**Carers’ Ministerial Advisory Group Meeting**

**Thursday 21st October 2021**

**11:00 – 12:30**

Attendees

Arwel Ellis Owen – Independent Chair

Julie Morgan – Deputy Minister for Social Services

Kim Dolphin – Chair of the COLIN, Monmouthshire Council

Anna Bird – Hywel Dda Health Board

Marie Davies – Powys Teaching Health Board

Rhian Webber – Cwm Taff Morgannwg Health Board

Claire Morgan – Carers Wales

Simon Hatch – Carers Trust Wales

Angela Hughes – Cardiff and Vale Health Board

Johanna Davies – West Glamorgan RPB

Sean O’Neill – Children in Wales

Cerys Gamble - Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board

Dianne Seddon – Bangor University

Elizabeth Flowers – Children’s Commissioner’s Office

Vanessa Webb – Swansea University

Kate Young – All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers

Rhiannon Ivens – Deputy Director Inclusion and Corporate Business, Welsh Government

Ceri Griffiths – Senior Carers Policy Manager, Welsh Government

Rachael Lovett – Carers Policy Manager, Welsh Government

Ben O’Halloran – Carers Policy Officer, Welsh Government

Apologies

Vicki Lloyd – Age Cymru

Jane Tremlett – Carmarthenshire Council

Stephanie Griffiths – Social Care Wales

Valerie Billingham – Older People’s Commissioner’s office

Introductions, apologies and previous minutes

Rhiannon Ivens introduced herself to the group and welcomed the chance to take forward the unpaid carers agenda in the coming months as new deputy director.

The previous minutes were accepted with no further amendment needed.

* **Action:** Officials will circulate to members the Carers Trust Wales report on the Carers Support Grant (Hardship fund) outcomes for 2020-21.

Following the appearance at the previous MAG meeting, Albert Heaney, Chief Social Care Officer for Wales (CSCOW), has attended events to learn more about the issues facing unpaid carers – an All Wales Forum hosted roadshow in Cardiff, and a listening event co-ordinated with Carers Wales, Carers Trust Wales and the All Wales Forum. He has also attended a meeting of the Wales Carers Alliance and previously met with the Carers Engagement Group.

Shared Care Scotland work in relation to short breaks was briefly mentioned. They are currently running specific workshops for Scottish 3rd sector organisations making grant applications to the Better Breaks Fund for 2022-23, and for Scottish organisations to consider the Scottish “Promoting Variety” guide.

Role of MAG and Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the MAG were drafted and agreed in 2018, they are therefore overdue a review. This had been delayed because of the pandemic. Members are asked to submit views as to how the MAG could be strengthened in terms of membership representation, and the focus of the work from 2022 onwards. This is an opportunity to review the terms, membership and recruit new representatives from within Welsh Government departments or appropriate external bodies. Everyone needs clarity about the role of the MAG in relation to the Strategy for unpaid carers, the delivery plan and their scrutiny of these. The group also needs to be able to respond flexibly to issues as they emerge.

The relationship between the MAG and the Carers Engagement group is positive but as with the Carers MAG, CTW are discussing a review of the Engagement group with officials to see how the role of that group can continue to support the work agenda of the MAG going forward.

It was suggested that a stakeholder reference group could be created to offer a hybrid approach to the MAG. Also very important to remain engaged with young carers.

* **Action –** Members to send views to Chair and secretariat and a future discussion of the Terms and membership will be on the agenda of the next meeting.

The Deputy Minister highlighted the significant progress made by the delivery plan working groups and thanked members for their time spent on these groups with special thanks to the chairs - Simon Hatch, Claire Morgan and Marie Davies.

The delivery plan will be a living document subject to annual review against milestones, and in response to innovations such as Programme for Government commitments, the new funding programme replacing the Integrated Care Fund and changes in legislation or policy at a UK Government level (as appropriate).

The Deputy Minister highlighted the launch of phase two of the carers’ rights campaign on the 11th October. On the same day of the meeting a further £40m of funding has been announced for social care, including over £5m for unpaid carers, as part of the Welsh Government’s Winter Social care plan. The written statement on the Health and Social Care Winter Plan was shared with members. <https://gov.wales/written-statement-health-and-social-care-winter-plan-2021-22>

The extra funding is intended to encourage local authorities to employ a range of mechanisms, including through Direct Payments, to support unpaid carers to take a break from caring, or access practical support, adaptations or equipment that support them in their caring role.

On a separate point, Welsh Government has launched the Strategy for an Ageing Society and a new delivery plan for that strategy will be developed. These two strategies together are key for improving the lives older people and unpaid carers in Wales. <https://gov.wales/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society-0>

Pressures on unpaid carers and social care sector

Kim Dolphin outlined the pressures on the social care sector at the local authority level. There are ever increasing demands placed on an already hard pressed social care sector. Care packages are being handed back to local authorities by providers, and recruiting staff into the sector is very difficult given competition from other sectors and wage levels. It is hard telling unpaid carers they cannot be given what they want but that does not mean to say LA staff are not trying to find solutions within the limiting circumstances. People in the social care sector are trying to meet the demand for care and support needs to be met, and those of carers.

The above comments were echoed by members who reported feedback from social workers who have expressed their frustration at being unable to provide a care offer which will fully meet the needs of the individual or the carer. Providing care packages is much more complicated than just providing respite care. Most of these mechanisms are costly and have to be thought of in the longer term of supporting the unpaid carer, and the cared for. This is seen most acutely with ageing populations moving to rural areas where the social care sector is already under immense pressure.

There is an ongoing need for respite support for unpaid carers and other opportunities such as sharing good practice of using Direct Payments more creatively to meet needs. Some unpaid carers still cannot access the face to face support they had pre-pandemic. Some voluntary and public sector services appear to lack confidence in reopening such services. There are increasing numbers of those living with dementia and their carers who need support.

Multi-year funding streams for all sectors would be much more beneficial in helping to address systemic and long term issues. However, Welsh Government receives its funding from UK Government on an annual basis. There are already examples of Welsh Government grants which last for three years. Getting funding down to the community level is crucial.

An example was provided about good practice and flexibility emerging at local levels. The Community Outreach team in Hywel Dda LHB area was initially tailored to support vaccine rollout in hard to reach communities. This has become much broader - looking at how to improve population health overall. Focussing on making contacts and establishing relationships.

Update on delivery plan and charter

*Working Group 1*

Time pressures impacting attendance to meetings was unfortunate as the membership of the group had reduced to a core set of members by the end. However, there was a thorough analysis of the priorities 1 to 3 on the strengths and actions, monitoring and accountability and how these actions will be delivered.

It is important to consider the needs of delivering for carers in a bilingual nation, as well as speakers of languages other than Welsh or English, BSL, engaging with BME communities, accessibility, partnership and training. Important to build on the work already out there in communities along with statutory bodies, health colleagues to achieve the plan’s aspirations in relation to primary care.

The proposed use of data collection to address gaps will link with the potential for a national GP database, it was recommended that this issue is brought back to the MAG at a later date. It was requested that a clear distinction be made between health and local authorities under the public sector headings of the plan.

* **Action** – Discussion of a potential national carer database to be on agenda for future meeting

Working Group 2

This group focussed on the new Priority 4 – which will support carers of all ages in education and employment. The important thing for this priority is realising what can be done in Wales and the connections that can be made with other organisations and policy areas in education and employment, as well as possibilities presented by future UK Government legislation. There was support from members around the plans for young carers, and the importance of connecting with the “Whole School” approach in the new Curriculum for Wales, which includes mental health and wellbeing. The Children’s Commissioner has recommended in her 2020-21 annual report that there is more direct engagement with young carers.

Working Group 3

Chair of the group, Marie Knox, met with Nick Andrews of Swansea University and following their discussion it was agreed with the group that inclusion of carer stories into the charter will be very important for engaging people and showing how the principles can be applied. The charter will set out what people must do, and what they should do under the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014. There will be a front summary sheet identifying the SSWB Act carers’ rights, with a supplementary document which outlines what the key principles should look like in practice.

More information and examples of relevant good practice stories are needed in order to progress the charter. The group agreed therefore to a further meeting on 8th November.

* **Action** – officials will help prepare a draft Charter document for discussion with the group at the next meeting.

Timeline for Delivery Plan publication

The intention is to try and obtain the Deputy Minister’s approval of the finalised Delivery plan in time for a launch on 25th November, however this is not confirmed.

For the Carer’s Charter this document will take longer to accommodate further discussion and allow any more stories to be submitted. Officials will be in touch with firmer dates for publication. The Chair expressed a view that he would prefer both documents to be published at the same time.

* **Action –** Members were asked to provide any comments on the delivery plan to officials by close of play Friday 29th October.

Any Other Business

Carers Wales and Wales Cooperative centre hosted a Social Enterprise event in mid-September. There was a good turnout from health, local authority, carers themselves and third sector. There is also a guide to help unpaid carers set up their own social enterprise. There will be a further event in December. <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/factsheets-carers-wales/social-enterprise-guide>

Carers Rights Day is 25th November. Carers UK will be launching a report about those balancing paid work and unpaid caring responsibilities and the impact of the pandemic. Carers Wales will also be launching its Working Carers guide.

The Deputy Minister will be making her annual Written Statement.

Date of next online MAG meeting

* **Action** – officials to circulate dates for agreement in January or February 2022.

Close.