

A Fair Deal for Carers:

Carers Wales Senedd Election Manifesto 2021

Unpaid carers looking after a disabled, ill or elderly family member or friend have saved the Welsh Government £33 million every single day since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 91% of the public in Wales believe unpaid carers have been important in caring for people during the pandemic. This immense unpaid effort has resulted in over three in four carers feeling exhausted as they have had to care for longer with reduced support. Yet 5 years of Carers Wales evaluations of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 demonstrate carers have been struggling for years. Despite legal rights to information, assessment and support, the vast majority of carers do not have their needs assessed or receive the support they need. As a result, many feel they must sacrifice their personal and career aspirations to care.

This manifesto has been informed by our engagement with thousands of carers over this Senedd term. It proposes realistic steps that must be taken by whoever forms the next Welsh Government to recognize unpaid carers as the vital third pillar of care and support in Wales, and deliver the support they so desperately need to continue providing care while looking after their own wellbeing. Carers Wales stands ready to support the implementation of these proposals.

The Social Services and Well-being Act

- The Welsh Government should adopt a more strategic role in monitoring and funding partners so they fulfill their obligations under the Act.
- Using the abundance of existing evaluation of the Act, and the interim report of the Welsh Government-commissioned evaluation due in October, a draft dedicated action plan to improve implementation of the Act with clear timescales should be published by the end of 2021. Once in force, Ministers should report annually to the Senedd on progress.

Fair and Consistent Carer Support

- To reduce inequality in provision across Wales, introduce minimum standards of carer support based on carer eligibility, including a breaks entitlement, supported by a national funding formula for local authority carer services if needed.
 - Improve access to, and understanding of, carers needs assessments through national requirements for standardized processes including on feedback, appeals and waiting times and encourage consistent, clear language to promote and explain the assessments.
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Renewed Carer Services

- Reinststate disrupted carer services as soon as possible and increase funding to meet the backlog of need created by the pandemic.
- Allow more flexibility in the use of direct payments to support carers to meet their needs.
- Provide certainty for services and statutory partners by committing to longer term funding arrangements for third sector services.

Carers in Employment

- Include working carers in the fair work agenda by encouraging carer friendly practices in all sectors including flexible working, carer passports and paid carers leave brought together in workplace carers policies that are co-produced with carers.
- Require carer friendly workplace policies as a condition of receiving public funds.
- Introduce an entitlement to paid carers leave for Welsh Government employees.
- Establish a Fair Work Forum focused on Carers in Employment to encourage cross-sector learning and expectations regarding support for working carers.

Identification and Awareness

- Introduce a new duty on the NHS to identify carers and promote their health and wellbeing.
- Create a national register of carers by 2023.
- Require all health and social care staff likely to interact with carers to undertake a proportionate level of Carer Awareness training.
- Ensure the current Carers Rights awareness campaign can be repeated annually.

A Stronger Voice for Carers

- Empower the Ministerial Advisory Group on Carers to take a more strategic role in determining national carers policy, informed by the expertise of its broad membership, in a spirit of social partnership.
- Acknowledge carers as a critical pillar in delivering care and support in Wales by setting clear expectations of Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and Regional Partnership Boards regarding meaningful co-production with carers and carer representatives.