

# Conwy County Borough Council

## Track the Act Briefing Response

### September 2024



**Sir Conwy, yr amgylchedd iawn i helpu pobl i helpu eu hunain**

**Conwy County, the right environment to help people help themselves**

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- Regional funding via North Wales Carers & Young Carers
- Operational Group (NW(Y)COG) group supports carers hospital liaison posts in the general hospitals across the region, which are valuable in helping to identify carers within health settings and signpost them accordingly.
- Our website, conwy.gov.uk has [a section dedicated to unpaid carers](#), with various pages describing a range of information and advice, and potential sources of further support. A guide to Carers Assessments includes embedded Carers Wales videos.
- The social care workforce within Conwy, made up of a range of Social Workers, Support Workers, Occupational Therapists etc. are trained to recognise unpaid carers and promote the resources available to support them in their own right, which includes the right to an assessment.
- Conwy has an internal team of Carer Support Officers who actively promote carers' rights and undertake Carers Assessments. This team provides support to carers where the cared for is unwilling to receive a social work assessment, and where there is a clear conflict for the cared for's social worker to provide support.
- Conwy also has service level agreements with a range of Third Sector providers who support unpaid carers, with one undertaking Carers Assessments for adults, and another undertaking assessments for young carers. The latter has developed appropriate referral pathways for young people and works closely with schools to achieve this.

There is, therefore, no “standard journey” that an unpaid carer would take, from identification to assessment. We do not feel that a single pathway approach would meet the needs of the wider carer community, as it assumes a shared or standardised experience and knowledge.

There is currently a waiting list for our in-house Carers Team, and whenever this occurs, we inform carers by letter. The average time for completion of Carers Needs Assessments is 70 days. We make courtesy calls to carers on the waiting list, and, where appropriate, share information about other resources. We screen and assess every referral, and prioritise any palliative cases. A duty system is in place whereby carers can phone in and speak to a Carer Support Officer.

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**b) In what ways can unpaid carers receive information and advice from your local authority and how many unpaid carers received information and advice through these sources?**

There are so many potential sources of information and advice that it is not possible to quantify this accurately.

However, information is available in a range of formats, from digital (online) to printed media such as posters, leaflets and booklets. All information available via the Local Authority is available in both Welsh and English.

The [conwy.gov.uk](http://conwy.gov.uk) website hosts a section for unpaid carers, containing several relevant pages. We are currently proactively reviewing these pages on our website, to ensure that they provide the most valuable information for our community.

Summary of Conwy website stats (2023-24) in relation to “Carers” pages.

	Visits	Page views	Unique visitors
Welsh	32	57	20
English	1093	1992	854
Total	1125	2049	874

The data reveals that the most common page after the main carers landing page, is the “What is a carers assessment?” page (477 page views), followed by the “information, advice and assistance for carers” page (370 page views).

With regard to our in-house Carers Team, our client information system shows that during 2023/24 there were 739 adult service enquiries where “carers referral” had been ticked. Of these, 27 were closed with the reason “advice and information”.

As previously stated, the wider Conwy Social Care workforce such as Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Support Workers, Well-being/Development officers etc. can, and do, all provide information and advice to unpaid carers.

Carers Outreach provide information and support to any Conwy resident on caring issues, emergency planning, social events, support groups, information on welfare benefits, and how to access grants, plus a quarterly newsletter. The service usually supports around 1200 Carers registered in Conwy at any one time.

Many carers across Conwy use the dementia services provided by Carers Trust Crossroads. They may attend a group (with or without their loved one living with dementia) or utilise the “Hafan Ni” groups, specifically for individuals living with dementia. This approach gives the carer a much-needed respite break, knowing that the person they care for is in safe hands. Crossroads also provided over 8000 hours of short break support in 2023-24.

Adferiad have worked with 64 carers during 2023/24 and accepted 46 new referrals.



**c) What carer-related training and development do staff supporting unpaid carers receive and how many staff have accessed carer-related training and development? This could include customer service, social workers/OTs, carer teams, housing teams etc.**

Conwy has promoted the following Carer Aware online training and resources, available via the Carers Wales website, to all staff, along with an e-learning module available via the Social Care Wales website.

- [Working with unpaid carers | Social Care Wales](#)
- [Training and Events | Carers Wales \(carersuk.org\)](#)
- [Carer Aware Project - What is it? | Carers Trust Wales](#)

In all, 17 people from Conwy County Borough Council attended the Carer Aware training for Social Workers in 2023-24. Of these, 13 were from social work teams and 4 were other Local Authority employees.

Our in-house Carers Team provides a valuable role in offering advice and support to practitioners across various social care teams. They are also linked to the five Community Resource Teams (CRT) across the county, and regularly attend team meetings to support staff and students to promote awareness. Any relevant carer-related news or developments are shared within weekly CRT meetings.

Our Carers Officers also support new starters through their induction process, to raise their awareness of unpaid carers and the various resources available.

**d) How many fulltime equivalent posts were available and able to undertake Carers Needs Assessments in your local authority and/or funded by your local authority?**

Conwy has an in-house team of Carer Support Officers, comprising three full-time posts and a full-time Team Manager. All Social Workers within Adult Services can undertake Carers Needs Assessments. This is not their full-time and singular function however, which makes it difficult to quantify.

We also commission Adferiad to complete Carers Needs Assessments for carers whose cared-for has a mental health condition. The funding covers the equivalent of a 0.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) post.

We commission CREDU to provide assessments for young carers via a joint service level agreement with Denbighshire and Wrexham. The funding covers 1.6 FTE for Conwy.

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**e) How many Carers Needs Assessments have been undertaken in your local authority area? Please define the total number of Carers Needs Assessments and how many were stand-alone and how many were part of a combined disability needs assessment.**

Stand-alone	Combined Disability needs	Adferiad	Young Carers (Credu)	Total
234	37	46	38	355

Of the 234 stand-alone assessments, 135 were completed via our internal Carers Team, 1 via the Disability Team, 14 via the Early Intervention and Prevention Team, 3 via the Vulnerable People Team, 80 via the Older People team and 1 via Family Centres.

It should be noted that our social work teams feel that the true number of assessments completed is probably far higher but limitations around our client information system (WCCIS) and reporting make it very difficult to obtain the true number.

In addition, Adferiad are commissioned to undertake Carers Assessments for carers where the cared-for has a mental health condition. 46 assessments were undertaken in 2023-24.

Credu are commissioned to undertake assessments for Young Carers. In 2023-24 there were 38 assessments completed.

## f) On average, how long did a Carers Needs Assessment take in your local authority, from referral to when carers are informed of the outcome of their assessment?

This is difficult to calculate because of the nature of our client information system. Some individuals could have an open episode or referral for months or years for an unrelated reason. If a Carers Assessment is subsequently added, it might appear that their wait times are excessively long. We filter out irrelevant data to obtain a more realistic figure of the actual duration between the need for a Carers Needs Assessment arising, and the completion of the assessment.

For our specialist in-house Carers Team the:

- Mean average is calculated at 70 days.
- Median average was calculated at 46 days.

The question also implies that shorter durations would be more desirable, but does not account for the fact that good quality, in-depth assessments will take longer but may lead to better outcomes.

Many unpaid carers, particularly those who are earlier in their caring journey, often don't feel the need to have an assessment, as they feel they are coping well and may benefit from some information and advice, and/or signposting to local resources.

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## Our third sector partners

### **Credu (Young carers)**

The average time between referral and first needs assessment is 170.5 days.

Credu told us:

*"We use the What Matters conversation as the basis for our Needs Assessment. For this first assessment with families, it is very important to us that it is worthwhile to the Young Carer and their family. We aim to get to the heart of the matter and hope to identify the Young Carers' desired outcome, so we give it time to do properly. Our whole team is trained in Collaborative Communication; a strengths-based, outcome-focused and person-centred way of working that is fully in alignment with the Social*



*Services and Well-being Act. There are plans to trial an online pre-assessment form for families on our waiting list.”*

## **Adferiad**

New reporting systems have been implemented throughout 2024, and the capacity to report the average time taken between referral and completed assessment has only recently been added, from May 2024. We can therefore not report this for 2023-24.

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### **g) Within the relevant 2023-24 budgets, how many Carers Needs Assessments could be theoretically delivered each calendar year in your local authority area? (We understand this may be an estimate)**

It is not possible to provide a robust or meaningful numerical answer to this question.

Staff in all teams have a range of duties and pressures on their time, and finite capacity to deliver against a wide range of demands.

As a Local Authority we are committed to the SS&W(W)B Act and the priorities within the national carers strategy, complying with our duty to undertake assessments and to support an unpaid carers right to an assessment.

Third Sector partners report that a large cohort of the unpaid carers they support are managing, and do not want (or need) an assessment.

There may be better measures of how well we are collectively meeting the needs of unpaid carers than focusing on the number of completed assessments, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with Carers Wales to develop the Track the Act reporting format, to maximise its potential for influencing the ongoing development of carers' services.

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### **h) How many unpaid carers were in receipt of a support package or direct payments? If possible, please split between where a carer has been included as part of a disabled person's support package and where a carer gets support in their own right.**

There were 59 active unpaid carers' Direct Payments packages during 2023-24, where independent assessments were undertaken for the carer.

We are unable to provide details of individual, additional Carers Needs Assessment/Direct Payments packages, where the outcome is part of a holistic disabilities assessment, as this information cannot be pulled from our information system.

The true cost of delivery of every aspect of a support plan is not possible to calculate as a plan may include a range of commissioned and community resources, with input from internal and external staff. There are also technical difficulties in reporting on activities such as day care, recorded against the cared-for, which clearly is of benefit to the carer.

The average sitting service is for three hours. People living in areas that are more rural may be awarded a longer service due to the travelling time to amenities, and the agency providing the service may receive travel time and mileage to get to the location. As an indication of the level of provision at any one time, the table below shows the number of packages in place, and their distribution across our five locality areas.

CRT	Packages	Hrs
Abergele	26	93
Colwyn	23	89.25
Llandudno	38	154.00
Coastal	20	82.5
Rural	14	58.5
<b>Total weekly</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>598.25</b>

(Data shown represents a snapshot from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2024)

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### **i) What is the cost of an average support package or direct payment over a financial year for an unpaid carer?**

The average cost of a carer package paid through Direct Payments in 2023-24 (in line with the above) was £7,663.24 per annum.

The average sitting service package is for three hours per week, so the cost of the average package is £77.52 weekly.

## Section 2: Commissioning

### a) What new services for unpaid carers were commissioned and delivered by the local authority in the financial year April 2023 to March 2024?

We have a range of service level agreements with various Third Sector partners to support unpaid carers, as detailed in part 2b. These have been in place for a number of years and so were not newly commissioned for 2023-24. These are described in the response to the following question.

However, the Welsh Government Amser short breaks funding has provided some additional funding, which has been used in various ways to benefit unpaid carers, summarised briefly as follows:

- Carers Outreach have successfully delivered micro-grants of up to £300 which may be used flexibly, for a wide range of purposes, depending on the needs and preferences of the individual carer. These have been very well received by carers.
- Carers Trust Crossroads have provided a mixed package of outings, groups and activities for unpaid carers, people in receipt of care, and wider family members across North Wales, through their engagement with the “Hafan ni” sessions. Carers reported they were better able to continue in their caring role knowing they have this day of respite.
- Credu provided an additional range of activities and trips for younger young carers, taking place on weekends and school holidays and providing an opportunity for valuable peer support and ‘time out’ for young carers (under 8). This also builds trust between families and the service, which enhances engagement and effectiveness as families progress.



- Conwy disability (under 25) service funded an additional 60 nights of overnight respite.

In recent years we have seen an increase in take-up of Direct Payments by carers; this has allowed the Local Authority to work with like-minded groups of individuals to create alternative ways to support them.

- In the rural locality a small group of unpaid carers pool their funding to enable their cared-for to be supported at home via a sitting service whilst they meet to undertake activities such as tending allotments and attending cooking lessons to create wholesome meals from their own produce. In some cases they learn new skills, previously undertaken by their cared-for. This group has supported attendees to create new friendships and a peer support network at times of need.
- The aim in the current year is to build on the above within each locality within our boundaries.

We are currently working with a voluntary organisation, which supports unpaid carers, to look at how Direct Payments may support these individuals. One of the main issues faced by families is access to sitting services at weekends or evenings. The aims are to develop a service that can be accessed at these times, and an option to pool funding when a number of unpaid carers wish to attend the same event, enabling their cared-for to be supported in a safe environment by carers already known to them.

### **b) What ongoing services for unpaid carers continued to be funded and delivered by the local authority in the financial year April 2023 to March 2024?**

Conwy has an in-house Carers Support Team, and service level agreements with a range of Third Sector partners including Carers Outreach, Carers Trust Crossroads, Hafal and Credu (Young Carers Support).

#### **Carer's Outreach**

Providing Information and support to any resident of Conwy, the service aims to support carers in their caring role, often by enabling them to access support, and to be included in planning future services.

- Information on caring issues, individual support, emergency planning, social events, support groups, and a quarterly newsletter.
- Information provided, as well as signposting to relevant services.
- Information on welfare benefits and help to access grants and benevolent funds.
- The service usually supports around 1200 Carers registered in Conwy at any one time.

- Ex-carers receive an ongoing service for 12 months.
- Turnover of around 150 every six months (new referrals vs cases closed).

Added value work not funded under Conwy's SLA:

- Information Officer helps carers maximise their benefits entitlements by working in partnership with other organisations, for example DWP.
- Carer Support Officer in Ysbyty Gwynedd, funded by BCU. The hospital pathway is valuable to identify and support carers, and assists with discharge from hospital, and preventing re-admission. We also offer the same support full-time in both hospitals specific to the Dementia Pathway.
- Community hospitals (2 days) – as the above but within the community.
- Provide access via an application system to Welsh Government Cost of Living - Carers Support Fund and Amser - Short Breaks Fund.

### **Crossroads Carers Trust**

Crossroads provide a sitting service that allows unpaid carers to have time to themselves and a much-needed break from their caring role. Crossroads staff support the cared for, either at home or in the local community, whilst the Carer is taking their break. Referrals from CCBC only, although people may also purchase services privately.

The service achieves two aims: to support carers to continue in their caring role, and by doing so, maintain the cared-for in their own home.

Added value work not funded under Conwy's SLA:

- Respite support (short term breaks) funded by BCU is in place to offer support to carers who may be unwell, have health appointments or have had a medical procedure and need support to keep the person they care for at home whilst they recover or to offer a respite service whilst the carer attends appointments.

### **Adferiad (previously Hafal)**

This service is focused on supporting carers where the cared-for has mental health needs.

The primary aim of this service is to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties under the SS&W(W)B Act to ensure that Carers are able to access:

- Information and advice
- A Carers Needs Assessment and support plan
- Support services where required, inclusive of crisis situations

The service specification outlines the following outcomes to be achieved:

- Carers have their needs assessed in order to maintain their health and wellbeing, their caring role, managing their home, time for themselves, their occupation, and their social networks, including the ability to participate in education, training or recreation.
- Carers have access to support, where eligible (including crisis).
- Carers are not financially disadvantaged, their financial entitlements are maximised.
- Carers achieve their outcomes as defined by their Support Plan.

## **Young Carers**

This is a collateral agreement between Conwy, Denbighshire, Wrexham and BCUHB. The main aims of the service are for Young Carers to be aware of their right to an assessment, and to services that can support them in their caring role, to build resilience and limit social isolation/exclusion.

The following strands make up the service:

- Awareness and information provision for Young Carers, including signposting to other Third Sector organisations.
- Raising awareness of Young Carers services within partner agencies.
- Access to Young Carers Assessment of Need.
- Provision of flexible services, responsive to Young Carers' needs, such as short breaks, peer support groups and school holiday activities.
- Individual support and advocacy work.

## **Conwy's In-house Carers Team**

- The Carers Team consists of a Team Manager and three full-time Carer Support Officers who are linked to the Community Resource Teams across Conwy.
- This team provides support to carers who are not known or if there is a conflict regarding the cared for's social worker providing support.
- The Carer Support Officer contacts the carer to arrange a home visit (or to meet at a venue of their choice) and to complete a Carers Needs Assessment, during which they ensure the carer is provided with any information, advice and assistance required to support their caring role.
- Manual handling training is also arranged specifically for carers.
- During Carers Week information stands are set up in Coed Pella, Conwy's main office in Colwyn Bay, targeting staff who have caring responsibilities, in conjunction with support around Direct Payments.

## **Conwy's Community Wellbeing Team**

The Community Wellbeing Team has seen an increase in the number of carers who are participating in their programme of activities and engaging in ongoing activities around the community. This increase (over 50%) has been as a result of both referrals from the Carers Team and self-referral. In addition, individuals accessing the sessions are telling the team that they are carers when they book sessions ensuring that they are provided with more targeted information as it is provided by carer organisations. Feedback from the community is that carers wish to be able to access community activities safely, rather than have carer-specific groups. The team has also managed to engage male carers and retain their engagement in activity.

The range of commissioned services within Conwy, in conjunction with our in-house team is an effective combination and frequently recognised as such.

Our Third Sector partners report very positive feedback about our in-house team as a central resource and contact point when following up issues around supporting Carers. From their perspective, having access to the Carers Team speeds up processes and minimises delays for Carers.



## Section 3: Closing the gap

**There is currently a gap between the aspirations of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act regarding unpaid carers receiving information, advice and support and the reality of carers receiving this. We understand that this is due to a variety of reasons. How do you think the gap could be closed and more specifically, what would help your local authority to do this?**

The Act places a heavy emphasis on the right to an assessment, which has created a number of issues.

Firstly, anecdotal evidence gathered over many years appears to support the notion that many unpaid carers find the terminology off-putting, often thinking that the assessment process implies an assessment of the quality of care they are providing, and fearful of possible negative repercussions should they fail to make the grade. This issue further compounds the widespread reluctance amongst many to recognise themselves as unpaid carers. Many carers think of the care they provide as being part of their spousal or familial duty.

Secondly, we are contending with how to appropriately provide parent carer assessments for parents of children with neuro-developmental conditions/behaviours such as ADHD/ASD, where there is no learning or physical disability, or where parents describe behaviours which may lead to diagnosis. In part, this is due to the option to self-identify within the ASC group, but also a reflection of the neuro-diversity factors within families. Expectations within language used by national providers leads individuals to understand that they have a right to an assessment as they have identified their role as being a carer, rather than as parent. This is not unique to Conwy.

Under the SSW(W)B Act, Local Authorities must offer an assessment to a carer where it appears *to that authority* that the carer may have needs for support. (A carer is defined as a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or a disabled child.)

Under the Autism Code of Practice, Local Authorities must ensure that carers of autistic people are aware of the right to access a needs assessment. The process of obtaining one should align with the diagnosis process and be offered at the diagnosis stage and a referral made if needed.

The Integrated Autism Service (IAS) and others are making carers of autistic people aware of their right to a Carers Needs Assessment; more people are being diagnosed as autistic and as such, more carers will be potentially requesting an assessment.



This is creating a risk of a discord between statutory duties, information about the right to a Carers Needs Assessment, the expectations of individuals and families, and the capacity to provide Carers Needs Assessments to all carers of autistic children. In turn, there are risks around potential inconsistency in provision, with carers of autistic children potentially being unable to access an assessment, and the risk of carer/family breakdown as a result of failing to provide assessments for carers of autistic children.

Responding to these issues, we are reviewing the content on our public website with a view to crafting more specific content for specific “personas”, in order to guide carers towards the best course of action for them, and to avoid creating unrealistic expectations. We will also liaise with key stakeholders within the community to reinforce this message to minimise any conflicting or confusing messaging. This is an ongoing joint piece of work with Denbighshire.

More generally, there is a continual issue around self-identification among unpaid carers, with the frequent perception that they are simply fulfilling their family duty. The terminology around unpaid carers and particularly the language around “assessments” can be off-putting to many, and does not facilitate engagement.

There should be an equal emphasis and joint ownership with Health Boards regarding support for unpaid carers, but it often seems to fall to Local Authorities. There may be opportunities to better connect services and define better pathways, as has been the case around the dementia assessment pathway across our region.

This survey has focused on questions that attempt to quantify the volume of delivery, without regard for the quality, and with no measure of the impact and outcomes of services.

Some of the questions have not been clear and not possible to answer directly.

Fewer carers requiring an assessment, because they have had timely access to good quality information, advice and support, leading them to feel confident in maintaining their caring role, should be recognised as a positive aspect of the holistic carer journey.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with Carers Wales, alongside other local authorities, on refining the questions to take account of quality, impact and outcomes, with a view to enhancing the influence of the Track the Act report and its ability to influence and shape carers services.