



Russell George MS  
Chair  
Health and Social Care Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

25 October 2023

Dear Russell,

The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee recommended we review how the rights of unpaid carers are being upheld in its report on hospital discharge and patient flow in June 2022. We commissioned the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSSC) to undertake a rapid review and this was received in June 2023. I wish to update you on the findings of the report and our plan to take forward. The report will shortly be published on the ADSSC website.

**The findings were:**

**Impact of COVID-19** – The report noted the significant negative direct and indirect impact on unpaid carers from Covid-19, and the legacy of poorer health outcomes of those receiving care. The report highlights the concern of some unpaid carers about the loss of day opportunities for the person in receipt of care. ADSSC have undertaken a separate review of day services. Policy officials for unpaid carers and day services are liaising to ensure impacts are known.

**Financial** – The report noted the significant impact of the current cost-of living-crisis on unpaid carers. Carers Trust Wales (CTW) have recently published a paper on access of unpaid carers to financial and statutory support<sup>1</sup> which outlines similar findings to the rapid review. I have previously raised my concerns with the UK Government regarding the level of Carers' Allowance and will consider how to continue to raise this matter.

We provided a one-off £500 payment for carers last year. The Carers Support Fund provides grants for unpaid carers on low incomes to purchase essential items. This fund is providing £4.5m over 3 years (2022-25).

**Carers' rights** – Several years on from the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the review found a lack of awareness and recognition of the rights of unpaid carers.

<sup>1</sup> [finance-briefing-\(eng\).pdf \(carers.org\)](https://www.carers.org/-/media/assets/advocacy-and-research/reviews-and-reports/financial-support-for-unpaid-carers-financial-and-statutory-support.pdf)

The [Charter for Unpaid Carers](#) is published and funding is provided to carers' organisations to promote awareness of carers' rights and the charter. I accept the findings of the review that there is more to do to encourage and understand those who are reluctant to identify themselves as carers and to ensure that more are aware of their rights.

**Carers' needs assessments** – The review expressed concern at the relatively low number of carers' assessments undertaken by local authorities and the number of support plans subsequently agreed. This is a significant and enduring issue which I wish us to take active steps to address on a national basis.

**Meeting carers' needs** – The report noted access to respite as the most common area of reported provision deficit. We have provided £9m of additional funding over 3 years (2022-25) to Regional Partnership Boards to address this and enable innovative, creative and individualised short break opportunities to unpaid carers. In addition, we have provided £1m to health boards this year to support carers at times of hospital admission/ discharge of the cared for person.

**Recognising and valuing unpaid carers** – I agree with the findings of the report that recognition and valuing of unpaid carers is fundamental to working in partnership and in taking a person-centred approach. It is vital we include unpaid carers in our planning of greater community based integrated models of service provision.

We fund Carers Wales to undertake awareness raising sessions with health and social care staff but, together, we must ensure all statutory agencies are taking responsibility for raising awareness of the very valuable role of unpaid carers and the challenges they often face.

Young carers can often be overlooked in our consideration of unpaid carers and regarding the review's findings, we must ensure we are including this group of children and young people.

## **Next steps**

I addressed the Ministerial Advisory Group on Unpaid Carers on 25 September and requested a working group be established to map the findings of the review against the current Welsh Government Carers' Strategy and Delivery Plan. While it appears the findings are reflected in the four strategic aims of the current plan, I wish to use the review to refresh and refocus our approach.

I consider improving access to carers' needs assessments and support plans as a priority. We wish to work with local authorities and the carers' organisations to develop collective recognition across Wales of the barriers and share good practice to bring about positive change.

We are reviewing how we promote greater carer recognition and self-identification with the carers' organisations who deliver much of this activity and ensuring people are aware of their rights, as outlined in the Carers' Charter.

The current national programmes to increase integrated health and social care delivery in the community provide opportunities for increased professional recognition of the role of unpaid carers in the assessment and care planning for the individual receiving services. We are ensuring unpaid carers are named as key individuals in the working documents for these programmes.

The rapid review is a helpful and timely report that is an opportunity for us to refocus our priorities and be a catalyst for new workstreams that will be overseen by the Ministerial Advisory Group.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie".

**Julie Morgan AS/MS**  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Social Services