**Carers Wales**

**Track the Act Information Request**

**2023-2024**

**Section 1: Please can you tell Carers Wales**:

1. **a-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.**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a dedicated page on the council’s webpage with information for unpaid carers. Advice and information is available on this page, and also contact details of our dedicated unpaid carer support workers and of our IAA team if more information or support is needed. We also hold regular coffee mornings and ‘walk and talk’ groups for anyone to attend who are or could be an unpaid carer, these groups allows individuals an opportunity to speak with our dedicated unpaid carer support workers for support, advice and signposting or just an opportunity to have a chat with someone. All teams in adult and children’s social services have completed collaborative communication training and work closely with our service users and their families, identifying and supporting individuals to identify if they are an unpaid carer. A carer’s needs assessment is offered to establish, ‘what matters’ to the carer, the carers identified outcomes and what help a carer may need in order to meet their own identified outcomes.

Individual, combined and dual carers assessments are available.

Attached is a flow chart in use by the Children’s Teams



1. **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?**
2. Individuals can access information and advice on the dedicated page on the BGCBC council webpage as well as information from the IAA department and social work teams.

Information and advice can be sought at the Coffee sessions which are held regularly as well as ‘walk and talk’ groups during the summer months. The carers team facilitate events during carers week, with third sector, and health colleague representation where information and advice can be shared. A young person’s carer can assess information and advice from the Young Carers index, the social media page, and are sent regular information via BG database and YC index

BGCBC also commission third sector organisations to work closely with individuals and their carer(s), such as Age Cymru where the service commissioned is specifically for carers living within Blaenau Gwent by providing support, information and advice to ensure they can maintain control over their own lives and have respite from their caring role. The authority also commissions other third sector organisations to directly and indirectly support both the individual and their carer(s), such as Adferiad Recovery who, as part of the service to the individual recovering from mental illness, provide information, advice and support to their carers, who themselves may be/have been experiencing mental illness; and Mencap’s ‘You First’ service which provides direct support to an individual at home or in the community giving indirect support to the individual’s carer(s) by providing a break from their caring role.

1. **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.**

All staff are signposted and encouraged to complete the Carer Aware training, provided by Carers Wales. Where staff can learn good practice principles and practical tips to use in their work to increase the likelihood of mutually supportive, open and positive relationship between staff and unpaid carers they work with.

Staff attend conferences on Carers Rights and feedback to teams, including attended young carers training in Swansea last November facilitated by the YMCA. All staff complete Social Services and Wellbeing Act training and any new staff to the authority completes an induction including time spent with our dedicated unpaid carers team where knowledge and processes are shared

Our workforce and development team are currently developing a local training programme for BG staff to access, this will provide local context on carer’s and cared for in our communities, acknowledging the caring needs of an increasing diverse society, helpful tools on how to identify individuals who are caring for someone and provide them the right information and support. It will cover carers assessments, practical, emotional and social support and training.

**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?**

BGCBC have 2 WTE staff available across adult and children services dedicated to undertake carers needs assessments, however, during 2023-2024 both of these individuals have experienced ill health and has had long term sickness at some point during the year.

All qualified social worker staff in adult and children’s social services are trained and able to complete carers needs assessments.

1. **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.**

There has been a total of 164 carers assessments completed, 74 of these were young carers needs assessments, 90- were adult carers needs assessment (46 individual and 44 combined)

1. **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?**
2. a carers needs assessment is very individualised with many factors which may impact on the length of time, however, from the point of referral for a needs assessment to informing carers of the outcome is approximately 4 weeks.

**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)**

Unable to answer this question, however, we are aware that the number of carers and young carers are increasing year on year, and as an authority we will ensure we have sufficient staff and services available to meet the demand and achieve the carers rights in the Social Services and Well Being Act. It is also worth noting that some carers refuse a carers needs assessment or will not engage with staff in the assessment process.

1. **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.**

38 adult carers

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

Unsure, dependant on numerous factors

**Section 2: Please can you tell Carers Wales:**

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

No new services, see question below

There are Regional Integrated Funds Board with provide additional carers services providing a regional approach

1. **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?**

Coffee mornings

Walks and talks groups (Summer months)

Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Awards (younger carers)

Weekly Young Carers groups

Yoga Sessions

Please provide examples and how these have supported unpaid carers so we can share good practice.

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| **Project (activity):** * Families First young carers support
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| **Background summary** Mum has terminal cancer and has been receiving ongoing treatment, she has four children, the eldest daughter has anorexia and was recently discharged from hospital, her twin sister cares for her sister, mother and younger brother who has a diagnosis of ASD. All are receiving support via a Team around the Family plan in addition to K receiving support from our young carers project.The family were put forward by our social worker in schools to receive a weekend break due to the family circumstances, mum was given a choice of weekend and family members to support/benefit from the short break. |
| **What worked well, what didn’t work so well:**The support Families First has given to my family is amazing, the young carers scheme has helped relieve stress from both myself and my children, it has allowed them to be able to still be children at the same time as carers, offering them various days out, when I might not be able to participate, also recognition in school as well. We also were lucky enough to have a weekend away in a lodge, which helped us to have some much needed family time and creating new and lasting memories, it brought us back closer together as well.  |
| **What ‘good’ or ‘success’ looks like:** All planned activities and trips away have always run smoothly and communication is fantastic, in school holidays there is always lots of different activities available to choose from as well. With Families First we have learnt to except additional support without fear of judgement, and not be worried to ask for help when needed. |
| **What has been learnt:**If I ever have any concerns or require help, I am able to reach out and be helped in the best possible way.  |
| **Outcomes:** The level of support has gone above what I ever expected, and without this our family life would definitely not be as good as it is now. |
| **Conclusion:**With my current health condition, it has taken so much pressure off me knowing my children aren’t missing out on lifetime experiences, and knowing that there is always support for us all. There have also been activities available for myself to help me. I don’t know what I would have done without this service.  |

Feedback from family

***Well what can I say... We approached this gently with our sons needs at the heart, we really had nothing to worry about we have had the most fantastic few days which we didn't think was possible, we was catered for personally by quite frankly the best team (Kirsty and Tom) I can't thank them enough, they were so approachable an navigated us on everything throughout the overnight stay an what we needed to do, we even had the pleasure of sitting near in the coach which certainly brought lots of smiles to our faces . Our son has lots of additional needs but these were catered for as no problem on this trip which was a little unsure turned out to be the highlight of our Easter holidays an we thank all involved from the bottom of our heart. Many thanks team P***

***Feedback from Adult Carers who received Afternoon voucher:-***

Hi I just want to say thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts for the treat we received. It was unexpected and really appreciated. Me and my wife Emma had a fantastic time and one soon not forgotten



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| **Project (activity):** * Blaenau Gwent Unpaid Carers.
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| **Background summary** * I am an unpaid carer for my Children who are both autistic. They are my adopted Children. Alfie is in Year 11 in LRB at Ebbw Fawr School, Sofia-Kate is in year 6 ain the LRB at Coed-Y-Garn.
* I am able to discuss with Darren the Support Worker for Unpaid Carers, any ideas or suggestions I may have which could improve groups and activities that are in place currently. I realise there is a budget so my ideas and suggestions not always will be possible.
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| **What worked well, what didn’t work so well:*** The coffee groups I attend with Darren on Tuesday mornings are really enjoyable and a time out that is needed. Through these groups I have picked up information and advise regarding possible support networks for unpaid carers, and also had the opportunity to share my knowledge and experiences with other carers, which makes me feel valued within the group. The wellbeing walks are also a real positive environment being able to walk freely in the outdoors, again sharing information and experiences with others, but also chatting in general in a very relaxed group and feeling confident that discussions are confidential. I feel the groups work really well and are much needed, however the numbers attending can be small despite social media posts and Darren updating us weekly on times when the group and events are running. It can feel a little frustrating when carers we are aware of don’t attend for various reasons, but would gain a huge benefit if they were able to attend every so often, if not able to attend regularly. The event that Darren and the Team organised in the summer was outstanding for everyone who attended! There was an afternoon of entertainment including a vocalist, a magician, Elvis tribute, along with a number of services and agencies present to pass on information and support to us as unpaid carers. There were a number of prizes distributed through the raffle and it was an afternoon that was so enjoyable and much needed. As it was an event to highlight the work we do as Unpaid carers, It definitely gave me a strong sense of pride with the caring responsibility I have towards my own Children, which can sometimes feel like a constant struggle.
* There isn’t really anything that I can think which hasn’t gone so well.
* I cannot think of anything at the moment related to unpaid carers in this aspect.
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| **What ‘good’ or ‘success’ looks like:** The entertainment day at Brynmawr Rugby Football Club was a huge success and was very good! The whole event was very well planned and was a real positive vibe throughout the day. There were a number of Unpaid Carers I recognised at the event who enjoyed it and were all in good spirits, which was great to see as I fully understand their responsibilities as carers. |
| **What has been learnt:*** There have been some information shared during groups and sessions which I was not aware of, such as when Carers Grants are open to apply for and what the correct application process is. Also, what other services are available in the community, what they do and where they are based. The Bridging The Gap service is a pilot scheme in Blaenau Gwent which Darren has informed us has started in the local community for Unpaid Carers. This service looks a real positive to carers and could possibly provide well deserved respite along with other types of support for
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| **Outcomes:** * Yes, it gives me some needed time away from my caring responsibilities, a chance to ‘off load’ my concerns or anxieties in a confidential, supportive environment.
* It has connected me with other like minded people which I would possibly have never met without attending the groups and events. It has given me a form of brief respite which is needed, albeit only a few hours per week, which does benefit my wellbeing.

The coffee groups have re started in recent times which allows me to attend and the wellbeing walks which are a big benefit to my wellbeing, are due to start again very soon. These give me a sense of belonging and an opportunity to feel like im doing something for myself again. |
| **Conclusion**I feel its very important for unpaid carers to be aware of the groups and support networks that are available to them as many feel isolated and are oblivious to what is available to them. I try to share this information as much as possible to carers I’m aware of and also am happy to share my experiences and knowledge to them, whilst also gaining valuable information myself from Darren and other sources of information. * I would like to see the coffee groups, wellbeing walks and Carers events continue and grow and expand so more carers are made aware of what is available to them. The Bridging the Gap service is also an exciting prospect for Blaenau Gwent and other areas, providing very beneficial support to unpaid carers and their loved ones. With the knowledge of the unpaid carers team like Darren and Tania, along with the Bridging the Gap Service staff, the future for Unpaid Carers looks much more supportive and positive going forward.
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Feedback from adult carer who attended a ‘walk and talk’ group



Carers appreciated having time away from their caring role, which has meant they felt valued in the role. “Thank you so much. Meeting up with others was lovely.” - Carers Walk

**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?**

As an authority we have been working with third sector organisations and health colleagues to try and identify new ways to engage with unpaid carers. There is a task and finish group with representatives from all parties that have been tasked with developing new innovative ideas for increased engagement. The team has developed a QR code which has been shared on social media and at carers events asking unpaid carers for suggestions of what activities and services unpaid carers would benefit from. A new Facebook page is being developed by the unpaid carer team to share information and advice for carers.

From responses so far, carers are reporting that they are unable to leave the cared for to attend many activities, and if they have an opportunity to leave cared for then they want to do things that they want such as getting their hair or nails done and visiting friends rather than sitting with others in similar situations as themselves and talking about their caring role.

The local training being developed by the workforce and development team will increase social work staff awareness of carers and identification of carers which should increase the number of carers receiving information, advice and support.

Funding for events and social activities for adult and young carers would be gratefully received to enable us to engage and support carers in a more informal, ‘fun’, social way as well as opportunities to provide respite hours for carers to enable them to participate in activities that are meaningful to them.