

## Track the Act Information Request

Information for the 2023/24 financial year:

### Section 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.*

All carer's situations are unique and needs change over time! There is no standard journey and people are likely to need a range of different support and services throughout their caring journey. It is not clear from the questions if this request is for information for both adult and young carers? As young carers are not mentioned specifically, our answers mainly focus on information and case studies from adult carers.

Many people don't see themselves as a carer or seek help from the local authority until they have reached crisis and may have found out about support from a variety of different sources e.g. informal conversation with a health practitioner in a GP surgery or by searching online. Referrals for unpaid carers over 18 are received by Denbighshire's Single Point of Access SPoA (See attachment). SPoA advisors are given a check list including red flag questions to help identify if someone might have caring responsibilities. The active offer is for all carers to be offered a Carers Needs assessment and home visit.

Carers Needs Assessments for adult carers are commissioned from The Third Sector, provided by Northeast Wales Carers Information Service NEWCIS on behalf of the local authority. Referrals for parent carers and young carers are received by the Children's Gateway and assessments for the carer are completed by the Child Disability Social Work Team. Working in partnership with the Third sector to raise awareness and develop clear referral routes and access to support that meets the needs of unpaid carers in Denbighshire including those who's first language is Welsh and those who have no digital access.

- 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?*

Unpaid carers can access information and advice via Denbighshire County Council's website, visiting a Talking Point or by contacting Single Point of Access or Children's Gateway. Further information is available on DEWIS. We have also recently updated our Carers Information Guide (Welsh and English versions).

There is focus on early intervention and prevention to help unpaid carers avoid crisis and maintain their caring role, if that is their choice with less reliance on formal services and by encouraging self-help through the universal offer and signposting. In response to the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 Denbighshire County Council has adopted an asset-based approach. Staff are now working with citizens

# Track The Act Information Request.

including carers, who need support in the heart of their communities promoting wellbeing and choice by

- Having meaningful conversations.
- Supporting them to take control of their lives
- Supporting citizens and communities to build on their strengths and abilities to identify individual solutions
- Helping to identify what matters to them.

Talking Points are held in local libraries across the County on different days of the week and unpaid carers are encouraged to drop in and find out what help is available in their local areas to improve health and wellbeing. Community Navigators, Carers Assessors and volunteers who are carers themselves attend on a rota basis and are enabled to start a what matters conversation and to assess individual needs. We are trying to work in partnership and ensure a clear referral route and access to a range of support including peer support and existing groups and activities in the community. Rural and social isolation that may particularly be experienced by unpaid carers in the south of the county are important considerations.

We are unable to report on how many unpaid carers received information and advice from Denbighshire County Council because we don't collect data in that way and our partner organisations also provide information. The universal offer and signposting is available to all. NEWCIS received 16,231 views on their web pages in 2023/2024 and the number of people viewing their Social Media posts 69,000 and 3, 761 newsletters were distributed to unpaid carers living in Denbighshire.

Quotes from unpaid carers in Denbighshire.

"I am now aware of how little information is given you and when you become a carer and while you are working there is little time to search for it"

"My partner recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's', and I only find out about things through talking to different people. Example we are not on any benefits so didn't know anything about claiming Council Tax, we had never heard of Attendance Allowance, so it is fine to have things out there but only for people already in the know. You are reliant on various people pointing you in the right direction and saying things like you may be eligible for this etc. "

All this information is available on the Denbighshire County Council website and in our carers information guide.

- 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.*

# Track The Act Information Request.

Denbighshire County Council introduced mandatory training for all staff in, The Carer Awareness e- learning module (accessible via the NHS e-learning platform and paper copies available from HR for those staff who are not online). We aim to improve staff knowledge of unpaid carers and the range of information and support that is available to carers, which includes members of staff who are carers. Training, policy and procedures are reviewed in line with legislation and National guidelines, e.g. recent changes to Carers Leave policy to reflect the new Act. We also work closely with Working Denbighshire, our employability service to promote the changes and good practice with local employers. This is all helping unpaid carers to find work and stay in employment, education or volunteering. (See Mali's story attached).

The Edge of Care Team was established during the Pandemic and is a resource that can help broker or match an unpaid carer and the cared for with opportunities that work best for their situation and help them achieve what that have to do with support from trained volunteers. E.g. attend a community group or individual activity or go on a day trip or longer time away together with the person they care for. A successful part of this project includes the development of a growing network of independent micro-providers providing additional capacity alongside commissioned provision.

Our internal Workforce Development Team helps promote and advertise both the internal Social Care Workforce Development raining programme and external training courses available to staff and unpaid carers, including Carers Wales awareness training and development tool. NEWCIS has their own training programme and staff also attend DCC training and provide information and advice about their offer for carers at team meetings and other events (although these sessions were interrupted during the Pandemic). NEWCIS is also a practice learning partner and hosts student social worker placements.

A staff development officer recently presented to the Carers Strategy Group to explain the training programme and shared the annual training needs analysis that is used to inform next year's plan. E.g. popular topics including legal rights and navigating the system, carers first aid, manual handling, mental health issues and condition specific topics such as neurological conditions. We also work closely with a range of Third Sector organisations who deliver training e.g. Together in Dementia Everyday TIDE.

*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?*

Carers Needs Assessments are undertaken by NEWCIS on behalf of the local authority. Denbighshire funds three full time equivalent posts and one p/t post. NEWCIS also provides added resources for the team leader/carers assessor time. Carer Needs Assessments for young carers are completed by in-house children's social workers. Denbighshire County Council also contributes to a regional support contract for young carers aged 8 to 18 across Wrexham, Conwy and Denbighshire. The aim of the service is to ensure that young carers have access to appropriate information advice and support including raising awareness of rights and services that are available in their caring role

# Track The Act Information Request.

including their right to an assessment and reviews. The contract makes provision for information and advice, groups and activities and one to one support.

Denbighshire County Council promotes collaborative work with other services, identifying hidden carers, jointly supporting unpaid carers and helping to raise awareness of rights. Carer Assessors are part of the Third sector team within 4 Community Resource Teams (CRT's) in Denbighshire which aim to provide improved levels of integrated working between primary care and community services across Health and Social Care.

- 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.*

370 stand-alone Carers Needs Assessments. We cannot report combined disability needs assessments.

- 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?*

Referrals must be acknowledged within five working days, although this is usually done in two to three days and appointment arranged within 11 days of first contact. NEWCIS operates a triage system, dealing with those in greatest need first and prioritising for a carer's needs assessment and home visit. Information, advice and signposting within 28 days. If a full Carer's Needs Assessment is required, it is estimated that it takes two to three weeks to complete depending on individual circumstances.

- 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).*

We cannot provide an estimate because there are too many variables, e.g. some conversations require a single visit whereas others will require repeat appointments. A carer may not take up the offer of a Carer's need Assessment straight away and may take time to consider if they want one or not.

- 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.*

54 Direct Payments to unpaid carers. 422 unpaid carers with a support plan, an unpaid carer wouldn't get a direct payment without a support plan. An unpaid carer will be offered a Direct Payment that they can plan how to use this to meet the outcomes agreed in their support plan. They can arrange and pay for the support themselves,

# Track The Act Information Request.

using a pre-paid card or Denbighshire County Council They can receive a pre-paid card that they can use their pre-paid card choose that they can arrange the support on their behalf.

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

We are not clear what the question is referring to, although it says support package, we think this means a support plan. Language is important and should be simple, straight forward and consistent to avoid confusion for unpaid carers and families. The team takes a person-centred approach, individual circumstances vary, and no average is felt relevant. We have moved away from time and task, to having meaningful conversations focused on outcomes.

Carer Assessment is free of charge and any support provided as a result of a Carers Needs Assessment is non chargeable, but charges may apply to the cared for person. Unpaid carers and staff agree that they don't like the term sitting service because it doesn't reflect the ethos of the SSWB Act. For this reason, we have shortened the name and simply refer to a carers service.

3 hours x 17 works out as £51 per week or £2,652 for the year, for the carers service, (sitting service) which has been commissioned on a spot basis via brokerage since 2014 with independent domiciliary care providers and Carers Trust North Wales, Crossroads. The cared for person is supported to enable his/her carer to have a break away from their caring responsibilities, provided it is deemed an appropriate service for the cared for person. The service doesn't usually provide personal care (e.g., support with medication, washing and dressing) or providing care in an emergency.

We also we no longer use the term respite, listening to research and feedback from carers who tell us that they prefer us to use short break. 4 weeks 4x £774.47 £3097.88 for the year.

## Section 2

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

The Carer Assessment Service was recommissioned, and the new service started on 1 April 2023. The purpose is to help unpaid carers to sustain their caring role and enjoy a life of their own alongside their caring role that meets their needs and ensure individual carers have access to

- Clear information, advice and assistance (including those who might not be online)
- User friendly what matters conversations (Assessments)
- Have a life of their own and take part in community activities
- Support to stay emotionally and physically well

# Track The Act Information Request.

- Promotes financial wellbeing
- Support to enter or stay in work, education or training
- Supporting unpaid carers to have a voice about services for the cared for person and themselves

Consumer and Financial Advice contract re-commissioned including the Carers Befriending Service (Keeping in Touch), based on a volunteer co-ordinator model, the scheme was originally started as a pilot in 2020, delivered in partnership with NEWCIS and Citizens Advice Denbighshire. The project won an award from Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council as a good example of partnership working and providing good outcomes for local communities.

*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?*

- Bridging The Gap – Carers voucher scheme, providing more short break choices. Bridging The Gap is a more flexible way of providing a break from caring. Carers are offered a voucher after a Carers Needs Assessment; they can then choose a provider and take a break at a time to suit their circumstances.
- Carers Service – The cared for person is supported to enable the carer to have a break from their caring role. A flexible service can be directed which allows unpaid carers to bank hours over a 2-month period. The service is reviewed after 3 months to ensure is working for both the carer and cared for and thereafter will be reviewed annually or sooner if circumstances change.
- Carers Direct Payments are used for holidays, pieces of equipment etc. Independent Living Advisors offer advice, guidance and support to facilitate the set-up of direct payments/prepaid card, liaising with Carer Assessors and assisting with identifying circumstances that may lead to a direct payment/prepaid card, home visits and gathering information and completion of paperwork.
- Information facilitator who is employed by NEWCIS, providing tailored IAA and includes help to administer the Carers Emergency Card Scheme, hosts a monthly support group and provides information, advice and assistance and signposting to local services.
- Healthy Carers Worker – based within SPoA, who accepts referrals and works on a one- to one basis with unpaid carers to improve and maintain health and wellbeing. She is also able to offer advice and help carers with accessing professionals to address issues as well as dealing with crisis referrals where packages of care fail or are unavailable.

# Track The Act Information Request.

- Support Worker, based in the Family Liaison Team Home Treatment Service (Local Health Board, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board BCUHB).

## Section 3

*There is currently a gap between the aspirations of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 regarding unpaid carers receiving unpaid care 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?*

We tend to remember the things that didn't go well rather than the success stories, which help us to want to improve! Many unpaid carers will have little contact with services for carers and will not be receiving any formal support in their caring role. We need to listen and communicate better progress is being made by awareness raising and through working in partnership to ensure that both internal and external organisations know where to signpost for a what matters e.g. health, social care, education, housing and community-based organisations.

Denbighshire Single Point of Access plays a key role in identifying unpaid carer, initiating a what matters conversation, signposting and social prescribing. Community navigators support people to develop and maintain social networks, improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation. Hidden carers don't see themselves as a carer or think they are entitled to any support and only come into contact with the local authority when they reach crisis point.

We need to understand who a carer is and where people go before they seek help from Social Care e.g. supermarkets, GP surgeries, pharmacies, hospital foyers, community events etc. Available in locations that are convenient for unpaid carers including those living in isolated rural areas and targeted at underrepresented groups e.g. LBGBTQ, black and ethnic minorities, working carers who cannot attend groups or access other services during the day. Lack of transport in rural areas is a barrier that contributes to carer isolation.

We would like to see wider recognition (nationally and locally) that unpaid carers are 'everyone's business' and not the sole responsibility of social care departments. Staff training to help us to identify, listen and provide an appropriate response from the first point of contact.

Information is available on Denbighshire County Council's website and our carer's information guide. More information and training about digital inclusion and digital skills training, recognising that some unpaid carers are unable to go online or have no access to the internet.

## Track The Act Information Request.

“What I am finding is you can only look for something if you already know something is out there. My partner recently diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, and I only find out about things through talking to different people. Example we are not on any benefits so didn’t know anything about claiming Council Tax, we had never heard of Attendance Allowance, so it is fine to have things out there but only for people already in the know. You are reliant on various people pointing you in the right direction and saying things like you may be eligible for this etc”. We need a more joined up approach to coordinate and link different wellbeing and preventative services together.

More joined up working with health. Better co-ordination between hospital and community support services. Planned discharge needs to start from admission, listening to unpaid carers and families and ensuring they’re kept informed and involved in decisions. People gather information from various sources e.g. registering as an unpaid carer with their GP and receiving information about flu jabs, annual check-ups and being given a referral for a Carer’s Needs Assessment, but this isn’t standard practice. More training for staff and named people or champions in schools and medical centres would help.

“My contact with SPoA has enabled me to sort out the services I need to put in place to help me manage. This was particularly helpful when I was in need of support to deal with my partner being discharged after a month in hospital without any attempt to follow up on planning for supportive care from hospital services. My SPoA contact helped with a plan of action that enabled me to take control and sort the help I needed quickly. NEWCIS made contact and visited - the information given to me included help to apply for a grant that made things easier at home. I would never have known about this had it not been for the information given”.

There are hospital facilitators based in the three main hospitals across North Wales, employed by NEWCIS and Carers Outreach which works well. The regional contract used to also include additional capacity to cover community hospitals and GP practices, but funding ended for this part. A Healthy Carers Worker is based in The Denbighshire SPoA. She is able to take referrals and works with unpaid carers who have their own health needs, providing support and reducing the risks to their own health and wellbeing and get enough sleep and some ‘me time’.

Working together to ensure assessments are effective and the carer’s voice is heard. Carer Assessors are part of the Third Sector Team within the four Community Resource Teams in Denbighshire. This provides opportunities for closer working between practitioners and carer assessors to consider how outcomes for the carer and cared for could be met. The team uses a personalised and asset-based approach in line with the SSWB Act.

Good links and learning from evidence-based practice and research. The team is experimenting with using pictures and other prompts to encourage unpaid carers to engage in what matters conversations and consider what a good break would look like, based on a workshop organised by Bangor University. Carer Think Tanks are being



# Track The Act Information Request.

progressed to encourage a collaborative approach and identify as wider range of solutions and we are also developing Carer Peer Forums. We would like to find out about good practice and what works well in other areas e.g. identifying circumstances that may lead to a Direct Payment/prepaid card or issuing Bridging the Gap code/vouchers which offer more choice and flexibility. We are also keen to encourage innovation and creativity e.g. supporting families to pool their budgets, but this hasn't been done successfully yet in Denbighshire.

There is an active Carers Strategy Group (health and social care forum) in Denbighshire consisting of statutory and Third Sector organisations who work in partnership to identify areas of collaboration e.g. the forum co-produced the Denbighshire Carer's Charter with local carers including young carers and organising joint events during Carers Weeks and on Carers Rights Day and other events, The Flint and Denbigh Agricultural Show 2024 recorded 3000 conversations and 50 people visited the wellbeing village. The Carers Strategy Group also links with other forums including Aging Well in Denbighshire, developing age friendly communities.

To understand and make better use of local demographics and carer data. Information management systems are unreliable due to age and quality of inputting information, due to be replaced in the next few years but we don't yet know what the changes are going to be? Monitoring focusing on the carer and service outcomes that are proportionate e.g. outcomes focused accountability methods. Part of the problem is that different organisations are asked to provide data in different formats. This links to the work that Welsh Government are doing on reviewing Carer Needs Assessments and the proposal to include carer's information in the Census return for 2025.

## Case Study – Denbighshire Carer

The unpaid carer contacted SPoA/NEWCIS for a Carers Needs Assessment. A What Matters conversation identified that the unpaid carer felt very isolated. The person they cared for had suffered a stroke and was now unable to communicate. Family and friends have been supportive but were not close by.

The unpaid carer was referred to the Keeping in Touch Service (KIT Carers Befriending Scheme) for calls from a volunteer. A care and support package was in place for the cared for, but the unpaid carer felt guilty about leaving the person they cared for to go and do the things that they enjoy. The unpaid carer was also enabled to access counselling services around loss and coming to terms with the cared for's condition. Confidence and knowledge grew, and this led the unpaid carer to be able to attend groups for peer support. The Carer was also put in touch with Denbighshire Citizens Advice for financial and welfare benefits.