Unpaid Carers in Carmarthenshire

Strategic, Local & Covid Related Developments

Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee

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Addressing the needs of Carers in Carmarthenshire

Overview

This report outlines the work undertaken in 2020/21 in relation to unpaid carers, the support provided during Covid and details the action being undertaken based on what carers have told us is important to them.

The report details both Carmarthenshire specific work and also details the regional West Wales action being taken to support unpaid carers.

Background

According to data from the last Census (ONS, 2011) there are approximately 47,000 unpaid carers within West Wales, representing 12.5% of residents and we know there is a considerable number of 'hidden' carers who do not define themselves as carers. In Carmarthenshire we also know from Census data that there are over 24,000 Carers who declared that they were providing care for another adult or a disabled child.

Carers are defined as *"anyone, of an age who provides unpaid care and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who is disabled, physically or mentally ill, or affected by substance misuse. Unpaid Carers are the single largest provider of care to people with support needs in our communities, and they save the NHS and Social Services millions of pounds a year."* Welsh Government (2013)

The West Wales Population Assessment (West Wales Care Partnership, 2017) identifies that the impact of caring on an individual can affect their emotional and physical wellbeing, finances, education/employment/training, life opportunities and relationships. Having said that the role of carers is invaluable and many carers feel a sense of pride and purpose in caring for their loved one.

Legislative Context-Social Service and Wellbeing Act

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) entitles carers to have an assessment of their caring needs, irrespective of their age, amount of care they provide or their financial position. Within the assessment, there is a duty to consider the following:

- Whether the carer has needs for support or are likely to do so in the future
- The extent that they are able and willing to provide care and will continue to be able and willing to do so
- What matters to the carer and the personal outcomes that they wish to achieve
- The extent to which support, preventative services, provision of information, advice and assistance can assist the carers with achieving those outcomes
- Whether the carer works, wish to work and whether they are participating or wish to participate in education, training or leisure activities.

As well as individual carers' needs assessments, it should be noted that in many cases carers needs' are considered as part of integrated assessments where a Social Worker will look at the needs of the carer and the cared-for simultaneously.

Regional Context-West Wales Carers Strategy

During 2020, the West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG), consisting of Hywel Dda University Health Board, Carmarthenshire County Council, Ceredigion County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council, developed a West Wales Carers Strategy.

https://www.wwcp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Carers-Strategy-Final-20.10.20-Eng.pdf

https://www.wwcp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/cym-Carers-Strategy-Final-20.10.20.pdf

In developing this strategy, 558 people provided their views and feedback via an online survey, with 35% of respondents coming from Carmarthenshire. In addition feedback from stakeholder events prior to Covid held in January and March 2020 shaped the feedback together with other partner agencies.

The strategy is structured around four key priorities:

- Improve the early identification and self-identification of Carers, including Young Carers and Young Adult Carers
- Ensure a range of services is available to support the wellbeing of carers of all ages, in their life alongside caring
- Support carers to access and maintain education, training and employment opportunities
- Support carers to become digitally included

Work is now being undertaken by WWCDG members to refresh their action plan to ensure that the above priorities are delivered against for 2021/22 onwards.

Support for carers in Carmarthenshire

Support for carers across Carmarthenshire is overseen by the Carmarthenshire Strategic Partnership Board for Carers. This is a multi-agency group that brings together key stakeholders, including carers, to improve the quality of life for carers of all ages by supporting them both in the caring role, but also to have a life outside of caring.

During the Covid pandemic the role and importance of unpaid carers has become more evident. The West Wales Carers Development Group have worked together to ensure carers continue to be supported with information, advice and support. Collaborative working across all partners and close working relationships with our commissioned service providers has enabled us to respond to the needs of carers including access to PPE & testing. During the first wave of the pandemic welfare calls to carers registered with the carer's information service were prioritised. Many carers took the decision to shield or to isolate themselves to protect those whom they are carers for.

We recognise the impact that Covid has had on carers, and how it has been difficult at times to offer the usual menu of support. We have therefore had to adapt the offer so that it can be delivered during Covid.

An overview of the services and support provided to carers is detailed as follows:

Service Provision/Developments

Refreshing Respite Regional work, supported by the University of Swansea, has been taking place to review and refresh what is understood by the term respite. 'Carers breaks' are now seen as a spectrum of opportunities, and work is being undertaken to take forward the concept of 'respitality' and maximising opportunities within our local tourism and hospitality sectors.

During Covid, offering planned bed-based respite has been an ongoing challenge due to the need to minimise any potential of infection getting into a care home setting. For older people, a limited offer has been available in one Local Authority care home and it has been possible to arrange emergency respite. However, for infection control reasons, these arrangements have been subject to a period of self isolation on arrival which has impacted on the positive experience that individuals normally have when receiving the respite service. This has meant that many individuals/carers have decided that they do not want to take up the offer of respite at the current time. We will need to closely monitor to consider at which point we can start to reintroduce bed-based respite in the way that it was previously offered.

Emergency Respite has continued at Tir Einon for those with complex needs and planned respite is now being reintroduced as part of the recovery plan.

Some day services have remained open throughout the pandemic to provide respite for individuals and their carer's, this has been on a one-to-one basis and following robust risk assessments.
Day services staff have kept in touch with carers and provided support at home or in the community when families have been struggling.

Community activities A range of activities and groups that offer carers breaks, whether through carer-specific provision or more general e.g. carers' yoga, dementia choirs and virtual cuppa clubs, befriending life links etc. Many of these can be found on Connect Carmarthenshire platform - https://connectcarmarthenshire.org.uk/activities

Short Term Replacement Care In partnership with Crossroads Sir Gar and commissioned by Carmarthenshire, this service provides carers with replacement care at home in response to carers needs. This often benefits carers who may be accessing services and support for the first time, but at a point when they may be finding the caring role difficult. This service has been enhanced during Covid, as normal forms of respite such as bed-based planned respite have been more difficult to offer and day services have in the majority of cases had to close. Hafan Glyd provides overnight and emergency replacement care and other services such as carers grants and carers counselling services combined to provide a supportive offer during covid.

In addition the Local Authority offered emergency short term respite (up to 4 nights) and planned respite within its own care homes.

Innovations Grants Funded by the Integrated Care Fund, grants have been awarded to organisations and groups across West Wales and a number of these include breaks for provision for carers in Carmarthenshire, including one-off short breaks to give carers the space to have time away from the caring role, developing sport-based community activities for carers and the people they look after and food-based breaks that support carers to have a break whilst learning about the importance of good nutrition.

Carers Rights Day and Carers Week Celebrated annually in Carmarthenshire, these events not only offer support for carers, but raise the profile of the caring role across society and the rights of carers in terms of employment, social care, financial support etc. With the theme of Carers Week 2020 being "know your rights", this short video was produced to promote the importance and value of unpaid carers:

English:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/yd6gh2sqd3y9chj/CCC-CarersDay_v4.0.ENG.SUBS.mp4?dl=0

Welsh:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/pog0o0m6qzinebz/CCC-CarersDay_v4.0.CYM.SUBS.mp4?dl=0

Carers Trust Crossroads Sir Gar, in partnership with the Carers Support Services Network and Carmarthenshire Local Authority organised programme of activity for carers over a four day period in November 2020. Activities included :

Yoga, managing change during Covid, resilience building, energise, mindfulness, stay positive, carers in the bake house (bread making) and much more. Over 450 unpaid carers received either an afternoon tea hamper or a wellbeing hamper.

Carers Provider Networks Carmarthenshire Carers Forum is an independent charitable organisation and is supported by the Local Authority to connect unpaid carers across the county. Working alongside Crossroads Sir Gar the Forum provides a peer support for carers across the county, linking carers with one another and encouraging the development of a network of mutual support groups.

Carers Recognition Card / emergency The carers' identity card is a system where by the carer is allocated an identity card to carry with them. The system provides re-assurance to the carer that their caring responsibilities will be acknowledged in the event of an emergency and that an immediate response can be arranged to ensure the safety and on-going care for the cared for person. The carers' card is administered by Delta wellbeing who also respond to an emergency situation as per the contingencies contained within the carers' application.

Small carers grants scheme Funded by Welsh Government/ Carers Trust Grant, Crossroads Sir Gar processed and awarded over 180 small grants to support carers impacted by covid. Grants were awarded for IT, essential household items, fuel and food payments, goodie bags & counselling sessions. In total over £44,500 was awarded across both Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.

A further 'top up' grant of £20,000 will be available and is due to open shortly.

Employers for Carers(EfC) Developed to support carers in the workplace, Carmarthenshire is a member organisation and is developing its approach to supporting working carers across the organisation. However, progress of this work has been impacted by Covid.

Carers Exceptional Circumstances Direct Payments (previously known as carers grants)
The aim of the exceptional payments direct payment is to be responsive to urgent need, quick & efficient to enable carers to continue their vital role. A carer's assessment is required to access this and can cover a range of situations such as replacement/ faulty white goods, contribution to carer's breaks etc. The solution is very person centred & tailored to meet the individual circumstances.

Investors in Carers An accredited quality framework led by Hywel Dda University Health Board, this West Wales initiative is designed to recognise organisations and services that support carers both in terms of the people they deliver services to, but also in terms of their workforce. Within Carmarthenshire all Teams in Adult Social Care are working towards the Investors in Carers award following on from the success of Learning Disability day services where three teams achieved their Bronze awards and are working towards their Gold.

The social work teams are progressing as follows:

- Substance misuse team – will be submitting in March

- 0-25 Disabilities team (split into three teams) all have had training and working on bronze.
- Community Learning Disability and Safeguarding Teams have just commenced.
- All three CMHT teams (Wellfield Rd, Swn y Gwynt and Brynmair) all at Bronze, Wellfield had started their Silver.

Within Education:

- St John Lloyd, Coedcae (wanting to do silver), Strade and Glan y mor all at Bronze and so is Coleg Sir Gar. Queen Elizabeth High and Bro Dinefwr working on their bronze. Crossroads Education officers are also supporting the schools and linking in with the IiC scheme.

One to one support- Many third sector organisations have moved to on line services and provided support such as befriending. Hafal have provided activity packs and one to one sessions of support including 'zoom' support groups. Alzheimer's, the Stroke Association and many others supporting carers have all adapted their offer during covid. However, it is acknowledged that a digital platform may not be accessible for all so continued efforts to support people in a safe way as is possible still continues.

Social Work Support. Face to face visits have continued where necessary, especially where families are struggling to support those with complex needs**.** Social workers have also kept in touch with individuals and families and carers by telephone, on teams and using I pads provided by the LA. In many cases contact has been significantly increased to support carers at this difficult time.

Carmarthenshire Digital Connections The importance of digital inclusion has been highlighted during the covid pandemic.

- **Enhanced digital offers**- during covid we have seen enhanced digital offers to support carers eg mind, day opportunities, Crossroad Sir Gar etc. There is a regional digital programme of work to take more strategic approach to digital inclusion with our third sector partners and communities. The Connecttokindness campaign was launched in July '20 recognising the importance of community connectedness and wellbeing.

- **CONNECT2Carmarthenshire**- Covid was a catalyst for this development providing a digital platform to promote community connection, it has community listings and a platform for mutual exchange/ support.

- **Delta CONNECT** this includes pro-active wellbeing calls & support and TEC enabled packages for example life line, sensors, falls detection, medication

dispensers etc, access to 24/ 7 community response service to respond to crisis giving families peace of mind and supports digital connections.

- **Care Homes connections-** a major concern for many carers has been not being able to visit their loved ones living within care homes. Care homes for older people have been supported, in partnership with Digital Communities Wales by the loan of ipads and digital equipment to support residents to keep connected with their families. In addition, the Integrated Care Fund has funded small grants to care homes to promote digital inclusion and covid related modifications to support family / carer visits. (@ £700,000 has been made available across the west wales region)

- **Virtual Activities-** learning Disability day services have been creative in offering virtual activities to those who use services, and this offer has been extended to carers to join in with those they care for. Feedback has been that this has been invaluable.

Conclusion

We are aware that the pandemic is having a significant impact on carers as services which provide much needed respite have been reduced in order to keep people safe. We are planning collaboratively with partners to be able to respond to the impact of Covid on carers.

Across West Wales there is a strategy to ensure that carers are supported both in their caring role and to have a life outside of caring. This is supported by a robust work programme of activity within Carmarthenshire to target the issues that carers report will support them to feel more included, connected and valued within communities and society.