

Track the Act

Briefing 3

Monitoring the 2nd year of implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

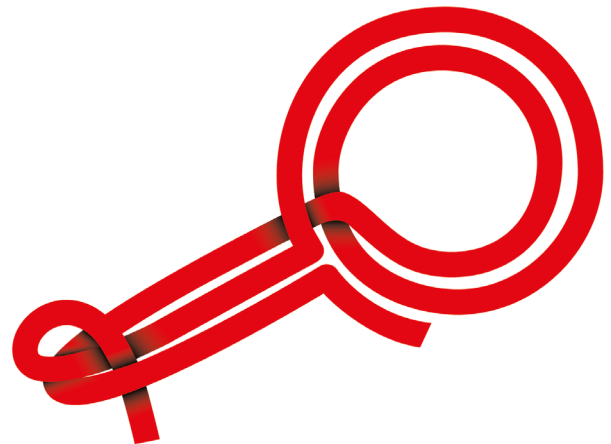


Overview

This briefing from Carers Wales outlines the key findings and recommendations from our work in monitoring how local authorities in Wales have implemented the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) 2014 Act (the Act) with specific focus on their duties to carers. It is the third briefing, which is funded by Welsh Government and covers the second year of the Act's implementation - 6 April 2017 to 6 April 2018.

Key Findings

- It is difficult to determine how well the Act is being implemented, given there isn't a universal mechanism to collect basic management information (MI) on the numbers of carers contacting local authorities for information, advice and assistance or accessing support services.
- There are a range of different approaches to providing information to carers across Wales. Some local authorities provide this themselves, whilst others commission this service out to external providers.
- The Act requires a proactive approach to providing information, advice and assistance and it is clear from our Track the Act survey that information is not reaching carers in need.
- When carers do see information, they find it useful whoever produces it.
- Most carers that completed the Track the Act survey have not received advice that would help them in their role as a carer.
- The Carers Needs Assessment process differs across Wales. There is also ambiguity in the process which carers have told us creates confusion.
- Carers are not receiving (or are unaware if they have had) a Carers Needs Assessment.
- We anticipate the number of carers in Wales will increase by 40% over the next 19 yearsⁱ. There is a lack of meaningful and evidenced-based long term planning into the services that will be needed in the future.
- Although all local authorities in Wales have a stated position that they do not charge carers for services, our survey found that 20% of those carers answering the question said that they pay local authorities for additional support and 48% reported that they pay others.
- Our evidence suggests that despite some examples of good practice, so far the success of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is limited.
- If only 3.5% of carers have had a Carers Needs Assessmentⁱⁱ, then a core element of the Act is not being implemented. This is something that needs to be addressed urgently.



Recommendations

Welsh Government

Key Recommendation:

There should be an honest assessment of the obstacles and barriers currently in the system which is frustrating the successful roll out of this legislative aim in order to ensure that those with the greatest need are supported. Welsh Government should identify the blockages and obstacles that need to be overcome to achieve the aims of the Act. This should be done via the Ministerial Advisory Group on Carers.

Recommendation: Welsh Government to change its approach from annual funding allocations to longer term grants to enable better carers service planning and sustainability.

Recommendation: Welsh Government should consider specific carers data collection as part of the Social Services Performance Measure requirements from local authorities.

Recommendation: Welsh Government should work with ADSS (Association of Directors of Social Services) to set out a clear mandate and unambiguous approach to data collection. This will enable effective monitoring of the implementation of the Act.

Recommendation: Welsh Government to continue to support the health sector to identify and support carers.

Recommendation: Welsh Government should fund a national awareness programme to promote the rights of carers.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should continue to press the UK Government to increase the level of Carers Allowance to the increased level currently offered in Scotland.

Recommendation: Welsh Government, Local Authorities and other stakeholders should include specific recommendations regarding carers as they develop and implement strategies on isolation and loneliness, such as the Welsh Government's Loneliness and Isolation Strategy for Wales.

Local Authorities

Recommendation: Local Authorities should track and publish annually

- The number of carers needs assessment and services provided to carers per head of population per month
- Which organisations are undertaking the Carers Needs Assessment on behalf of the local authority
- The number of services provided due to a Carers Needs Assessment per head of population per month

Recommendation: Local Authorities to expand its work with third sector partners to raise the awareness of the information, advice and assistance available to carers across Wales.

Recommendation: Given feedback regarding the usefulness of advice, local authorities and the NHS need to work closer with, and use the experience and expertise of the third sector when giving advice to carers.

Recommendation: The ADSS (Association of Directors of Social Services) to build on the work of the Population Needs Assessments to plan, innovate and commission sustainable local carers services needed over the next ten years.

Recommendation: We encourage the Carers Officers Learning and Information Network (COLIN) to continue to share and action best practice regarding the provision and quality of services provided to carers.

Recommendation: Local Authorities should be transparent regarding services available to carers in their areas.

Recommendation: Local Authorities should be transparent regarding any costs associated with services supplied by other providers which carers are being referred to.



Background

It is a Carers Wales priority to evaluate the implementation of the Act with a specific focus on carers. We understand that regulators, local government, Welsh Government and other 3rd sector organisations undertake similar research, but our priority is how the Act has had an impact on carers across Wales.

Too often carers are forgotten, have their needs confused with those of the person they care for or are seen as an afterthought. The ethos of the Act specifically sought to overcome this by explicitly including carers throughout the legislation and codes of practice. Our work looks at how far the Act is meeting the needs of carers.

The Track the Act programme fulfils a different role to the one being undertaken by statutory bodies and academic institutions. It is not our job or intention to provide a complete and detailed evaluation of the Act. We have a responsibility to give carers a voice as well as to challenge assumptions, highlight good practice and shine a light on what can be improved.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

It is now over four years since the Act received Royal Assent and two years since it was implemented. It is no longer a new law but one that should be fully embedded within local government.

The Act placed a set of new duties on local authorities:

- Unpaid carers in Wales have equal legal rights for support as the people they look after
- There is a legal duty on local authorities to meet a carer's eligible needs following a carer needs assessment
- Local authorities must ensure that they have information, advice and assistance services in place and clearly signposted so carers can get the right information at the right time
- There is a legal duty on local authorities to make sure there are a wide range of relevant community services and activities available in the local area for information services to signpost people to
- Local authorities are now also required to promote the well-being of both people 'in need' and of their carers

Wider policy context

Carers Wales welcomes the current level of interest in carers from politicians and public bodies in Wales. Since our last report we have seen:

- the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Group on Carersⁱⁱⁱ
- the Welsh Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry in the *Impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to Carers*^{iv}
- the launch of the Wales Audit Office review of carers and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014^v

Each of these activities are worthwhile, however it is imperative that carers see action as a result of this work so that it positively impacts on their daily lives.

We were also interested to see the launch of the Welsh Government's A Healthier Wales Plan^{vi}, encouraging care closer to home. This will inevitably impact on unpaid carers. Carers Wales will be keeping a watching brief to see how carers are considered in the implementation of this plan. It is positive that the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales recently acknowledged the vital role carers play in creating resilient communities. We hope that carers will be supported in delivering these policy ambitions.



Our Research

To understand how the Act is being implemented we have used several different research methodologies.

We have:

- Collated direct feedback from carers through our Track the Act survey
- Sought and received data directly from local authorities and local health boards
- Reviewed Population Needs Assessments
- Reviewed information that is publicly available on local authority websites relating to carers services
- Analysed statistics published by the Welsh Government

Surveys

We had a fantastic response to the Track the Act survey. This year 637 carers responded, from each of the 22 local authorities areas.

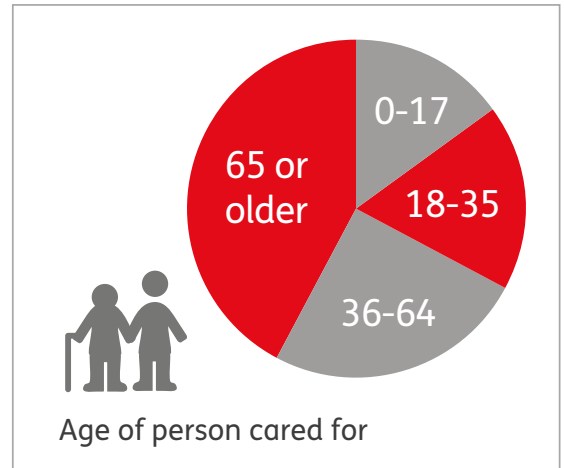
Most people completing the survey in 2016 -2017 and 2017 -2018 are those with significant caring responsibilities and those who have been caring for over 12 months. This is both a strength and weakness of the data. Clearly our data is weighted towards people who have been caring for over 12 months and caring for someone over 50 hours a week.

How many hours do you care for someone	
	2017-18
1 to 5 hours a week	2%
6 to 19 hours a week	8%
20 to 34 hours a week	7%
35 to 49 hours a week	12%
50 + hours a week	71%

Table 1 - hours cared

How old is the person you care for?	
0-17	15%
18-35	18%
36-64	25%
65 or older	42%

Table 2 - age of person cared for



Many of the people who responded to the Track the Act survey care for people who already receive a service because of a care plan from a local authority. However, a majority do not.

Does the person you care for receive any services from their council as a result of a care plan?	
Yes	38%
No	57%
Don't know	5%

Table 3 - receives services

This indicates our sample has a bias towards carers supporting people with significant need who may or may not have eligible care needs. In effect our sample is reflective of the population of carers the new provisions in the Act was aimed at – those people who make a significant contribution to the caring for and ensuring the wellbeing of others through their role as a carer.

Carers Wales would like to thank all the carers who took the time to complete the survey.

Our Research (cont.)

Data from local authorities and local health boards

As with the monitoring for previous years, we requested information from all local authorities in Wales as the Act’s implementation is primarily their responsibility. However, for the first time we also requested information from local Health Boards. We did this because of the important role of the health sector in supporting carers and the Welsh Government’s commitment to the increased level of integration between health and local authorities at both a strategic planning level and via the Regional Partnership Boards and when providing services.

Following feedback from local authorities, we decided to change our approach and instead of using Freedom of Information requests to gather data on carers, we worked with the local authority officers on obtaining the data needed.

We asked local authorities:

Question 1
How many carers were in contact with your local authority between the start of April 2017 and the end of March 2018 through:
your Information, Advice and Assistance service
other services you provide process

Question 2
Between the start of April 2017 and the end of March 2018, how many carers did your local authority:
signpost to another service e.g. third sector organisation etc.
provide a regular and ongoing services to as part of a care package to the person they care for
provide a regular and ongoing services as a care package for the carer in their own right

We also asked local authorities to include good practice examples where they have improved services for carers because of implementing the Act and how carers lives have benefitted as a result.

We asked local Health Boards to share:

- Good practice examples where they have improved services for unpaid carers and how carers’ lives have benefitted as a result, including carer awareness within GP surgeries, carer involvement at hospital discharge
- What funding spend has been allocated to services/ support for unpaid carers e.g. ICF and the 2018/19 Transition fund^{vii} and what the funding is being used for
- Any future plans they have to develop services/ support for unpaid carers

We are delighted to report that most local authorities and local health boards responded. A full breakdown of who responded and the data they provided is available on the Track the Act pages of the Carers Wales website. We have not been able to include all examples of the best practice provided to us, but these are included on the website.

Carers Wales would like to thank everybody who responded and helped us gather information for this work.

Population Needs Assessment

The Act required local authorities and local health boards to jointly undertake an assessment of the population, to find out the carer support needs in their areas. We have reviewed each of the Population Needs Assessments to understand on what basis services for carers are being developed.

We were very pleased that each of the assessments featured information and data on carers and their needs. This was often detailed, clearly setting out priorities that focused on meeting the needs of carers. For example the Western Bay Population Needs Assessment highlighted the priorities for carers which were based on the Valuing Carers Transition Plan (ABMU Carers Partnership Board).

Local authority website review

We reviewed what information is available on local authority websites relating to information and support for carers.

Welsh Government statistics

We have reviewed the Social Services Performance Measures data from a carer’s perspective.

Key findings

Data

Providing Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) to carers is a foundational element of the Act.

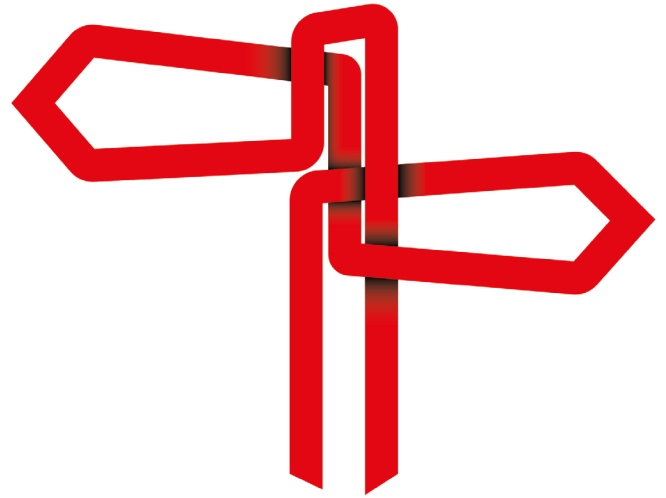
The data we received from local authorities however indicates

- that there isn't a universal mechanism to collect basic management information (MI) on the numbers of carers contacting local authorities for information, advice and assistance and accessing support services.
- some local authorities were unable to provide any data due to the implementation of new information gathering systems.

What this means in practice is that four years after the Act received Royal Assent there is no mechanism to identify the performance or progress of local authorities in relation to key elements of the Act. We are unsure why this is the case. 'How many carers do you provide services to' is in the same sort of data as, for example, 'How many pupils are eligible for free school meals.' We know that data collection guidance has been issued by Welsh Government but our research shows a continuing lack of consistency in the data that is captured and shared.

This was identified as an issue within the North Wales population needs assessment.

Data is available on the number of carers' assessments that took place across North Wales. We have not included it here as it gave a misleading picture as the numbers were counted differently in each county. It was also based on the assessment of the person 'cared for' so excluded assessments of carers who had self-referred. A consistent approach to assessments and data recording is needed.



Recommendation: Welsh Government should consider specific carers data collection as part of the Social Services Performance Measures requirements from local authorities.

Recommendation: Welsh Government should work with ADSS (Association of Directors of Social Services) to set out a clear mandate and unambiguous approach to data collection that enables effective monitoring of the implementation of the Act.

Recommendation: Local Authorities should track and publish annually

- The number of carers needs assessment and services provided to carers per head of population per month
- Which organisations are undertaking the Carers Needs Assessment on behalf of the local authority
- The number of services provided due to a Carers Needs Assessment per head of population per month

Key findings (cont.)

Information

From the local authority information responses we received it is apparent that there are a range of different approaches to providing information to carers across Wales. Some local authorities provide this themselves, whilst others commission the service out to external providers, most often third sector organisations.

For example Cardiff Council has increased the size of their carers team to do in-house information provision and carers needs assessments whereas Blaenau Gwent and Carmarthenshire contract with other organisations.

In the local authority responses a range of approaches are used at local level to provide information to carers, for example:

- Caerphilly Council Facebook and Twitter accounts
- Gwynedd Council Community Connectors
- Newport Council Adult Services First Contact Team
- Rhondda Cynon Taff Carers Information Pack

Our survey indicates that 53% of carers in Wales have seen information that has helped them in their role as a carer. However, as identified by Cardiff Council it is still a challenge providing information when carers do not self-identify. It is promising to see good practice being delivered through the Investors in Carers programme in the Hywel Dda Health Board area and in Monmouthshire. This scheme raises awareness of carers and their needs in health settings. This is especially important when we know that 4 out of 5 carers^{viii} first point of contact is generally within a primary care setting.

2016 – 6 April 2017) this had increased to 46%. More people are seeing information but there is a significant scope for local authorities and other organisation to make greater effort to ensure that carers can access information.

The Act requires a proactive approach to providing information advice and assistance and it is clear, from our sample at least, with the vast majority of respondents caring for over a year, that information is not reaching new carers and people in need. Research undertaken in 2006 by Carers UK – *In the Know*^{ix} – **The importance of information** for carers found that 65% of people with a caring responsibility did not identify themselves as a carer in the first year of caring, for 32% it took over five years.



I have no idea what is available. We were given an ASD diagnosis and told “off you go”. What next???



Information is out there if you look for it. Carers are often too tired to make that effort. Also there seems to be no coordination between agencies, so it can get very confusing.

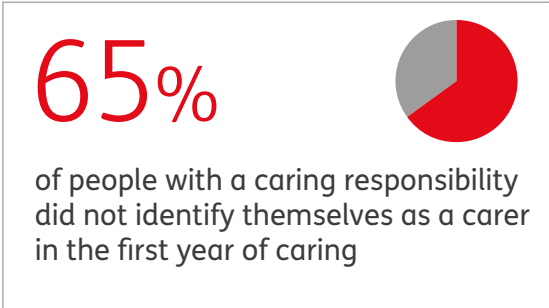


Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

Have you seen any information that would help you in your role as a carer? This information could be in a leaflet, on a poster, on-line or somewhere else.	
Yes	53%
No	47%

Table 4 - seen information

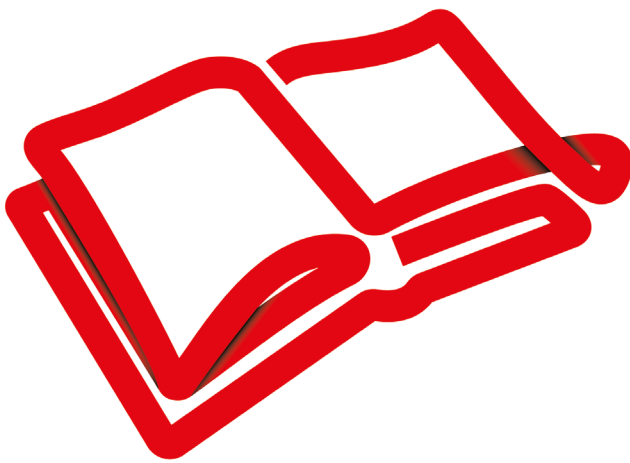
This reflects a trend that was identified in previous briefings. In the first six months of the Act’s implementation (6 April 2016 - 6 October 2016) only 16% respondents had seen any information produced by local authorities that would help them in their caring role. However, in the second six months (6 October



Key findings (cont.)

Who produced the information and what did you think of it?			
	It was very helpful	It was helpful	It was not helpful
I've seen information from the council	22%	50%	28%
I've seen information from a charity	39%	51%	10%
I've seen information from the NHS	16%	62%	22%
I've seen information from another type of organisation	30%	57%	13%

Table 5 - who produced the information



When carers do see information they generally find it useful whoever produces it. For example, 90% of people who have seen information produced by a charity have found it helpful or very helpful. This is fantastic. Information from the council, which will by its nature often be more generic, was viewed by 72% of respondents as helpful or very helpful. This indicates the importance of getting the information to the people in the most need because it will make a significant difference.

Recommendation: Welsh Government should fund a national awareness programme to promote the rights of carers.

Recommendation: Local Authorities and third sector partners need to work together to raise the awareness of the information, advice and assistance available to carers across Wales.

Recommendation: Welsh Government to continue to support the health sector to identify and support carers.



of people who have seen information produced by a charity have found it helpful or very helpful



Don't know what help there is or where to get any help from as I'm also disabled so my husband cares for me physically and I care for him as he suffers from mental health.



I am aware that our local council has made big efforts to improve contact with a provision for carers.



Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

Key findings (cont.)

Advice

Over the last 12 months have you been given any advice about being a carer by someone working or volunteering for an organisation?

Yes	39%
No	61%

Table 6 - advice

Most carers that completed the Track the Act survey have not received advice that would help them in their role as a carer by someone working or volunteering for an organisation. Given that the survey data is so biased towards people with significant caring responsibilities this is disappointing. The Act was designed to enable people with higher levels of need to receive more support.

If you have received assistance

	It was very helpful	It was helpful	It was not helpful
I got advice from someone working for the council	32%	39%	29%
I got advice from someone working for a charity	62%	33 %	5%
I got advice from someone working for the NHS	43%	46%	11%
I got advice from someone working for another type of organisation	47%	46%	7%

Where carers have received advice they generally found it helpful. Again, this reflects a pattern. Carers value the information, advice and assistance they receive from whichever organisation provides it. It is simply that too few people access the information or are provided with advice.

Recommendation: Given the feedback regarding the usefulness of advice given by various stakeholders, local authorities and the NHS need to work closer with, and use the experience and expertise of the third sector when issuing advice to carers.



Council does not know I even exist!!!!
Have no help or support son is 30 has Aspergers we don't exist!!!



So glad Carers Wales gave advice about what to claim, prior to this we were not receiving benefits we were entitled to. It was by chance coming across Carers UK, that I phoned asking for help and was given the correct information of what benefit to apply for.



Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

61%



have not been given any advice about being a carer by someone working or volunteering for an organisation over the last 12 months



At first I felt very isolated as a carer now recently with all the support given I feel so much better and at ease that there is help available when I need it. Thanks so much - appreciated.



Hospital service was not connected to local council. Had to badger people to get and support. Left to get on with it for 8 months after my husband stroke having been sent home with meds and victim support number.



Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

Key findings (cont.)

Carers Needs Assessment

The right to a Carers Needs Assessment remains a key element of the Act. Carers have a right to an assessment in their own right, and local authorities have a clear duty to promote this right and reasonably the benefits that an assessment would potentially offer.

We understand that accessing a Carers Needs Assessment can be challenging for carers because of the language used. Carers will often consider the assessment as looking at their ability to care rather than what support they need.

The Carers Needs Assessment process differs across Wales. Some local authorities will offer a pre-assessment conversation such as ‘What Matters’ or Carmarthenshire Council use an Outcomes Star pre-assessment. Our survey tells us that this can be via conversation or literally a document that is e-mailed or posted. Other local authorities are using a ‘What Matters’ conversation as the actual assessment. There is ambiguity in this process. Carers have told us creates confusion.

Bridgend Council have improved their Carers Needs Assessment process over the last year as a direct result of carer feedback, which is a positive outcome.

We welcome the Welsh Government instructing Social Care Wales to identify best practice in relation to the Carers Needs Assessment process, which can be rolled out to professionals across Wales.

Over the last three briefings we have highlighted a trend that carers are not receiving or are unaware that they have had a Carers Needs Assessment. We are disappointed that over half of our respondents to our Track the Act survey this year have not had a Carers Needs Assessment or a review of a previous assessment.

Over the summer however it was reported the period 2016/17 only 3.5% of carers had been offered a Carers Needs Assessment and only 0.5% had received a service as a result of an assessment. This is woeful.

It is not acceptable that so many carers with significant caring responsibilities who responded to the survey have had difficulty in accessing Carers Needs Assessments. See feedback below. We believe that this is a systematic failure to provide a service that is enshrined in a much-heralded piece of legislation.

In the last 12 months have you been offered or requested a carers needs assessment? ^x	
No, I have not been offered or requested a carers needs assessment or a review of a previous assessment	54%
Yes, I was offered or requested a carers needs assessment but I chose not to complete it	4%
Yes, I was offered or requested a carers needs assessment and received a service	15%
Yes, I was offered or requested a carers needs assessment but did not meet the criteria for services	14%
Yes, I was offered or requested a carers needs assessment met the criteria but have not yet received any service	7%
Yes, I requested a carer needs assessment but was refused	2%
I don't know if I have been offered or had a carers needs assessment	4%



Had to chase for a re-assessment in 2017 but got one. Was aware carers officer was telling people they weren't entitled to them and corrected her and advised carers they should get one.



Requested Carers Assessment but was declined.



Assessment took a year – still no result 6 months later.



I was offered a referral but refused at the time and when I asked our Social Worker to review my decision the request was ignored.



The so-called Carers Assessment was little more than a box ticking exercise. The council can say they have done their bit but no actual support was offered.



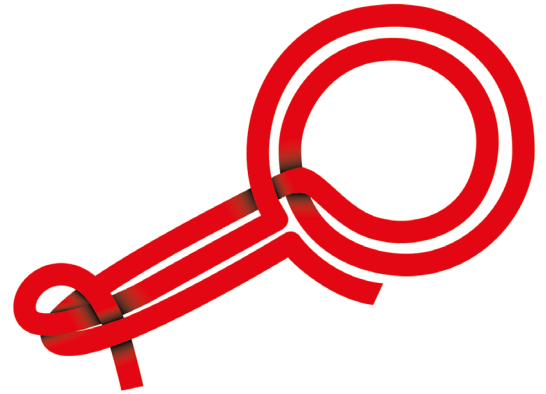
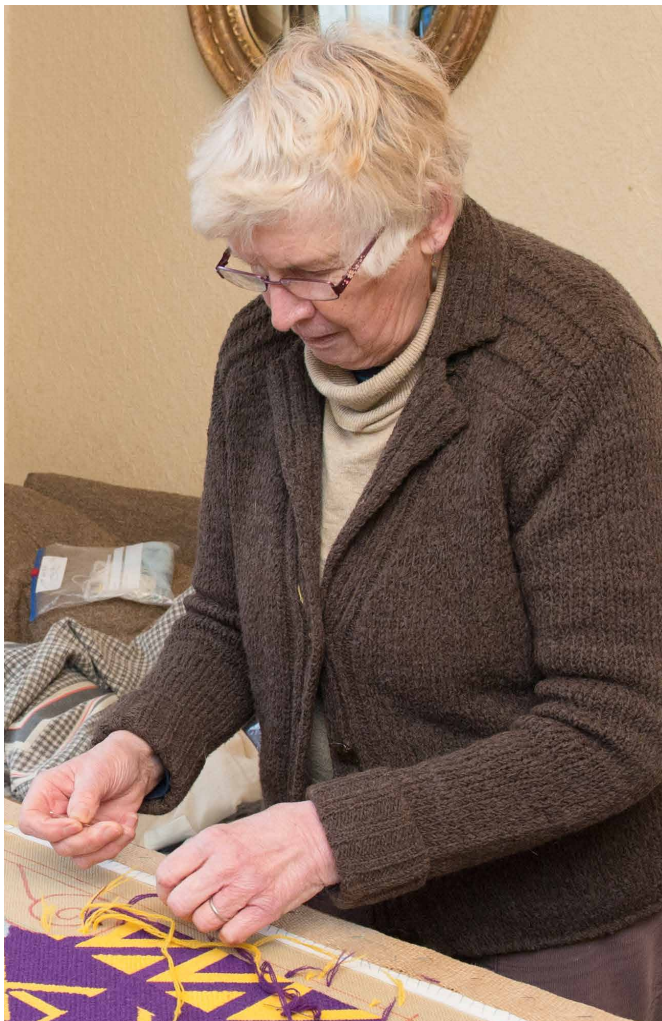
Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

Key findings (cont.)

In addition to the numbers of people who are receiving carers needs assessments we have some concerns about the quality of assessments.

Despite the will to ensure that the Carers Needs Assessments are offered and carried out across Wales, the reality on the ground shows that a minority of carers are being offered assessments. It is clear that those carers most in need, are not having their needs met. We understand that not all carers will want an assessment, but our findings paint a worrying picture.

Recommendation: There should be an honest assessment of the obstacles and barriers currently in the system, which is frustrating the successful roll out of this legislative aim in order to ensure that those with the greatest need are supported. Welsh Government should identify the blockages and obstacles that need to be overcome to achieve the aims of the Act. This should be done via the Ministerial Advisory Group on Carers.



I felt my life has turned a corner since my assessment phone call - empathetic but effective at fulfilling my need. Hafal got in touch and has made a 100 year difference to my life and is allowing me to be a better carer in many ways - so, so, so needed, but I don't think I would have known to ask for a carers assessment if it wasn't for my friend working in Social Services.



The reality on the ground shows that a minority of carers are being offered assessments.



Was told do not need an assessment or help but the person who said that is no longer in her post.



I approached social services and all they did was send out a chair for my mother to be able to shower in comfort. The people where so unpleasant I never asked again.



Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

Key findings (cont.)

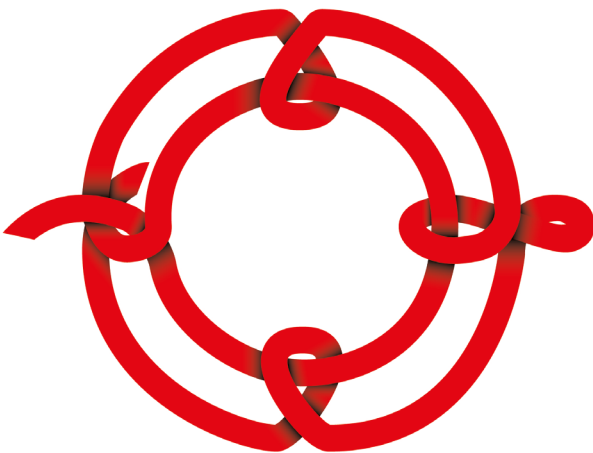
Services

We have been given details of services that are being provided or commissioned by local authorities and health boards such as Blaenau Gwent Carers Engagement officers visiting GP surgeries and carers training in Ceredigion and the Vale of Glamorgan authorities. These services provide huge benefit to carers, however we note that many services currently being provided are via one off discretionary grants or time limited commissioned projects. Our concern is that where short term funding is provided this does not enable long term planning of services that would make the most difference to carers.

In addition, we have been given examples of where local authorities are providing activities for carers that include social meals, trips to the panto and spa days. Whilst such activities could play a role in prevention, it is unclear how such services are aligned with an eligible need or if they meet the needs of carers most in need in that local authority area. Discretionary services are fantastic for the individuals whose needs are met in this way but are not an alternative to services that a carer would have an eligible right to as a result of a Carers Needs Assessment, particularly for those carers in crisis.

The responses from local health boards and local authorities show that there are some excellent examples of collaboration taking place, particularly in developing carers strategies and action plans at a regional level e.g. via the Regional Partnership Boards. Being able to embed these in daily practice is more challenging.

We anticipate the number of carers in Wales will increase by 40% over the next 19 years¹. We are concerned that there appears to be a lack of meaningful long term planning for the services that will be needed in the future, not just in the short term.



Recommendation: Welsh Government to change its approach from annual funding allocation to longer term grants to enable better service planning and commissioning.

Recommendation: The ADSS (The Association of Directors of Social Services) to build on the work of the Population Needs Assessments to plan, innovate and commission sustainable local carers services needed over the next ten years.

Recommendation: We encourage the Carers Officers Learning and Information Network (COLIN) to continue to share and action best practice regarding the provision and quality of services provided to carers.

Recommendation: Local Authorities should be transparent regarding the services available to carers in their areas and how they access them based on need.

40% 

We anticipate the number of carers in Wales to increase by 40% over the next 19 years.



From my experience, the thing I need and miss the most is time out for myself. I am a mother, a wife, a daughter, a neighbour, a 24/7 carer to not only my mother who had a severe stroke, but I am a 'carer' to my son, husband & dogs. Everyone wants something from me and turns to me for their needs but who do I turn to for mine? Sometimes you just want someone to step up and say 'take some time out' 'it's ok I'll sort it out while you take a break'. You want to be able to take time out without worrying of feeling guilty.



Track the Act respondent 2017-2018

Key findings (cont.)

Money

Carers Wales State of Caring Report 2017, reported that 43% of carers described themselves as struggling to make ends meet financially. The survey confirmed that money is major concern for many carers.

Although all local authorities in Wales have a stated position that they do not charge carers for services, carers answering the question said 20% pay local authorities for additional support with 48% reporting they pay others.

As we have identified in our previous reports, it is likely that these people are paying for services that they have either found themselves or been signposted to. Carers Wales believes that charging should be clear and transparent and mechanisms are in place to mitigate costs for carers on low incomes and those living in poverty.

Recommendation: Local Authorities should be open and transparent regarding any costs associated with services supplied by other providers which carers are being referred to.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should continue to press the UK Government to increase the level of carers allowance to the increased level currently offered in Scotland.

Loneliness and Social isolation

The survey also highlighted many carers experiences of social isolation. It is now widely accepted that loneliness and social isolation can impact gravely on carers. Carers UK research found that 8 in 10 carers describe themselves lonely or isolated as a result of caring^{xi}. Academic researchers have identified being lonely as having a significant and lasting negative effect on blood pressure, depression and higher rates of mortality.

Recommendation: Welsh Government, Local Authorities and other stakeholders should include specific recommendations regarding carers as they develop and implement strategies on isolation and loneliness such as the Welsh Government's Loneliness and Isolation Strategy for Wales.



My biggest challenge is surviving on Carers Allowance topped up with Income Support. I live in poverty as a result.



Carers allowance is pitiful, way less than the minimum wage. Yet Carers are saving government and local government many thousands of pounds. I'm one of the 1950's women who is losing out on my state pension which I paid towards and planned for throughout my career. I'm living on my savings which will run out. I'm not the only person in this situation I'm guessing many Carers are affected by this unfairness.



I'm exhausted in tears with it all and constantly feeling like a failure. I just don't want to deal with it anymore. I have nothing left.



What carers do for the ones they care for ought to be recognised and supported by the authorities. How are we supposed to have a decent quality of life and protect ourselves from the inevitable depression, loneliness and isolation that comes with being a full time carer? Where is the help for us as vulnerable people?



Being a carer means I have to make a lot of sacrifices and pretty much my life is on hold.



Track the Act respondents 2017-2018

Summary



Our evidence suggests that despite some examples of good practice, so far the success of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is limited.

If only 3.5% of carers have had a Carers Needs Assessment, then a core element of the Act is not being implemented.

This is something that needs to be addressed urgently. We encourage Welsh Government and its partners to consider what the blockages are to progress so these can be overcome and the fundamental aims of the Act realised.



From my experience, the thing I need and miss the most is time out for myself. I am a mother, a wife, a daughter, a neighbour, a 24/7 carer to not only my mother who had a severe stroke, but I am a ‘carer’ to my son, husband & dogs. Everyone wants something from me and turns to me for their needs but who do I turn to for mine? Sometimes you just want someone to step up and say ‘take some time out’ ‘it’s ok I’ll sort it out while you take a break’. You want to be able to take time out without worrying of feeling guilty.



Track the Act respondent 2017-2018

i Census 2011

ii <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-44860079>

iii <https://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/carerfriendlywales?lang=en>

iv <http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=022518>

v <http://www.audit.wales/news/social-services-and-wellbeing-study>

vi <https://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/healthier-wales?lang=en>

vii <https://gov.wales/newsroom/health-and-social-services/2018/fund/?lang=en>

viii Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010

ix In the Know - The Importance of Information for Carers

x A carers needs assessment could be in the form of a conversation where your needs as a carer are explored with a view to possibly providing support/service. Carers needs assessments are undertaken by a council or another organisation acting on their behalf

xi The World Shrinks: Carers UK and the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness

Our mission is to make life better for carers



We give expert advice,
information and support



We connect carers so
no-one has to care alone



We campaign together
for lasting change



We innovate to find new ways
to reach and support carers



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