



Summary

This is the first of a series of briefings on how local government in Wales is delivering on their new duties towards carers as set out in the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**. There is more information on the Act and the *Track the Act* research methodology at the end of this document.

Briefing 1

Track the Act Briefing 1 covers the first six months of the Acts implementation - from 6 April 2016 – 6 October 2016.

Finding 1: Information, advice and assistance

Our research indicates that local authorities in Wales do not know how many unpaid carers they are providing '*information, advice and assistance*' to. Reaching carers with information, advice and assistance to support them in their role as a carer is a fundamental part of the Act. The Act recognises that these specific types of light touch support, provided early in a care journey, improve outcomes for both people in need and their carers.

We found that 17 of the 22 local authorities in Wales were not able to provide any data on how many carers contacted them by phone, the internet or in person for information advice or assistance. Of the other authorities, none could provide data for all these major communication channels. A number of local authorities have however indicated to us that collecting this data is something they are actively looking at.

82% of unpaid carers who responded to our Track the Act survey had not seen any information published by their local authority that would help them in their caring role. **Of those carers that had seen information produced by local authorities 62% found the information useful or very useful.**

“Although my parents receive care at home. I have not been offered or made aware of any support available for myself”.

Track the Act survey respondent

Although it is early days there is still a job of work to be done by local authorities to demonstrate they are reaching out to carers with the information, advice and assistance that is required by the Act.

Finding 2 Signposting

The majority of local authorities in Wales do not know how many carers they are signposting to other organisations. **We found that 16 out of the 22 local authorities in Wales were unable to tell us how many people they had referred on to other organisations.**

Signposting is an important element of supporting people to live independently. Local authorities have a clearly defined duty to signpost both carers in need and those people who they care for to a range of preventative community services. For local authorities to be sure they have met their duties they must be able to demonstrate some kind of feedback loop.

Local authorities also have an obligation to ensure that the organisations they are signposting people to are inclusive to the diversity within our communities.

“The needs of ethnic minority carers are still not taken into account and they have no representation on local boards, steering groups, committees and forums. This is a concern since marginalisation is very much a problem when trying to access voluntary groups & organisations. Some are notably hostile to “outsiders”. Access to services and support needs to be made equally available to all”.

Track the Act survey respondent

Finding 3 Assessment

Figures produced by the Welsh Government show that in the year 2015/16 there was significant variability in how many carers assessments each local authority had undertaken. In 2015/16 some authorities completed thousands of assessments whilst others a few hundred.

Our research indicates that the situation has not significantly altered and there remains significant unexplained variability in the level of assessment. One north Wales local authority had for example undertaken 661 carer needs assessments in the first six months of the Act coming into force, whereas a similar sized neighbour had only undertaken 128.

This variability of approach to assessment may make it difficult for parts of the NHS when they are dealing with people with similar needs but who have varying levels of access to support simply because they live in different authorities.

Our Track the Act survey highlighted that many carers are still not being offered or are requesting carers needs assessments. **Of the people who completed the survey 80% had not been offered a carers needs assessment.** This is quite a stark finding given the fact that those people completing the survey had already identified themselves as being a carer.

“I have had a nightmare trying to get a carers assessment for myself. I'm still waiting. Social services are not interested at all. I have been made to feel like I'm wasting their time”.

Track the Act survey respondent

The data that we have been provided with also indicates that there has not been a significant increase in the numbers of carers being assessed following the implementation of the Act. This is interesting as the criteria for requesting or being offered an assessment has shifted from people who provide a substantial amount of carer to anyone in a caring role. Local authorities also have a new duty to actively offer carers needs assessment. We would therefore have expected to see some uplift in numbers being assessed.

Finding 4 Eligibility for services

A similar pattern occurs for carers receiving support via a care plan in their own right following an assessment. Under the Act carers have a right to be assessed and then receive a service in their own right if they meet the eligibility criteria. The data we were given by local authorities indicates that there is significant variation between local authorities in how carers are treated in this respect.

Some authorities provide a significant number of carers with a service whereas several local authorities only offer a handful of carers a service in their own right. One local authority had not offered any carer a service in their own right following assessment in the period 6 April 2016 – 6 October 2016.

Finding 5 Disabled children

The Act imposes a duty on local authorities to assess the needs of carers who are providing or intending to provide care for an adult or a disabled child.

Our Track the Act survey identified that where people care for disabled children they are less happy with the support they receive than carers of adults. It is too early to extrapolate too much from the statistical or qualitative feedback so far but this is a worrying trend. We will continue to monitor the impact of the Act on parents of disabled children.

We have however noted that this duty on local authorities to assess the needs of carers who provide care to disabled children is not made explicitly clear in much of the information produced on the Act by local authorities. The website of one local authority appears to exclude carers of anyone under the age of 18 from accessing a carers needs assessment.

“I am totally fed up and hope my situation will improve and I finally get some help as I am lonely tired and stressed”.

Track the Act survey respondent

Background to the Act

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 came into force on 6 April 2016. This landmark piece of legislation changes the way social care is delivered in Wales. Carers are very much at the heart of this Act. ‘Carers’ or ‘carer’ is mentioned 328 times in the Act whereas for example ‘well-being’ is only mentioned 263 times.

The Act places on local authorities a set of new duties

- Carers in Wales have equivalent legal rights to support to those people that they look after
- There is a legal duty on local authorities to meet a carer's eligible needs following a carer needs assessment.
- There is a legal duty on local authorities to ensure 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 carers.

Background to the research

Our aim in publishing this briefing is to provide a commentary on how the Act is being implemented and ultimately making a difference to carers across Wales

To understand this progress we have made Freedom of Information requests to local authorities, looked at local authority websites, analysed statistics published by the Welsh Government and we have been collecting direct feedback from carers through the Track the Act survey.

We will publish this data in its entirety on our website so anyone interested can see progress in each of Wales 22 local authorities.

A key element of our research was a national survey of carers. This can be found at www.carersuk.org/wales/news/track-the-act

- 223 carers from Wales responded to our survey. These responses we received covered each local authority area in Wales
- Of these responses, 70% cared for someone for over 50 hours per week and 76% had been in contact with a local authority before 2016.

We will produce a second briefing in May next year on progress of the Act one year on from implementation.

Our thanks go to the carers and local authority staff who provided information for this briefing.

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Contact us

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