being support.
- ✓ More carers getting the right support, at the right time... and much more.



Next steps

We'll continue to listen to carers about what works and what could be better.

We will share a report each year about what has been done and what still needs to improve. The first report will be published in June 2027.

You can read the full strategy here:
gov.wales/national-strategy-unpaid-carers