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**MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Carers Wales – Track the Act Information Request**

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| **Please can you provide the following information for the 2023/24 financial year:** | |
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| **Section 1: Please can you tell Carers Wales:** | |
| 1. Please describe the standard journey of an unpaid carer in your local authority area from identification through to a Carers Needs Assessment. If this is modelled in your local authority, then please feel free to share this with us. | Carers become known to us in a variety of ways, for example:   * Via the cared-for person * Though our many networks * Through events and sessions which are organised by us and third sector organisations.   As with some other Local Authorities, carers may not always identify as a carer and see themselves as a family member looking after a loved one. We recognise that there may be barriers to individuals identifying as a carer and the support needed to encourage carers to come forward and have information, advice and support to identify their desired outcomes and enable them to continue in their caring role.  Through the assessment of a cared for person by a health or social services professional an unpaid carer will be identified. It is at this point they will be offered a Carer Assessment. The purpose of this assessment will be to identify the needs and desired outcomes of the carer independently to those of the cared for person. However, an person who identifies as a carer can make a request for a Carer Assessment. Unfortunately, many of those who may be identified as a carer will decline an assessment. We would, however, offer information and advice about community resources that may be able to help, i.e CAB, carers support groups, and services provided by the third sector.  Face-to-face contact is important to carers and giving them an opportunity to share their lived experiences. Where a Carer Assessment has been completed this would be recorded on the social services electronic recording system.  If an assessment identifies an eligible assessed need which can only be met through statutory services, the assessor will identify the appropriate service and make a request to the local authority commissioning panel for approval for the service to commence. |
| 1. 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? | Parents/carers of Children with Disabilities Team are recognised as unpaid carers and are offered appropriate support as unpaid carers.  Information, Advice & Assistance is provided along with the offer of a carers assessment to explore carers needs.  Unpaid carers can access information and advice from our local authority, through the Carer Support Coordinator. Individual carers may be referred through social workers, care coordinators, third sector organisations etc, or the carers will be identified and contacted through drop-in session, events, support groups etc. We also have a Facebook group ‘Merthyr Tydfil Carers’ that is managed by the Carer Support Coordinator as another way of getting information and advice out to carers. The Carer Support Coordinator regularly attends pop up events, drop-in sessions and displays a stall or a table at relevant places where unpaid carers may attend/ be identified.  There is another newly appointed carer support coordinator at the local Town Centre Hub in Merthyr Tydfil. The Town Centre hub is SPF Funded until March 2025, it is a local public facility based in the centre of Merthyr Tydfil Town. It is accessible to the public 5 days a week to support with aspects such as any housing issues, benefit support, ICT Skills and welfare support. The new carer support coordinator will be based at the hub full time, to enable carers to access their support, advice and signposting at a face-to-face aspect. |
| 1. 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. | Social Workers have access to the Carer Wales Carer Awareness training that occurs monthly via teams.  Unpaid carers can be provided with information on online and third sector training which may be available to them and beneficial to them in their caring role. |
| 1. 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? | All Social Workers and Reviewing Officers within Social Work teams can undertake carer assessments. Additionally, our Carer Support Coordinator are able to have “Carer Conversations” which are recorded to ensure the individual needs of carers are captured. |
| 1. 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. | CWD – between 2023/2024 – 13 carers assessments outside of the proportionate assessments.  We do not have available data on the total number of carer assessments which have been undertaken, we can however, assure that all those individuals who either identify as or are identified as a carer are offered a carer assessment. |
| 1. 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? | Dependent on how a request for carer assessment has been identified but on average around 2 weeks. |
| 1. 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) | From discussions with our colleagues in Finance we would not be able to provide a response to this question as they are not individually costed and form a part of the role of those professionals mentioned above. |
| 1. 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 are a total of 69 children receiving direct payments within the Children with Disabilities Team. Each of the care and support plans would have considered and will consider how the need of the child impacts the carer. When direct payments are provided as part of the plan most of the time respite for the carer is provided.  Through the assessment process for the cared for and carer the needs of all parties would be considered individually and collectively to ensure all eligible assessed needs for statutory services are identified. |
| 1. What is the cost of an average support package or direct payment over a financial year for an unpaid carer? | Any package of care or direct payment package will be individual to each cared for person or the unpaid carer based on eligible assessed need using a strength-based approach. As such these will vary for each individual and so it would not be possible to provide an average amount. |
| **Section 2: Please can you tell Carers Wales:** | |
| 1. What new services for unpaid carers were commissioned and delivered by the local authority in the financial year April 2023 to March 2024? | A consultation event was organised in February with providers, carers, professionals and services to consider our existing provision, and how this needs to look in the future.  It was evident that in order to ensure a service which is co-produced, is able to meet the needs of all unpaid adult carers, is responsive and offers a range of support mechanisms, it could best be met through an Alliance partnership. All those who attended the event were keen on exploring this and have since reached out to confirm they are interested in forming an alliance model of working.  The proposal is to move to an alliance model which will:   * promote a true collaborative approach to carer services; * encapsulate co-production with the people who use the service; * ensure participation and involvement of organisations with a breadth of knowledge and skills to ensure the right support at the right time; * promote the unpaid carers outcomes, voice and control whilst ensuring they are able to continue in their caring role for as long as possible.   The alliance would operate through a board of stakeholders from organisations, the Local Authority and unpaid carers. The alliance model would also ensure that from a funding perspective, the Local Authority would only be funding the services which are supplied.  This is going to be the new way of ensuring that the relevant advice, support, and services are provided to carers in the Merthyr Tydfil area. It will reach smaller agencies that offer support and advice to then increase the scope and the range of support and advice that is offered.  This is an ongoing new service that is continuing to be developed throughout April 2024- March 2025, relevant updates can be provided upon request. |
| 1. 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?   Please provide examples and how these have supported unpaid carers so we can share good practice. | Carers advice officer, citizens advice, third sector organisations, domiciliary care packages, day services, direct payments, short breaks in a variety of settings.  Through our local authority we continue to commission the ‘Carers Star Project’ with MIND. This project aims to support unpaid carers by improving their quality of life, to promote and improve mental health and wellbeing, and encourage carers to make positive life choices. The project focuses on emotional support, health support, managing at home, support with finances and encourage time to oneself. The project also provides weekly peer support group sessions that the unpaid carers and their loved ones attend. This group has been ongoing for 2 years and has been proven to be widely successful and beneficial to the unpaid carers. The peer support group provides the carers with a short-term respite away from their caring role to share experiences, interact with others and gain information from relevant guest speakers to support their caring role.  A consultation event was organised in February with providers, carers, professionals and services to consider our existing provision, and how this needs to look in the future, as such we will be developing a carer alliance to ensure we are supporting carers in a truly collaborative way. |
| **Section 3:** |  |
| 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? | Often carers are reluctant to accept support, they report that they don’t see themselves as carers, especially if they are caring for a spouse, or a child, with a feeling it is their duty to care. Carers allowances are often difficult to navigate, the benefits system is complex, we always suggest that any potential claimant gets advice from Citizen’s advice. Through grant funding we were able to offer unpaid carers vouchers for a local supermarket, these reduced feelings of financial hardship reducing pressure on an already demanding caring role. The feedback from carers was positive, both in terms of the financial support this offered but also recognition of the vital role unpaid carers offer.  The development of a Carer’s Alliance which is co-produced and collaboratively managed with unpaid carers, the local authority and third sector organisations will support carers to get the right support at the right time, with the voice of the carer truly encapsulated. This will enable us to further increase awareness and identification of unpaid carers. |