



# Social Enterprise Guide

A guide for unpaid carers thinking about setting up a community co-op or social enterprise

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# About this Guide

This guide introduces the opportunities that collaborative working via social enterprises and co-operatives can offer to support carers in their caring role. The guide has been funded by the Welsh Government.

Social care provision is facing many challenges and carers may feel the needs of those they care for are not being fully or appropriately met. In addition, many carers find themselves struggling to achieve their potential or fulfil their own needs. Co-operation opens opportunities for carers to connect and create solutions to meet some or all these needs and improve their wellbeing.

Excitingly, co-operation can eventually lead to big things through social enterprises and community co-operatives. We have designed this guide to explain what social enterprises and community co-operatives can look like for carers and how they can provide a tool for positive collaborative change.

Once you have read the guide, and if you are interested in finding out more, we would love to hear from you. You can contact us directly at [info@carerswales.org](mailto:info@carerswales.org). You can also attend events with other carers that are being hosted by Carers Wales in collaboration with the Cwmpas.

These events will provide additional information as well as an opportunity to share your thoughts and any ideas this guide may have provoked for you.

## Who is this Guide For?

Often carers face challenges in their caring roles including a lack of resources such as time, money or support. This guide is for you if you are an unpaid carer who is interested in finding new and innovative ways to improve your own wellbeing and influence the ways in which the needs of the person/s you care for are met.



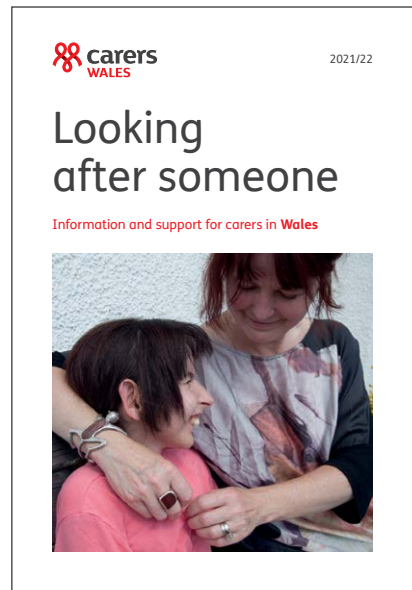
# Who is an Unpaid Carer?

An unpaid carer can be anyone who provides support and/or care to one or more person/s because they are older, ill, vulnerable, have a disability, physical or mental health difficulties or struggle with substance misuse or addiction.

Unpaid care recipients are often family members, friends, or neighbours, but can include others.

Unpaid Carers:

- Do not have to live with the person/s they support, although many carers do share a home with the person(s) they care for
- May be caring for one or more people at the same time
- May provide care on their own or in collaboration with other paid or unpaid carers
- May provide a few hours of care a week or be on call 24 hours a day
- Can be of any age
- May provide care on a temporary or permanent basis
- May provide physical, practical, emotional, or mental health care and support
- May or may not receive **carers allowance**



**Find out more about caring in Wales in our Looking After Someone guide.**

# The opportunity

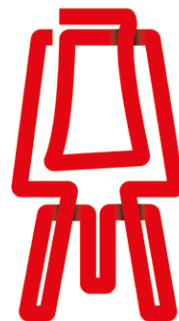
In many parts of Wales, social care demand outweighs available provision. Covid-19 added more pressure onto unpaid carers as services were reduced or withdrawn.

Many carers have found that their wellbeing has suffered as their caring role has expanded, and you may feel that the way things are now is unsustainable. You may also feel that the care available to the person/s that you care for is insufficient or provides services in a way that does not fully meet their needs.

Co-operative working towards a shared goal may offer you an opportunity to meet some of these needs more appropriately and/or improve your own wellbeing. Being an unpaid carer can be isolating, physically, mentally and socially.

Connecting with others who have similar experiences to you and are in the same situation can be empowering and inspiring. One voice on its own may not be heard but the combined voice of a co-operative group is much harder to ignore.

Taking this a step further, social enterprises and community co-operatives provide an opportunity to root social care in your community so that it truly reflects the requirements and experience of local communities.



# Social enterprises and co-operatives

## What is a social enterprise?

Social enterprises are essentially **businesses** created for a **social purpose to mitigate or reduce a social problem and generate social value.**

Social enterprises can take many forms when it comes to their legal and business structure. A social enterprise is not a specific form of business in of itself, but rather an umbrella term that refers to a range of types of businesses.

What they all have in common is their social purpose, and that they do not exist to maximise profit for their shareholders. Social enterprises can include community interest companies, charities and co-operatives.

They come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, from community cafes to larger organisations. Whatever their size they commonly start with a person or group with a particular passion or sense of purpose that often understand a problem or issue personally.

They can emerge as a business from groups that did not start out to create a business at all but to support and listen to each other about a particular issue. From there, the group may move on to starting to see how improvements can be made and solutions can be found.

## What kinds of businesses are Co-operatives?

Co-operatives are **membership groups** made up of workers, customers, residents, carers, members of the community, or a combination of these. A co-operative is owned and controlled by members who come together to meet shared needs and aspirations.

At their heart, co-operatives **care about their communities and exist to create value for them.** They are often set up to solve a problem or in response to an issue.

**Many kinds of businesses operate co-operatively, in fact, co-ops are found in all sectors.** They are the communities that come together to take over a much-loved community space for social activities or to create a community garden. There are housing co-ops, health care co-ops, food co-ops and much more.

## The Welsh Government and social enterprises

The Welsh Government has developed legislation to support and empower co-operative alternatives to traditional care services at the local level through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The principles of the Act put carers and those you care for at the centre of your own care and support. Carers have opportunities to co-produce, working with service providers to feed experiences, ideas, and thoughts back in and create new ways of working

Through this Act, local authorities must now promote the development of social enterprises that provide care, support and preventative services. It gives carers and those you care for a voice that cannot be dismissed or ignored.

The Social Services and Well-being Act aims to enable carers by encouraging:

- **Voice and control** – putting the individual and their needs at the centre of care and support, giving them a voice in, and control over the outcomes that help them achieve well-being.
- **Prevention and early intervention** – increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need.
- **Co-production** – encouraging individuals to become more involved in the design and delivery of services.
- **Wellbeing** – supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.

## Wellbeing and collaboration

The Act aims to enable carers to

achieve wellbeing outcomes through co-working to produce their own solutions in their communities.

Broadly speaking, Wellbeing means **a person is happy, healthy, and comfortable with their life and what they do.**

Although wellbeing is a personal experience and therefore should be defined by the individual, there are key elements that come together to achieve wellbeing.

While considering the potential for collaborative working practices that help to improve wellbeing, it can be useful for you to understand what wellbeing may look like.

The Welsh government wellbeing statement outlines eight parts that make up wellbeing:

- ✓ making sure you have your rights
- ✓ having a good home
- ✓ positive relationships with families and friends
- ✓ having a social life and enough money to live a healthy life
- ✓ being part of the community
- ✓ being physically, mentally, and emotionally happy
- ✓ having education, training, sports and play

You may be experiencing a challenge or need you think can be met in a new or alternative way. Those who work co-operatively set out to meet one shared need and discover that they have found solutions to more through the process, finding benefits over and above what they initially set out to achieve.

### How does this benefit carers?

Community co-operatives and social enterprises offer a wide range of potential benefits for you and those you care for. By bringing people together to work collaboratively, everyone's expertise and experiences can be used to find solutions and create change.

You can gain the freedom to make choices by having:

- Control over your own wellbeing solutions
- the ability to create long-lasting, stable and sustainable solutions
- your voice heard in reshaping and rebuilding what comes next for carers and those they care for
- the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect you
- the ability to make decisions at a local level
- power over the services you receive
- the opportunity to positively influence your community.

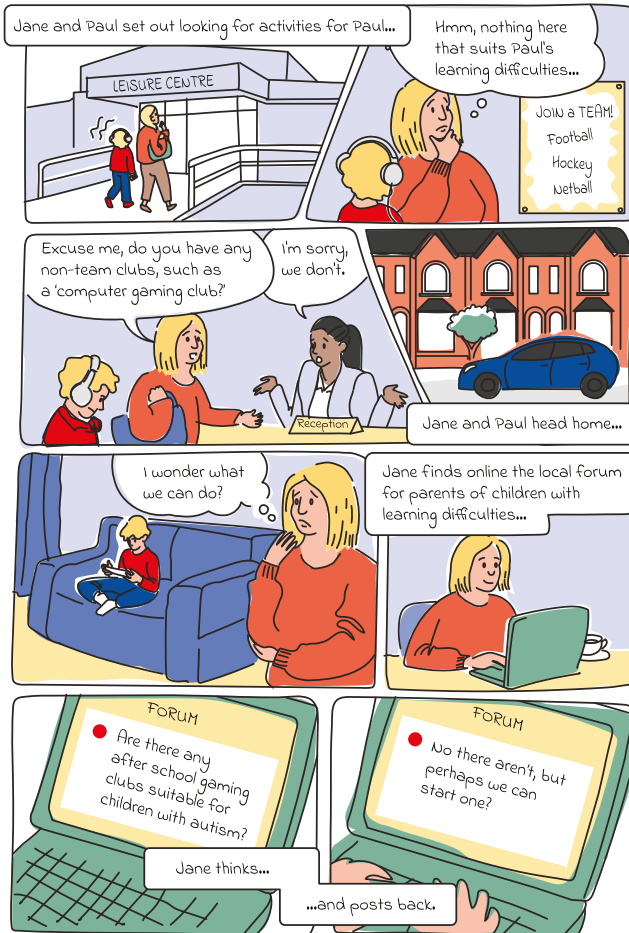
Co-operative working offers an opportunity to be recognised and valued for your contribution for all that you do. By coming together, supporting each other, and making the changes you want to see in the world, social enterprises can become an engine for social justice and create opportunities to create valuable social change. For the people involved, co-operatives can be revolutionary in shaping the future for families and communities.

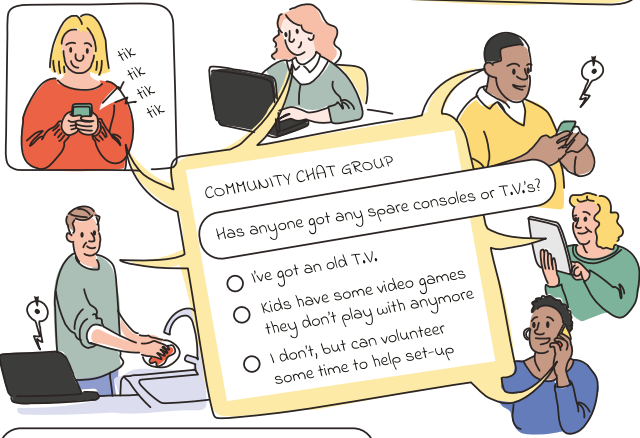
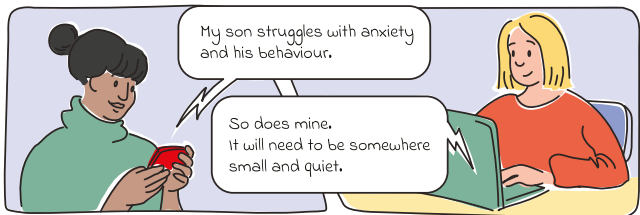




# Thinking about developing a social enterprise

Thinking about developing a social enterprise may seem daunting. In this section, we'll discuss 'Tectivity' a group that developed when the founders needed after school activities for their child who has autism. Then we'll show you the steps you can take to start thinking about developing your own social enterprise.





## Case Study – Tectivity

“ Primary school had a great set up of after school activities for my son. Moving to secondary school there was nothing after school, no autism group and things started to become desperate for us.

Everything started from a Facebook group for families with a child with autism. Somebody said, ‘is there an after-school club for gaming?’ Everyone was saying no there isn’t. I said, ‘no there isn’t... but we could start one’, and several people said, ‘that’s a great idea!’

I approached the charity Follow Your Dreams, and said ‘I want to start up this club, it’s for children with additional needs, it’s not something that’s being provided at school or in the community- if I do this can you help me?’ It wasn’t what they normally did, but they offered to support it for 12 weeks and provided a sessional playworker who came along to help us with the children at the sessions, which was great.

I reached out on Porthcawl First, a local site, and asked for volunteers and had a good number of responses and a load of them turned up. Some thought they wouldn’t be techy enough but what we needed was people just to be involved with the children. Some are with us 5-6 years on.

I had no money for equipment so scrapped together loads of old tech, stuff I had at home, stuff that friends and family had.

I’m not one for procrastinating, I didn’t spend months thinking shall I or shan’t I? Three weeks after the initial Facebook conversation we had our opening night session. There were 17 children there the first night. Follow Your Dreams said it was such a success they could see how needed it was so would continue to fund it. I got in touch with BAVO and they were brilliant they help me set everything up.

Honestly, local Facebook pages are a mine of support- when I needed T.Vs I put it out on Porthcawl Local. People said I’ve got a TV and would a laptop also be any good to you? Working with the local Covid 19 strategy group we’ve collected around 140 devices for children or older people that didn’t have devices. If we are offered things we can’t use they are passed onto someone that can. ”

## Step 1 – Think about you're the things you need

Unmet needs can emerge for yourself or those you care for due to a variety of circumstances.

There may be barriers to accessing current provisions such as money, time, or the appropriateness of services for your situation. Sometimes services close or may be unavailable as the founders of Techtivity discovered.

Going through a transition in your situation can mean that services you once relied upon are no longer

available to you. You may have changed homes and moved to a new location but found that the services you accessed previously are not an available option in the local community.

By identifying which needs are not currently being met, you can form ideas for which services you'd like to see.

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## Step 2 – Recognising others have similar needs and situations

When you talk to others in the community you may find that your situation is not unique. Many others may also share in your experience of lack of suitable provisions to meet the needs that matter to them.

By talking to people who understand what you are going through you may find that you have shared challenges. These conversations can help to identify others in your

wider community that have similar needs helping you to realise you are not alone and that there is a local demand for a service.

## Step 3 – Communicating shared challenges

By talking about your shared needs as a community you can also share ideas as a community.

By joining with those people who better understand your situation you can talk about potential solutions.

You may find the solutions discussed are more appropriate to your needs than any alternative provision.

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## Step 4 – Collaborating in your community - sharing resources

There will likely be things you may need for any ideas or solutions you may have.

Often, local communities are full of unused or unneeded resources such as community spaces, second-hand furniture etc. Reaching out to the wider community can provide needed resources at reduced or nil cost. Members of the local community, when made aware of activities will often want to contribute any resources and sometimes their own time.



## Co-operation starts with a conversation

Social enterprises and community co-operatives often begin with an initial conversation. Consider the questions below and start to map out potential needs, who else is being impacted and the possible resources that are available in your community. You may then explore this further by speaking to other people in a similar situation or other people within your community.

- ▶ **What issues, concerns and strengths do you have in your community?**
  - Identify unmet needs in your community
  - What strengths are in your community? (You can also develop community through strength not just by what is missing)
  - Identify the issues you face as a carer
  - Identify gaps in services and provision for the person/s you care for
  
- ▶ **Within your community, what is the scale of the issues identified?**
  - How does it affect individuals, families, schools, the local economy?
  - Do others recognise the same issues and problems?

- ▶ **What is your vision ... what do you want to achieve?**
  - What would positive change look like?
  - Could you transform existing services by starting a co-operative?
  - How does your idea link to the wellbeing outcomes of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014?
  
- ▶ **How will you take this forward?**
  - What are the opportunities for shared interests?
  - Who might be able to help you realise your idea?



## How Techtivity developed

“ I never had any intention of conquering the world, I didn't have a three-year plan, but parents would say it would be lovely if we could do this or that and it went from there. We then started looking at other things. We started an after-school club on weekends and holidays. We all started going on holiday together. We had families say they 'felt like I've come home'.

We started to do things in half term because our children didn't have school friends and didn't get invited to parties. They didn't want to go out places; their parents were trying to get them to go out but they were refusing. We tried to find things they could do as a group that weren't competitive and not team-based, and trampolining was popular.

Somebody told me they had difficulty getting a space on rebound trampolining, which is disability support trampolining. So, me being me, I trained as a trampolining coach, having only ever been on my kids' trampoline in the garden - I'm not a particularly sporty person. Then we were qualified and started to run a rebound trampolining session and that's when Altitude, our rebound trampoline club, started.

We run two children on each trampoline for a half an hour session, five mins, on five mins off. There aren't extended amounts of time waiting around or crowds; there are literally four children and their

parents and instructors. They leave and then the next lot come in.

In all our activities there is nothing that is just for the child with the disability; if the sibling wants to come along we have a space and many of our activities are cross-generational. I'm always putting on grant forms 'family cohesion' as we want families to do things together. We want parents to see the children achieve and the sibling to think, 'actually my brother isn't just a pain in the bum he's also really good at climbing, really good at surfing'.

I had to stop full-time work when my son was little because he needed me. This gave me a purpose and made me feel better about myself. I say I run a charity. To be able to say I did volunteer work pushed my self-esteem back up a bit.

The year I started the club was a tough year. My son's mental health had gone downhill with a change of school. I got a lot of support from the tech club at that point.

The volunteers that teach the trampolining and help on the Techtivity nights are all parents, carers or sibling carers with few exceptions. We are a community, that's how I describe us to people.

It gives you a bigger family and, to an extent, it gives you your family back. It's feeling part of a community and I think as a carer you're cut off from most of the community. The child is isolated because of their difficulties but the parents are isolated as well.

So I think that it's important to feel your whole family is valued as part of the community.

I've gained a lot of friends, and close friends, which is amazing really because you lose a lot of friends when you have a child with a disability. I didn't expect to have such good friendships, seeing each other so regularly we have become great friends and helped each other through some tough times such as supporting each other through lockdown.

I don't ever remember promoting the club, I remember telling people about it on forums, saying we are going to be doing this if anyone wants to come along. I was as shocked as anybody when we had 17 children there the first night. It was just a jaw on the floor moment. We still have a huge waiting list - I would love it if others started something similar up too. ”

Techtivity is a great example of a group of people with shared unmet needs coming together to create a group that benefits those involved. Over time, they have developed and grown as more people join in the activities – and this has benefited not only the children who Techtivity serves but the members of the group who are involved with service delivery.



# Benefits of getting involved with a social enterprise

Social enterprises and co-operatives bring people together and can create life-changing experiences.

Through working together, co-operative communities have the potential to:

- ▶ break down barriers
- ▶ decrease isolation
- ▶ increase the confidence of participants
- ▶ improve inclusion and diversity in the community
- ▶ create new social relationships and provide mutual support
- ▶ help carers to regain an identity outside your caring role

This can include new friendship groups, community transport, parent/carer groups, self-advocacy services and so much more.

It all begins with a vision of what you want to achieve for your personal situation or by starting a conversation with others in your community.



## Building confidence and support systems

Many carers have ideas for great solutions to improve care and support but may not have the confidence or self-belief to think their ideas are worth following through. But, as a carer, you are an expert in caring and therefore well-positioned to find and implement brilliant solutions. Being involved with a co-operative group can help you to develop the skills and confidence you need to begin. Through this journey, many carers find their self-esteem improves as well as their skills.

## Accessing mentoring

Co-operatives work by several principles one of which is to mentor and support other co-operatives. This means that if you are considering the option of co-operation as a solution to your needs there will be many people ready to help, support and mentor you.

Whether you are at the initial idea stage or further along the road to co-operation there will be a variety of already established co-operative members ready to share their experiences and lend support. Some of which have taken part in the development of this guide. If you are interested in finding out more about how you can benefit from a mentor contact Carers Wales.

## Longevity and time saving

Members of a co-operative work together and share the time required to create their solutions.

Carers that have been involved in co-operatives often speak of the time benefits they gained from their journey. Many have created more sustainable solutions developed around their specific needs. The bespoke services created often last far longer than the other services available. Many are more secure being less at risk of funding cuts and management changes.

## Building skills

As a carer, you will already have the insight and passion to create and develop the right solutions for your needs or those you care for. Your experiences and passion could lead to the creation of ideas far better than what is currently available.

You may feel nervous about not having all the skills you think may be needed, but there is support. Cwmpas helped co-produce this guide and can work with you and your community to generate the skills that you may need to develop our shared goals. They already work with carers across Wales to support them to take their ideas forward and create real lasting change.

# How are social enterprises funded?

Now that you have learned more about how social enterprises can work in practice you may feel inspired to start thinking about ways a social enterprise could benefit you, the person/you care for and the community. One big question remains though - how would it be funded?

## Sharing and Pooling Direct Payment Resources

The Social Services and Well-being Act states that your local authority must work in partnership to support initiatives that will meet wellbeing outcomes including through the development of citizen-led direct payment co-operatives and social enterprises.

This means that local authorities must enable you and those you care for to be actively involved in **shaping** your own care and support by promoting self-management with the aim to increase independence.

Direct payments allow you to pay for what you need and gives you control over how, where and when to spend it. It is, therefore, possible for you and those you care for to come together and pool resources to buy services where there are shared and/or common needs.

A group of friends who receive direct payments may want to spend time together fulfilling their needs as a community. They may wish to put their payments together and employ staff or a service to meet their needs. They may want shared support for some of the following examples:

- Shared social activities – employing a singing teacher for a class of several people or paying for an hour's meditation class for a group of people.
- Shared personal assistance services – food prep, shopping, pet services.
- Shared housing - help people live independently in one building.
- Pay for housing support to help them live individually in one building.

The Welsh Government state that a small group of up to four people can come together and employ a personal assistant to provide the things they need, without the need to register as a care service.

### Direct payment pooling example

Three independent people that all struggle with anxiety and mental health disabilities want to go for a walk in a quiet place. Neither, due to their health concerns, can leave their homes without support. To enable the group to go on a walk, they employ a support worker through direct payments to take them. Each person has been awarded one hour of direct payment time a week for support with this activity. By coming together to hire someone through direct payments they can have 3 hours a week walking time with the added benefit of being able to go for a walk together and form friendships.

By doing this as a group they receive many benefits:

- ▶ They are treated the same as the rest of society by being able to engage in activities with the people they choose such as friends, neighbours or family
- ▶ As a group, they have more control and a say in how they want their lives to look
- ▶ They can plan activities together that would not have necessarily been possible alone such as group holidays
- ▶ The group may feel more supported and benefit from greater well-being as part of a group

The guidance states ‘a direct payment is designed to be used flexibly and innovatively and there should be no unreasonable restriction placed on the use of the payment, as long as it is being used to meet eligible care and support needs. For more information on Direct Payments please visit our website at: [Direct Payments - Carers UK](#)

The group or the executors of their assets will all be responsible for paying for the staff or personal assistant together.

# Other sources of funding

Social enterprises can come in many forms and access different streams of funding. These may include:

## Grants

You may be able to apply for grant funding. Grant funding typically comes from philanthropic, charitable and government organisations. Grants are money that does not need to be paid back and is awarded in exchange for agreed-upon outcomes for your project.



## Community Share Offers

A community share offer is a way of raising capital available to co-operative societies, community benefit societies and charitable benefit societies. You raise capital by selling shares to your members, and unlike traditional forms of share offers, each member gets a democratic say in how the scheme is run – no matter the size of their investment.



## Donations and fundraising

A social enterprise may be able to accept donations, depending on the legal structure that is chosen. Many social enterprises also raise capital by using fundraising campaigns and crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter.

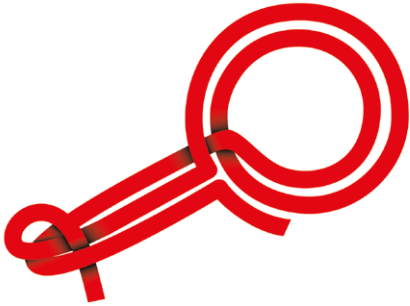
In addition to raising funds through some of the above methods, you may also be able to access help, advice, support and mentorship from various schemes in Wales. These include Cwmpas who offer help and support for social businesses to get started – including what legal structure to use, visioning your business and much more. Support from Cwmpas is funded by the Welsh Government and is free to new businesses.

# Interested in finding out more?

If this guide has encouraged you to start thinking about the possibilities of setting up a co-operative in your community, perhaps you would be interested in finding out more?



Follow this [link](#) to see the latest seminars and training that Carers Wales offers, or email us at: [info@carerswales.org](mailto:info@carerswales.org)



# Additional Information and Support

## **Carers Wales**

facilitates events across Wales for carers interested in social enterprises and community co-operatives. We can help to connect carers interested in additional support and information to relevant organisations

## **Cwmpas**

supports the growth of co-operatives and social enterprises, and by collaboratively delivering projects that provide skills and tackle exclusion

For ongoing social business support, you can also contact **Social Business Wales**.

## **The Hive Co-op**

The Hive offers up to 10 days of bespoke business support, mentoring and training for start-up co-ops.

## **Co-operatives UK**

works with and on behalf of members to make it easier to start and grow co-operative enterprises.

Useful websites which have helpful information about employing workers to meet support needs:

## **ACAS**

provides advice and information to employers and employees.

## **Being the Boss**

is a peer support website run by people with disabilities who aim to share knowledge, support and information about employing personal assistants.

Wales only:

## **Dewis Cymru**

provides advice and information on direct payments and employing personal assistants



Every year in Wales 123,000 people become carers, looking after family or friends who are older, disabled or seriously ill.

**However caring affects you, we're here.**

For expert information and advice about caring, contact the Carers UK Helpline:

T 0808 808 7777, Monday - Friday, 9am - 6pm

E [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org)

The logo for cwmpas consists of the lowercase letters "cwmpas" in a bold, dark blue, serif font.



Ariennir gan  
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