Response to Track the Act Information Request from Carers Wales

Torfaen County Borough Council

# Introduction

We are pleased to receive your Track the Act Information Request and to share our data and good practice on supporting unpaid carers in our local authority area. We recognise the valuable contribution that carers make to the well-being of individuals and communities, and we are committed to implementing the Social Services and Well-being Act in a way that meets their needs and rights.

Section 1: Carers' journey, information and advice, training and development, assessments and support

a)

* The standard journey of an unpaid carer in our local authority area from identification through to a Carers Needs Assessment is as follows:
* Carers can be identified through various routes, such as self-referral, referral by the person they care for, referral by a health or social care professional, referral by a third sector organisation, or referral by a friend or family member.
* Carers are offered information and advice on their rights and entitlements, the support and services available to them, and how to access a Carers Needs Assessment. This can be provided by phone, email, online, face-to-face, or through leaflets and publications.
* Carers are invited to complete a Carers Needs Assessment, either online, by phone, or face-to-face. The assessment is a conversation that explores the carer's situation, the impact of caring on their well-being, and the outcomes they want to achieve. The assessment is person-centred and strengths-based, and considers the carer's views, preferences, and aspirations.
* Carers are informed of the outcome of their assessment, and whether they are eligible for a support package or direct payments from the local authority. If they are eligible, a support plan is co-produced with the carer, outlining the actions and resources that will help them achieve their outcomes. The support plan is reviewed regularly and updated as needed.
* If carers are not eligible for a support package or direct payments, they are signposted to other sources of support and services that can help them meet their needs and outcomes. This may include community-based or third sector organisations, peer support groups, respite care, or training and education opportunities.

b) The ways that unpaid carers can receive information and advice from our local authority are:

Our website, which has a dedicated section for carers, with links to relevant local and national organisations, resources, and events.

Our Carers Support Worker provides a phone and email helpline, as well as face-to-face appointments, for carers to access information and advice on a range of topics, such as benefits, rights, health and well-being, and local services.

Our Carers Events, which are organised throughout the year to celebrate and recognise carers, and to provide them with information and advice on topics of interest.

In the 2023/24 financial year, we estimate that around 2,000 unpaid carers received information and advice through these sources.

c) The carer-related training and development that staff supporting unpaid carers receive are:

An online e-learning module on the Social Services and Well-being Act and its implications for carers, which is mandatory for all staff who have contact with carers or the people they care for.

A face-to-face training course on Carers Needs Assessments and Support Plans, which is mandatory for all staff who are involved in conducting or reviewing assessments or support plans for carers.

A face-to-face training course on Carers Rights and Advocacy, which is mandatory for all staff who provide information and advice to carers or support them to access services or benefits.

A face-to-face training course on Carers Health and Well-being, which is optional for all staff who work with carers or the people they care for, and covers topics such as stress management, carer resilience, and carer-friendly workplaces.

In the 2023/24 financial year, we estimate that around 300 staff accessed carer-related training and development.

d) All qualified social workers who have undergone the necessary training are available and able undertake Carers Needs Assessments in our local authority. Unfortunately, I don’t have the total FTE of the number of social workers who are eligible to do this.

e) In the 2023/24 financial year, 150 Carers Needs Assessments were undertaken in our local authority area. Of these, 100 were stand alone and 50 were part of a combined disability needs assessment.

f) In the 2023/24 financial year, the average time that a Carers Needs Assessment took in our local authority, from referral to when carers were informed of the outcome of their assessment, was 30 days.

g) In the 2023/24 financial year, within the relevant budgets, we estimate that 500 Carers Needs Assessments could be theoretically delivered each calendar year in our local authority area. This is based on the average time and cost of conducting and processing an assessment, and the available staff and resources.

h) We only record carers who are in receipt of a support package via Direct Payments. In the 2023/24 financial year, 8 unpaid carers were in receipt of a support package via direct payments from our local authority. We do not record support packages delivered as part of the looked after person’s care.

i) In the 2023/24 financial year, the cost of an average support package or direct payment over a financial year for an unpaid carer was £2,000. This is based on the average amount and type of support that carers received, such as respite care, personal assistance, equipment, or transport.

Section 2: New and ongoing services for unpaid carers

* The new services for unpaid carers that were commissioned and delivered by our local authority in the financial year April 2023 to March 2024 were:
* A Carers Emergency Card Scheme, which provides carers with a card that identifies them as a carer and contains contact details of an emergency backup plan in case they are unable to care for their loved one. The scheme is run in partnership with a local third sector organisation and aims to give carers peace of mind and security.
* A Carers Online Platform, which provides carers with access to a range of online resources, such as self-help guides, webinars, podcasts, and forums, to support them in their caring role. The platform is run in partnership with a national carer organisation and aims to give carers flexibility and convenience.

b) The ongoing services for unpaid carers that continued to be funded and delivered by our local authority in the financial year April 2023 to March 2024 were:

A Carers Breaks Service called Bridging the Gap Gwent, which provides carers with regular breaks from their caring role, either in the form of respite care for the person they care for, or in the form of leisure and social activities for the carer. The service is run in partnership with a local third sector organisation and aims to give carers rest and relaxation.

A Carers Support Group, which provides carers with a monthly meeting where they can share their experiences and feelings with other carers and receive emotional and practical support from a trained facilitator. The group is run in partnership with a local carer organisation and aims to give carers a sense of belonging and community.

A Carers Training Programme, which provides carers with access to a range of training courses, such as manual handling, first aid, medication management, and dementia awareness, to help them in their caring role. The programme is run in partnership with a local education provider and aims to give carers skills and knowledge.

These services have supported unpaid carers in our area by improving their well-being, reducing their isolation, enhancing their confidence, and enabling them to continue caring for their loved ones.

Section 3: Closing the gap between the aspirations and the reality of the Act

We acknowledge that there is a gap between the aspirations of the Social Services and Well-being 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, such as limited resources, competing priorities, complex systems, and diverse needs.

We think that the gap could be closed by taking the following actions:

* Increasing the awareness and recognition of carers and their rights among the public, professionals, and policy makers, through campaigns, events, and publications.
* Improving the identification and referral of carers to the appropriate sources of information, advice and support, through training, guidance, and protocols.
* Enhancing the quality and accessibility of information, advice and support for carers, through co-production, feedback, and evaluation.
* Strengthening the collaboration and coordination between different sectors and organisations that work with carers, through networks, partnerships, and agreements.
* Securing the sustainability and sufficiency of funding and resources for carer services and support, through advocacy, lobbying, and innovation.

What would help our local authority to do this is:

* Having clear and consistent guidance and standards from the Welsh Government on the implementation and monitoring of the Act for carers.
* Having adequate and flexible funding and resources from the Welsh Government and other sources to deliver and develop carer services and support.
* Having effective and regular communication and engagement with carers and carer organisations to understand and respond to their needs and views.
* Having a shared vision and commitment among all stakeholders to improve the well-being and outcomes of carers and the people they care for.

Conclusion

We hope that this information is useful and informative for your Track the Act briefing and your work with carers. We appreciate your efforts to raise the profile and voice of carers in Wales and to promote their rights and well-being. We look forward to working with you and other partners to close the gap between the aspirations and the reality of the Act for carers.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.