

# All Wales Carers Assembly 2026 – Event Report

Carers Wales

## Introduction

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Carers Wales's mission is to make life better for unpaid carers in Wales. We provide information and advice on caring, help carers connect with each other, campaign with carers for lasting change and use innovation to improve services.

The 2026 All Wales Carers Assembly was held on Monday 23 March, bringing together around 50 unpaid carers from across Wales to discuss key issues and priorities. Attendees heard from leaders in health and social care services and also had the opportunity to engage with spokespeople from 6 political parties who look to be on course to win representation in the 2026 Senedd election in May.

We also discussed how Carers Wales and unpaid carers can work to shape services and society to be more carer friendly, to make life better for carers across the nation. This included how we can engage with candidates prior to the 2026 elections, and with whoever forms the next Welsh Government.

## With Thanks

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The All-Wales Carers Assembly could not have happened without the support of the Welsh Government and The National Lottery Community Fund, as well as our speakers, who

helped make such an engaging event. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who supported and contributed to the event:

- The Welsh Government
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Wales Millennium Centre
- Welsh NHS Confederation
- Social Care Wales
- Llais
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- Cllr Martyn Palfreman
- Peter Fox MS
- Sarah Rees
- James Evans MS
- Cllr Brendan Roberts
- Cllr Ian Chandler

A heartfelt thanks also to the unpaid carers who gave up their time to raise their voices and the voices of carers across Wales. Your experiences, ideas and determination to improve the lives of carers in Wales made the Assembly possible. We will continue to work to make life better for unpaid carers across Wales and look forward to working alongside you to make these changes.

## Setting the Scene for Carers in Wales

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Unpaid carers in Wales face significant challenges as a direct result of their caring roles, being disproportionately impacted by poverty and facing worse health and wellbeing

outcomes than the wider population. Research by Carers Wales and WPI Economics in 2024 indicates that over 100,000 unpaid carers in Wales are living in poverty, and the deep poverty rate for carers is 50% higher than the general population. Our State of Caring in Wales 2025 report shows that more than half of unpaid carers (52%) are cutting back on essentials such as food and heating – up 53% from 2023 – and nearly 4 in 10 carers (39%) say their mental health is bad or very bad.

While unpaid carers have rights and entitlements to information, advice and support under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, many carers struggle to see these rights ever realised. Successive Track the Act reports by Carers Wales, as well as reports from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Welsh Government's own evaluation of the Act, highlight failures in the implementation of the legislation, and the impact this has on carers' lives.

## Who's responsible for what and how do we change things?

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Our opening session at the event illustrated the various organisations and bodies that hold influence over the services and laws which impact carers' lives. We started by looking at the different responsibilities of the UK Government, Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales, who to influence, and which areas of responsibility have an impact on unpaid carers' lives.

We also walked carers through some of the key services, organisations and regulators that exist in Wales and how to make use of these organisations, such as the Public Services Ombudsman, Llais, Social Care Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales. We explained how Regional Partnership Boards bring together councils, health boards and a range of partner organisations to seek to enhance integration and plan care services at a regional level.

Finally, we discussed ways in which carers can make their voices heard in these spaces. Whether via becoming reps on Regional Partnership Boards, taking part in focus groups and consultations – including the recent example of carers giving evidence to the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee – and how Carers Wales can support carers to do this in a way that fits around the pressures in their lives.

## Policy Experts Panel

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We were delighted to be joined by representatives from Social Care Wales, the Welsh NHS Confederation and Llais to discuss some of the key issues carers face in accessing services either on behalf of the people they care for or themselves.

The panel members fielded a range of questions directly from carers on issues such as:

- Conflicts of interest in complaints processes, when complaining to service providers.
- The lack of capacity within social work professionals and multi-disciplinary teams to provide person-centred support for carers.
- Disjoin between health and social care services within Wales and cross-border services in England, and how these can be mitigated.
- Why information and advice for unpaid carers in Wales is not available in one central place (drawing comparisons with bereavement advice), and what respective services can do to support a move to this approach.
- Why – when legislation says carers must be willing and able to provide care – are statutory services placing increasing pressure and expectation in regard to care on unpaid carers, resulting in a greater impact on carers' lives and wellbeing.

The questions from carers in attendance and subsequent discussions were powerful and harrowing examples of the care people are forced to provide, which were shared within the room. There was agreement from panel members that unpaid carers are not sufficiently prioritised within services and a recognition that more needs to be done – by services and within wider society – to better support carers.

The panel discussed the areas within their organisations and roles where they could see improvements, and suggested possible topics and questions that carers could raise with the political representatives during the following session.

## Political Engagement Session

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Given the upcoming Senedd election, we wanted to give carers in attendance the opportunity to engage directly with parties that look on track to win representation in the next Senedd. We invited spokespeople from the six main parties in Wales that polling suggests are on course to win at least one seat, and were delighted to host the following representatives:

- Cllr Martyn Palfreman, Welsh Labour
- Peter Fox MS, Welsh Conservatives
- Sarah Rees, Plaid Cymru
- James Evans MS, Reform UK Wales
- Cllr Brendan Roberts, Welsh Liberal Democrats
- Cllr Ian Chandler, Wales Green Party

Attendees were informed that other parties and candidates were standing for election in May and that a full list of candidates for their area can be found online, and that Carers Wales is happy to support any unpaid carer in finding out who their local candidates are.

Each party representative gave a short opening speech, outlining their party's vision for unpaid carers in Wales and key ways they would seek to better support carers. We then split attendees into six groups and facilitated a set of short, sharp roundtable discussions between the spokespeople and groups of carers.

Groups had 15 minutes to discuss their key issues and priorities with each of the spokespeople, and what action they want to see from the next Welsh Government to make life better for unpaid carers. A huge range of topics and issues were discussed in short periods of time, and we thank party representatives as well as the carers in each group for focused, honest and respectful discussions. Carers told us that they valued the opportunity to speak directly to the people seeking their vote in small group settings.

## Show Us You Care: A New Deal For Unpaid Carers

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Our final session focused on the Carers Wales manifesto for the 2026 Senedd election. We gave attendees an overview of how we co-produced the manifesto with unpaid carers, reaching over 200 individuals last year via focus group sessions, events and a survey, to ensure the manifesto is rooted in carers' lived experience and reflective of carers' top priorities.

We discussed with carers how we have used the manifesto to try to influence parties' manifestos and candidates ahead of the election, and also how carers may want to use the manifesto locally and regionally to do the same. As well as the manifesto, we have created a range of resources for carers to use when engaging candidates locally, and we made these available to carers on the day to support them in their engagement ahead of the election.

Finally, we discussed with attendees what plans they had – if any – to engage with parties and candidates in their area. We crowd-sourced ideas and collaborations within the room and offered Carers Wales's support for carer-led activity locally and regionally, reminding carers that after May 2026, local elections in May 2027 provided another golden opportunity to raise carers' profiles and priorities to key decision makers.

Attendees were provided with copies of our manifesto, which can also be found on our [website](#).

## Close and Thanks

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We closed the event by showing our appreciation to the carers who were able to join us on the day, and those who we have had the pleasure of working with and supporting over the course of the previous 12 months.

As ever, we are committed to championing carers' voices at every level of decision-making across Wales and working to empower carers to advocate for themselves and their peers wherever possible.

## Carer Feedback

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We asked all attendees on the day to share their thoughts and experiences of the event with us, this is what they said:

- 97% of attendees felt more knowledgeable after the Assembly.
- 90% said they felt that the event had helped carers' voices be heard and listened to.
- 74% felt inspired to be more involved in campaigning for carers' rights.
- 83% said they felt the event had helped carers to be acknowledged, valued and contribute to the decisions that affect their lives.
- 64% said they felt empowered to use their voice to support carers.

We asked carers what topics they would like to see covered in any future events akin to the Assembly:

- *Benefits scandals/support around carers allowance overpayments.*
- *More Employers understand Carers Rights and the gender difference - more men helping.*
- *Where is funding going - how much going to private care is profit?*
- *What a good Carers Needs Assessment should look like i.e. a meaningful Carers Needs Assessment.*
- *Actions what's been done - what's changed?*

We also asked for any other feedback relating to Carers Wales's work or the All Wales Carers Assembly more generally:

- *I was pleased politicians [were] invited to hear our voices; felt listened to.*
- *Nice to meet known and new unpaid carers, good networking.*
- *Provides good information and good campaigning to and for unpaid carers.*
- *A sense of not being alone but part of a general movement.*
- *Given me an outlet for how I feel - good for wellbeing. Given my brain a much needed workout.*

Our sincere thanks to carers who shared their views and perspectives of the event, and what they would like to see going forward. We commit to ensuring this feedback shapes our work and the 2027 All-Wales Carers Assembly.

## Conclusion

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Carers need to see positive change in their lives. Since we re-established the All Wales Carers Assembly in 2024, it is clear that – in spite of pockets of good practice – the same issues persist for carers across Wales. Carers feel like they have to battle with services on a daily basis to see the support they should be entitled to, for themselves and the people they care for. Carers are still being pushed into providing care they are either unable or unwilling to provide, because the alternative is seeing the people they are caring for go without the support they need. While some carers reflected feeling listened to and heard at the event, this is not a feeling shared by many carers in a range of contexts. The next Welsh Government must do more to see carers in Wales get the support they need.

More must be done to make life better for unpaid carers in Wales, and it must happen as an urgent priority. Carers deserve nothing less.

## Contact us

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