**CARERS’ MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP MEETING**

**07 JULY 2021 (ONLINE)**

**10:30 – 12:00**

Arwel Ellis Owen – Independent Chair

Julie Morgan – The Deputy Minister for Social Services

Alwyn Jones – ADSS, Wrexham Council

Johanna Davies – West Glamorgan RPB

Marie Davies – Powys THB

Jon Day – Social Care Wales

Anna Bird – Hywel Dda UHB

Claire Morgan – Carers Wales

Angela Hughes – Cardiff and Vale UHB

Simon Hatch – Carers Trust Wales

Kim Dolphin – Chair of the COLIN, Monmouthshire Council

Kathy Proudfoot – Vice chair of the COLIN, Bridgend Council

Elizabeth Flowers – Children’s Commissioner’s Office

Vanessa Webb – Swansea University

Dianne Seddon – Bangor University

Sean Oneill – Children in Wales

Amanda Phillips – Vale of Glamorgan Council

Rhian Webber – Cwm Taff Morgannwg UHB

Kate Young – All Wales Forum

Government Officials

Albert Heaney – Chief Social Care Officer

Rachel Lewis – Head of Older People and Carers Branch

Ceri Griffiths – Senior Policy Manager Older People and Carers Branch

Ben O’Halloran – Older People and Carers Branch

Apologies

Vicki Lloyd – Age Cymru

Elen Miles – Older People’s Commissioner’s office

Ffion Johnstone - Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

Programme for Government and Wellbeing Statement

The Chair stressed the importance of these two documents as they clearly outline what Ministers want to achieve over the next 5 years. The beginning of the new government term offers a great opportunity for this group to see where it can contribute and use the political will to support unpaid carers.

Officials gave a short presentation on the documents giving a brief description on how they relate to the work going on to support unpaid carers.

Comments from members:

* There was concern about the statement in the Programme for Government referring to reforming care and support as it appears to be framed in market terms and the emphasis needs to remain on the need.
* The Wellbeing Statement is quite subjective - it needs to be made clear how this information will be used and who will use it. We cannot expect to succeed fully in these categories as many providers in social care may be at their limit. The document should not be used to hold social care providers to account. These metrics may be useful for internal discussions but there is concern if they are used for outside publication.
* Any measure needs to give an accurate result so it can then be built into a successful system.
* How will the Programme for Government apply across Welsh Government? It is important to extract the details relevant to health and social care but we need to see and shape a broader approach.
* The Wellbeing objectives belong to Welsh Government objectives so can be used to guide, however it is useful to know the long term vision of this administration.
* What is meant by “in reach” services for young people? The term in-reach is used to refer to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service practitioners proactively working in the school environment (rather than in their clinic settings) with teachers and other school staff to provide consultation, liaison, advice, training and relationship building across organisational boundaries.

Deputy Minister for Social Services

The Deputy Minister said she is pleased to be continuing the important work with unpaid carers.

The Strategy for Unpaid Carers was launched in March and the Deputy Minister is pleased to be working with members of the MAG and the Carers Engagement group on the Delivery Plan and Carer’s Charter.

There is a real chance to take action that makes a real difference as we recover from the pandemic which highlighted the issues unpaid carers experience. It is vital the lessons are learned and we make a positive contribution to the lives of unpaid carers.

The work on Priority 4 gives us a chance to consider how public and third sector bodies can work to promote more carer friendly services. Action is already taking place to help carers access financial advice and the Support Fund helped many carers across Wales who were struggling financially. The final report on the fund is due soon.

The Strategy and Delivery plan will be rooted in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act Wales (2014).

Presentations on Working Groups

The Chair attended two of the working group meetings and was impressed by the personal testimony from the carers on the groups.

Working Group 1 – Simon Hatch (Chair)

The conversation was very detailed with a combination of strategic level discussions and thoughts about more specific and measurable approaches.

Key points on Priority 1

* There was interest in the potential value of recording information about unpaid carers, such as a national or regional register.
* Members were keen to make use of the data available from the Welsh immunisation system and to look at the recent challenges around vaccinations.
* It would be valuable to examine the different approaches some GPs have taken to identifying carers and signposting.
* There were a few key examples of broader work such as stronger prequalification training and ongoing training for social care staff. New approaches to training for professionals in the first point of contact should be considered.
* The importance of how we connect the delivery of the Act to colleagues in health was highlighted.

Key points on Priority 2

* Positive conversations on how we can think and focus new tools on information, advice and assistance.
* How can we address the challenge of appropriate advice at the appropriate time in the appropriate context?
* Reaching Welsh minority communities - how we can reach all carers in Wales?

Key points on Priority 3

* There were strong conversations around gaps in resources for respite and short breaks.
* Consider how to meet the needs of carers of those with complex health needs.
* Bring together key information around breaks and respite and create a place where this can come together more clearly to support carers and professionals understand how they can access support.

Comments from members:

* The effective ways information has been communicated during the pandemic need to be considered and possibly replicated
* The Vaccine equity committee has ensured certain groups are being reached. For example they have been using mosques as vaccine centres. These methods can similarly be used to reach unpaid carers.
* It was confirmed members of the working groups can make additions to the minutes and meeting documents.
* Challenges around GDPR and accessing unpaid carers data is something that may need a directive from Welsh Government.

Working Group 2 – Claire Morgan (Chair)

Claire and Ceri provided a brief presentation at the working group meeting, setting the scene for this priority and how it fits into the wider work to support unpaid carers.

Priority 4 can be broken down to three elements:

* Working with employers and representative bodies to support carers in the workplace.
* Promoting financial resilience.
* Encouraging local authorities to support state schools to identify young carers.

Additional key points from the meeting:

* All public bodies should be encouraged to have a carers’ policy, offer carers leave, have a carers statement and possibly offer a carers’ passport.
* How can we improve the carer’s and their manager’s knowledge of what support should be available and how to access it.
* It is very important to have a member of staff in an organisation that champions carer’s rights. There is an ongoing discussion about what these champions should be called as it does vary across Wales.
* The role of the private sector will be very important with this priority.
* The Carers Wales Employers for Carers Hub was highlighted as an important resource for this work.
* In supporting young carers we need to support aspirations and give support to live life outside of caring.
* Examining data will be very important, it would be useful to see how young carers perform in school in comparison with their peers.
* How will this working group link with the other two? The meeting of the three chairs will be very important for this.

Comments from members:

* The Deputy Minister said that data seems to be an important emerging theme from the feedback so far. This additional information we have managed to record from pandemic to identify carers and young carers must be used as we move forward.
* Some young carers have small part time jobs or weekend jobs, where can we alert some employers to be aware of some of their needs?
* Need to identify some people in WG Education and other Welsh Government bodies that can bring more to this working group.
* Carer friendly policies need to be considered in higher education settings. Young adults who come home from university can find the caring dynamic has changed. Perhaps we could introduce the concept of having different ways to access learning. There has been work with universities and carers. HEFCW worked with Carers Trust Wales and others to produce this guide. <https://carers.org/downloads/resources-pdfs/going-higher-wales/going-higher---a-carers-guide-to-universities-in-wales.pdf>

Working Group 3 – Marie Davies (Chair)

* There were strong testimonies on the differences between what is said in the Act and what can be accessed. There are high ambitions the Charter can be a way to address this disparity.
* It will be embedded within the Act and it will recognise the needs of a consistent offer across Wales.
* The Charter will need to look beyond health and social care to anywhere a carer may need support.
* There was a detailed conversation on developing a charter for young people and adults, either as two separate documents or one joint document. This is a discussion that will be picked up at the next meeting.
* The Charter has to deliver from day one.
* The group looked at several examples of different charters and found some aspects to be included in this document.

Comments from members:

* There was a mix of options on whether there should be one joint charter or separate ones for young carers and adult carers.
* The arguments for one charter rested on the fact the rights exist for carers regardless of age. The principles of the Act apply to all unpaid carers. If it is to stay true to a person centred approach, there should only be one.
* Young carers and young adult carers must be engaged throughout the whole process and the document has to be accessible. Education needs to be fully incorporated.
* One possible issue arising from a single charter is managing to include all the various pieces of legislation that are relevant to carers of all ages and still have a document that is accessible and manageable to read and refer back to.
* The Children’s Commissioner’s office has worked with a number of organisations (Health Boards, NRW, Police Services) to develop children's rights charters - examples can be found here their website; <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/resources/case-studies-the-right-way/>

Albert Heaney – Chief Social Care Officer

Albert gave a brief overview of his new role as Chief Social Care Officer and stressed the lessons from Covid and the importance of social care will be carried through into the recovery.

The key messages going forward is that we must ensure unpaid carers are valued in our society. Issues around recognition and support need to be addressed. This new role offers an opportunity to work directly with stakeholders on these key issues. Albert asked any members present should they wish to meet him between now and the end of September, they can get in contact. Groups wanting to meet will be filtered by importance. These meetings will be a chance to pinpoint some areas that members think should be addressed.

There will be a new office created around this position and it will be comprised of Government officials and advisors from outside Welsh Government. Albert confirmed he is keen to explore secondments where people can be advising from a health care or social care role. Having a connection with the day to day realities will be very important so their strengths can be utilised.

Any Other Business

* The JCVI booster programme for the winter will include unpaid carers.
* The Social Care Recovery plan is currently being created and is a good example of collaborative work. It would be useful to bring to this group.
* Thanks was given to the Health Board reps for submitting their end of year reports. Officials are carrying out a mapping exercise on any good practice in the reports. A gentle reminder was given to those who have not submitted their forward work plan submissions.
* The consultation summary of responses for the [Age Friendly Wales: Our Strategy for an Ageing](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-07/summary-of-responses.pdf) has now been published. A working group is being developed for the Delivery Plan. Officials have also commissioned research from Swansea University which will be comparing older people’s experiences across the four UK nations. This will be published in September alongside the Strategy.