

COMMITTEE	SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
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TITLE	UNPAID CARERS INVESTIGATION REPORT Link to the report:- https://democracy.cyngor.gwynedd.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?cid=131&mid=1711&ver=4& (Item 7)
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Introduction and context

1. The investigation focused on finding out the type of support available for unpaid carers in Gwynedd. It is clear that the Council, the Health Board, and Third Sector organisations active in this field are managing to support unpaid carers in Gwynedd but that there is increasing pressure on services. Savings and cuts have had an impact on the ability to maintain a crucial preventive service and the level of services that carers expect.

Our Vision for Gwynedd

2. The vision for carers in Gwynedd is one of a society that recognises, appreciates and supports unpaid carers.
3. Gwynedd Council, along with its partners, is committed to developing and implementing services that will improve support for carers in Gwynedd.
4. Gwynedd's vision for the future focuses on stepping forward and enabling, to encourage support for the individual in his/her community. This means that the support from social services is designed to help citizens concentrate on their strengths and what they are able to achieve on their own, or with the help of family and neighbours.

The review process

5. Five meetings of the Scrutiny Investigation were held in order to gather information by Public Sector and Third Sector representatives, and evidence was submitted in writing by some organisations.
6. Observations received from some members were considered. These observations, about the experiences of being carers and about the support

provided by the services, had been conveyed to them by individuals in the community.

7. Consideration was given to performance reports, and measures and documents used by the Adults, Children and Health Services to identify and record the information about carers.
8. Council websites were looked at, as were Third Sector organisations and publications, from the point of view of older and younger carers.
9. The Council's Carer Support Service distributed a questionnaire to over a thousand carers in September 2016 and the analysis of the results was available in February 2017, which was very timely. This gives the members of the investigation a good indication of the opinions of service users.

Summary of the main findings

10. Below, is a short summary of the key findings of the investigation:-
 - *Understanding the significance of what constitutes a carer is crucial. One of the characteristics of carers is that a number of them do not refer to themselves as carers. It should be noted that every carer's caring situation is different, and that a lack of support can have a very negative effect on the health of carers and on their ability to care.*
 - *A significant difference can be seen between the areas of Bangor and South Meirionnydd in general and even more so between specific wards/LSOAs. In addition, from the information submitted and from discussions with officers and practitioners in the Focus Groups, it appears that the Council does not have reliable information about the number of carers who live in the County. Without knowing the extent of the need, it is not possible to address it.*
 - *It was unclear to the members why the measure of carer assessments still performed badly in Gwynedd, but there are some possible reasons: the data is collected and recorded differently across Wales; even though assessments are made, they are not being recorded; officers prioritise other, more important work; officers do not have the time to record information; lack of clarity on the arrangements and methods of recording information e.g. that assessments are more thorough and take longer in Gwynedd than in other counties.*

- *It was noted that comprehensive information is available for carers electronically and on paper. In addition, observations were made that gathering, sharing and updating information about more local events such as club and society activities could be highly valuable for carers and those they look after, but that it was difficult to carry this out this effectively. Clear evidence suggests that the majority of carers obtained the most useful information from another person. Getting the right information at the right time is crucial to the well-being of carers, but one of the difficulties in sharing information with carers is that carers, often, do not identify themselves as carers.*
 - *The need for carers to have regular respite needs to be considered; this is vital to enable carers to maintain their own health and well-being and for them to have a life beyond their caring role. A period of respite could mean a few hours, days or weeks and could be provided by statutory services, the third sector, friends, and families. A range of respite periods are provided in Gwynedd; nevertheless, despite being very important and valuable, there are a number of problems with the respite opportunities provided: the statutory sector lacks funding; the care recipient is unwilling to give the carer time off; shortage of care workers, especially in Meirionnydd; shortage of Welsh speakers; lack of flexibility at short notice; particular shortage that would otherwise enable carers who look after dementia sufferers and people with mental health problems to be given respite.*
 - *Members of the investigation are concerned that the Council could create serious financial problems in future by not investing strategically in preventive work in the field of carers. It was suggested that this should be considered in more detail and a comprehensive assessment carried out on the impact of reducing budgets in the field of unpaid carers in terms of increased spending for the Council along with the impact on carers.*
11. The Report of the Unpaid Carers Scrutiny Investigation was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2017. All recommendations were accepted and approved but Cabinet Members were asked to prioritise the development of Recommendation 4, Recommendation 6 and Recommendation 8. It was also resolved that the development of the recommendations would be monitored.
 12. The recommendations of the Investigation and updates are provided in the table below.

Investigation Recommendations and Action Plan

	Recommendation	Update on Gwynedd Council's response
1.	<p><i>Identifying Carers - that the Cabinet Member commission detailed work with our partners to agree on how to identify and record 'hidden' carers in Gwynedd.</i></p>	<p>One of the aims of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Carers Partnership is to become better at identifying hidden carers of all ages through getting them to see themselves as carers. We have begun work with our partners in health and the third sector to raise awareness of carers at surgeries and pharmacies. Carers Wales will appoint an officer in North Wales to be responsible for promoting raising awareness of hidden carers through working with volunteers - a three year position. At a regional meeting at the beginning of December 2017 it was agreed that carers' experience needed to be considered before they reach carers' services and at key times. Consequently, the intention is to map the journey of carers in the different counties of north Wales.</p> <p>We resolved to consider the way we record the number of carers receiving our services in Gwynedd Council, whether it be via a 'What Matters' assessment or an Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service.</p>
2.	<p><i>Assessments and Recording - that the Cabinet Member work with our partners in care across north Wales to reconcile the methods of conducting assessments and of record keeping.</i></p>	<p>This forms part of the work of the Regional Business Manager - Carers.</p> <p>The matter is also being raised at North Wales Carers Strategic Group meetings. The current inconsistency in the way assessments are carried out and records kept, also the differences in opinion about what constitutes an assessment, have been highlighted in the 'Tracking the Act' briefing papers, with the figures being based on different definitions from each authority. Regionally, it was agreed that the carers' assessment needed to focus on what matters to the carer, and that it was also important for the carer to have a conversation alone with the assessor. There is concern that some carers still think that a 'Carer Assessment' assesses their ability to care and the quality of their care.</p>

		<p>It was resolved that the way the needs of carers are assessed within the Council would be reviewed. New guidance is needed for staff in the wake of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><i>Feedback from Carers - that the Cabinet Member use the information in the questionnaires received from carers to identify strengths, weaknesses, obstacles and opportunities for improvement.</i></p>	<p>Feedback from carers in the questionnaires has been included in the Gwynedd and Anglesey Carers Partnership Strategy (and the action plan) and steers the current work of the Children and Adults Carer Support Officer.</p> <p>Another questionnaire was sent to 500 carers (through collaboration with the Carers Support Service) to be returned by mid December. Data from the questionnaires will be available by the end of January 2018.</p> <p>Two members of the Gwynedd Sub-group of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Carers Strategy Implementation Plan are carers.</p> <p>A questionnaire will be sent to the carers of people with mental health problems at the beginning of January 2018.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><i>Information and Advice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing Information, Advice and Assessment - IAA arrangements, to be coordinated across the county without delay</i> • <i>Raising awareness among Council Members, officers and front line staff about support services for carers</i> • <i>Pharmacists to give out carer leaflets when dispensing medication</i> • <i>Surgeries to give out leaflets with prescriptions</i> • <i>Schools to distribute leaflets to pupils.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is under way to develop the Information, Advice and Assessment (IAA) arrangements. In order to ensure a comprehensive and effective IAA service, focus will be placed on a number of different elements. Changes are in the pipeline to create a 'front door' for services at a local level, which capitalises on the co-location with the Health Board; as well as trialling the role of the Third Sector (Community Link) within the Community Resources Teams. The purpose of the Community Link role is to improve the understanding of team members about the opportunities that exist within communities, in addition to instigating community activity that promotes the well-being of residents. Furthermore, as part of this, options are being discussed for trialling ways that would offer residents the opportunity to have conversations of

		<p>a preventive nature in convenient, visible and local places. Work is also under way to ensure our 'information', which of course helps people help themselves, is being introduced at the most appropriate places and in the most effective way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff training was arranged to raise awareness of carers' needs and the importance of providing early support for carers as a way of carrying out preventive work in the context of establishing the IAA service. This is a way of changing the culture of the workforce in meeting their new responsibilities toward carers.• There is also a need to raise awareness of the work of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Carers Partnership and to report to the Adults and Children Management Team occasionally.• Still need to develop the work in this field but there is a guidance available to support staff who are carers and guidelines to help managers support these staff members. The Corporate Support Department has been asked to include this on the Council's intranet• The Carer Support Officer is collaborating with the BCUHB Engagement Officer on how to distribute carer leaflets via pharmacies• Some Gwynedd surgeries have begun distributing leaflets with prescriptions; this is part of the Carers Outreach Service GP Surgeries Facilitator's work. The leaflet provides information about Carers Outreach i.e. support available for carers in the community (this corresponds with the aims of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundbreaking work has begun with schools and young carers under the Carers' Trust umbrella, with a pilot scheme that includes one secondary school in Gwynedd. The regional young carers sub-group discusses ways to build on this work (Gwynedd is a member of this sub-group)
5.	<p>Respite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a detailed survey to see the extent of the lack of respite opportunities • Gwynedd Council to create a policy to support carers with respite periods 	<p>The Council has received an additional respite grant for carers for the year 2017-18. Consequently, young carers, the parent carers, and adult carers will be given opportunities and support to receive respite from caring duties. The grant has been divided between the learning disability service, Derwen, Action for Children (Gwynedd Young Carers Project), Age Cymru Gwynedd and Môn, Carers Outreach Service and Carers Trust North Wales Crossroads Care Service.</p> <p>As regards the area of physical disability and older people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support services for carers have, previously, been very traditional • Respite beds have been identified at the Council's residential homes along with specialist dementia beds at some homes which is a highly valuable resource. Traditionally, we have been providing a sitting service and day care opportunities to provide respite for carers. • Our vision for the future is that we focus on the important initial conversations with individuals and those who care for them, in order to get to the real root of what matters to them, and work with the individuals, carers and their communities to find solutions that meet their personal aims. This allows for more creativity in the way individuals and their carers are supported. <p>The learning disability service has scoped LD respite needs and has decided on the</p>

		<p>following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new respite care unit at Tan y Marian • Decommission current respite care arrangements by March 2018 • The new framework for respite care for LD adults will provide a choice of service options for different needs that are available across the county. • Have received feedback from parent carers that they are happy with the development of the residential facility at Hafod Lôn, although it has not opened yet. <p>It is noted that the lack of care provision, especially in some areas, poses a challenge when trying to provide respite care.</p> <p>Creating a Gwynedd Council policy to support employees who are carers is one of the action points in the plan to implement the Gwynedd and Anglesey Partnership Carers Strategy.</p> <p>Welsh Government announced that a permanent contribution of £114,000 would be made to the RSG. We shall consider how to administrate and roll out this budget across the Adults and Children Department, whilst ensuring that this sum is reserved for use with carers, especially respite.</p>
6.	<p><i>Impact of Savings and Cuts - that the Cabinet Member conduct a detailed assessment of the impact of the reduction in expenditure on support services for unpaid carers/people who look after someone.</i></p>	<p>LD services (outlined above under 5) will provide best value.</p> <p>In response to the financial cuts made to the Carer Outreach Service, the organisation had to be restructured. The effect of this is that more carers have to wait for some of their services such as home visits. This is a concern for them as their officers now have to prioritise carers according to their needs (i.e. the most complex situations are given priority). In addition to this, statutory services and other services have ended their support; and a number of carers are waiting for unacceptable amounts of time for contact and no services are available in some areas</p>

		<p>after contact. Consequently, they are trying to respond to a higher demand for support with fewer resources. Considering that Gwynedd Council has cut funding at a time where demand is greater than ever, they feel that the reduction in expenditure is contrary to the new act and carer needs. The problem of recruiting care workers has worsened over the difficult financial period, including among temporary staff.</p>
7.	<p><i>Third Sector and Community Businesses - planning the core and preventive services with the Third Sector and Community Businesses.</i></p>	<p>The Adults, Health and Well-being Department provides core funding to the following organisations: Carers Outreach Service, Age Cymru Gwynedd and Môn, Abbey Road Centre, Deaf Association, CAB, Tan y Maen, NWAA, Felin Fach, Gofal a Thrwsio. These organisations have a preventive role.</p> <p>Gwynedd Council uses a substantial part of a supplementary Welsh Government grant to provide respite care for carers and young carers, and it commissions the third sector. After discussions at a workshop of regional partners at the beginning of December 2017, it was agreed that a more detailed agreement was required between partners about the way services in North Wales should look i.e. carrying out more detailed work on the results that have already been agreed (at the beginning of the regional work).</p>
8.	<p><i>Mental Health - that the Cabinet Member carry out an urgent review to assess the situation in its entirety.</i></p>	<p>The contract with Hafal ended at the end of March 2017. Since 1 April, there are two support workers (one based at Hergest, Ysbyty Gwynedd and one based in Plas Brith, Dolgellau). The intention is to send a questionnaire to carers for their feedback on the new internal service. The social workers carry out the assessments (which complies with the requirements of the new act) and there has been a substantial increase in the number of assessments completed since April. Support workers provide one-to-one support and there is one carers' group in</p>

		<p>Arfon.</p> <p>The questionnaire, sent in January 2018, seeks the views of mental health carers on the current service and what matters to them as support in their role as carer.</p> <p>Carers of Hergest patients should be supported by Hafal (a service funded by the local health board). We understand that there is no one currently in post but BCUHB is looking into the situation in order to ensure that someone is there for the carers as soon as possible.</p> <p>A lack of practical support resources is a problem for carers i.e. an opportunity to receive respite. It is not simply the lack of respite care provision that prevents us from providing this support but also the attitude of those who receive the care i.e. that they refuse to attend activities etc.</p>
9.	<i>The Welsh Language</i>	<p>The Council has a strong language policy and we are fully committed to More Than Just Words and to implementing it in our work with providers. Unfortunately, some of our providers are having difficulty recruiting Welsh-speaking staff, especially in the south of the county.</p> <p>One reason for ending the contract with Hafal was its consistent failure to provide a bilingual service. The support service available for carers of people with mental health problems is now available in Welsh and English.</p>

Conclusion

13. To conclude, we believe that positive work has begun on the recommendations of the investigation, and in response to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, even though much work is still needed.
14. We are aware that data from Gwynedd in the second briefing paper for Carers Wales on Tracking the Act did not reflect well on us as an authority but the Carers Officers Learning and Information Network (COLIN) raised

- concerns about the first briefing paper in March. Carers Wales acknowledged the accuracy of the points but was unable to act on them when sending the second request for information. The new Director of Carers Wales has assured members of COLIN that she would get in touch with COLIN in order to ensure they receive the observations of local authorities to ensure they produce a third briefing paper that is comprehensive and balanced. Therefore, I would like to ask Members reading the briefing paper to consider the above acknowledgement by Carers Wales that their methodology needs to be improved.
15. We realise that we are unable to support carers without the support and collaboration of our partners in Health and the Third Sector. The work currently being carried out by the Regional Business Manager - Carers, will be highly beneficial in reconciling services and support for carers across north Wales. There are a number of modernisation projects in the pipeline, which focus on achieving positive results for carers and those they support. We have to continue to listen to carers about what matters to them and when considering how best to provide the support, and of the importance of providing sustainable services that give best value in a difficult economic climate.