
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	February 2021
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Service Area	Adult Social Care / Children's Services
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To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Adult Services and Children's Services Carers Strategy

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report outlines the activities undertaken in support of carers within Adult Services and Children's Services. It outlines our objectives and intended activities moving forward and the links to the Regional Carers Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to receive this report and to raise questions and challenge leading to improvement.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 This report outlines the activities undertaken in support of carers within Adult Services and Children's Services.

3.2 Unpaid carers play an essential role in supporting people in the community as part of the wider health and social care sector. The support they provide is varied and a number of them provide support to people with highly complex needs.

3.3 It must also be recognised that without the support of unpaid carers there would be a significant increase in the demand for statutory social care services.

3.4 Young carers are children and young people under 18 who provide regular and on-going care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled, or misuses substances. The provision for Merthyr Young Carers is

located within Children's Services Early Intervention and Prevention component of its service strategy.

- 3.5 As part of the Regional Work programme of the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board, a new Cwm Taf Carers Strategy was developed in 2016 to replace the separate plans of partner organisations. Working with partners across Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and including carers themselves, the Cwm Taf Carers Strategy 2016-2019 covers carers of all ages.
- 3.6 The following principles have been used by the Cwm Taf Carers Partnership Group to inform its work:
- We will promote and support effective communication across the partnership;
 - We will make sure that users of our services, particularly carers, are able to influence the work of the partnership;
 - We will focus on what matters to the people and communities of Cwm Taf;
 - We will promote and develop solutions towards preventing problems occurring or getting worse for people in Cwm Taf;
 - We will promote and support collaboration and integration;
 - We will make sure that we strike a balance between short term needs and longer term goals;
 - We will listen to, understand and respect individual organisational views and the views of other parties;
 - We will conduct business with transparency and openness; and
 - We will fully utilise the wide range of skills, knowledge and experience which are available to the Group.
- 3.7 The strategy is currently under review and now includes Bridgend as part of our new regional footprint.
- 3.8 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg steering group have met several times within 2019/20 to draft an updated version of the carers' strategy. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions and Government guidance impacting on the group's ability to meet, this work remains outstanding.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

Adults Services

- 4.1 Within Merthyr Tydfil we did not have a carers officer in place to support carers within Adult Services. It was recognised that there was a need to improve our offer to carers and as such, a carers officer was recruited in August 2020.
- 4.2 Throughout 2019/20, partners in the region built upon the success of the previous year and continued to work collaboratively together and with other stakeholders in improving recognition of carers and providing appropriate information and support.
- 4.3 Key areas of work that were undertaken were:
- Worked with partners to deliver the annual Action Plan.

- Continued work with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Partnership Group to oversee implementation of the Strategy, reporting to the SSWB Partnership Board.
- Provided Carer Aware training (both via e-learning and face to face) to further expand the knowledge of both Carers Champions and staff throughout the Cwm Taf region.

4.4 Worked with Third sector partnership within Merthyr Tydfil to deliver:

- Primary Care Cluster GPSO's who engaged, signposted, offered advice and worked with patients to influence cultural and behavioural change for service users within a Primary Care setting.
- VAMT community coordinators provided information, advice and signposting to local community groups, activities and services.
- Established a Merthyr Tydfil Dementia Support group.
- Continued to deliver the Merthyr and the Valleys Mind Carers STAR Project.
- Funding was secured by Citizens Advice Bureau to create the CAB for Carers project.
- Funding secured by Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil to create their project Caring for Cancer Carers.

4.5 The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on carers as there has been a reduction in the availability of a number of services that support carers in their role such as day services and access to respite in care home settings.

Young Carers

4.6 The Young Carers Service within Merthyr Tydfil has been provided by Barnardos since 1997. The service operates an open referral system, accepting referrals from young carers themselves, their families and professionals.

4.7 During 2019/20 18 new young carers assessments were undertaken, all of which led to a support plan. A further 197 young carers support plans were reviewed within the set timescales.

4.8 Carers well-being is central to the measures of the Young Carers service; overall within the year 85% of young carers who have attended the programme have reported an improvement in their wellbeing. 80% of families engaged with the service report an improvement in their families' resilience.

4.9 Key areas of work that were undertaken included:

- Through working with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group we had secured continued funding of £4,100 for residential breaks for young carers to take place during 2019/20.
- The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group also supported the provision of cooking sessions for young carers.
- The Young Carer's Choir continued to meet on a weekly basis. During 2019/20 their performances include the Welsh festival at Pontypridd, the Child Looked After Celebration Event and the 20th Celebration of the Taith Partnership hosted

by Mark Drakeford. During the six-week school holiday period Glam Choir provided an excellent opportunity for 11 young carers to attend a two week summer camp.

- Children's Services and Barnardos in conjunction had secured funding for music activities for young carers and young mothers. The Alaw project has been attended by 12 female young carers aged between 14 and 18 years old. Sessions to date have offered opportunities for participants to song write and learning to play musical instruments.
- Young carers are represented at the Merthyr Borough Youth Forum. Young carers also attended the Youth Parliament Event at the Liberty Stadium in Swansea where they were involved in a focus group looking at developing life skills in the curriculum. Seven young carers were part of the community ambassador programme and attended a visit to the Children's Commissioners' Office in Swansea.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

5.1 The pandemic continues to place additional pressures on unpaid carers as whilst services such as day services have re-opened, they are at a much reduced level to enable social distancing. Planned respite services in care home settings are unavailable due to the restrictions on admissions to care homes.

5.2 We have been working to provide support in alternative ways such as direct payments and more sitting services in the person's home. However, we are now seeing an increase in the number of unpaid carers who are saying that they are in crisis and unable to continue in their caring role.

5.3 We recognise the need to support carers and in order to do this we have needed to seek alternative ways of engaging with them to develop and evaluate new services and the following are now in place:

- A Carers Officer to develop and understand what carers needs currently are.
- Mechanism for contacting carers to provide support through COVID.
- Establishment of a social media group for carers in Merthyr Tydfil to share up to date information from the Local Authority and our third sector partners.
- Funding acquired to commission 'Meaningful Care Matters' workshops and online resource membership.
- Review of the current carers assessment to identify what needs to change for it to be more carer friendly.
- Review and development of the regional carers strategy (ongoing).
- Worked with our WCCIS team to identify how many carers have had carers assessments undertaken.
- Redeveloping our Local Authority website landing page to have more detailed information for carers.

Young Carers

- 5.4 During 2020/21 the COVID 19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions have placed significant pressures on our young carers. The Young Carers Service worked quickly to adapt their ways of working to ensure that we remained a consistent support for our young carers. This has led to increased virtual working and outdoor sessions during the pandemic period.
- 5.5 During the first three quarters of 2019/20 118 young carers engaged with the Young Carers Service. 11 new young carers assessments were undertaken, all of which led to a support plan. A further 152 young carers support plans were reviewed within the set timescales.
- 5.6 Carers well-being is central to the measures of the Young Carers service; overall within the year 61% of young carers who have attended the programme have reported an improvement in their wellbeing. The current restrictions and changes in service delivery are considered to be fundamental components as to why this measure is lower than previous years. It is important to note that over the three quarters this measure has increased (Q1 27%, Q2 84% and Q3 89%). 78% of families engaged with the service report an improvement in their families' resilience.
- 5.7 Young carers have continued their commitment this year in participating in various awareness raising activities which has helped to promote them on a local, regional and National platform. Merthyr Young carers have also had the opportunity to have their voices heard through participation in various consultations and meetings that are relevant to them.
- 9 young carers participated in a focus group with Ludicology looking at 'play' this was commissioned by MTCBC.
 - 2 young carers participated in a meeting with the Education Minister Kirsty Williams to help inform her decision on the future of exams.
 - 4 young carers who participated in the 'Here I Am' Campaign. This campaign has now been presented to schools across Wales, lesson plans and resources are now being used to tackle stereotypes, looking at identity and celebrating differences.
 - Barnardo's Kidsmas Event. Merthyr Young Carers Choir were showcased at this year's Barnardo's Kidsmas event. The event was streamed across the whole of the UK. Moreover, Barnardo's used the Merthyr Young Carers Choir and interview to stream on Christmas day, this was independent of the Kidsmas event.
 - Community Ambassadors - 4 young carers represented their peers at the quarterly event held on Zoom. They met with Children's Rights Ambassadors from Caerphilly, Swansea, The Vale of Glamorgan and Carmarthen. The group spoke about their role as carers and the support they give.
- 5.8 The Young Carers Service has continued to expand its partnership working to ensure that our young carers and their families are safe, stimulated and supported. Some of this year's partnership work has included:

- Providing our young carers who did not have the laptop/computer facilities with laptops, including sim cards so they have Wifi. This was through a programme supported by the Welsh Government.
- Local Councillors - Providing educational wellbeing packs and Christmas packs for all Barnardo's young carers across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.
- Glam Youth Choir providing tutoring and support to Merthyr Young Carers Choir.
- ArtisCommunity - Support with funding for a music tutor. Providing opportunities and events to showcase Young Carers choir. Providing opportunities for Young Carers to attend on-line arts sessions.
- Dowlais Community Centre (Stephens and George Charity) - Joint project enabling Young Carers to explore their creative skills resulting in production of a children's book to raise awareness of caring.
- Mike Church (author) Osian (illustrator) - Bookish creative writing project.
- Martin Daws Poet Laureate, Owen Mcclue MC - Support with music and poetry sessions.
- Community Music Wales - Music/poetry tutors to support Alaw sessions.
- 3G's Development Trust - Donations of wellbeing art and craft packs for young carers' families across Gurnos, Penydarren and Dowlais Wards.
- MTHA/Fit and Fed - Funding for Nutrition for Life Recipe Books and funding to purchase Tesco vouchers.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg - Working towards young carers' ID card scheme.

5.9 The Young Carers Service has continued to work closely with the Early Help Hub and Education to ensure the range of support available to young carers is utilised.

5.10 In December 2019 Young Carers' Scrutiny Report we shared a clear vision for where we wanted to be. The pandemic has created a clear barrier to us achieving the developments we had aimed for in 2020/21. We have needed to focus delivery time on 'safety first' models of support. Naturally, the required shift from group delivery to one-to-one work whilst necessary, has placed additional demands on the service.

5.11 Merthyr Tydfil Young Carers' Service want to ensure that young carers are provided with the right support at the right time to maximise the likelihood of young carers meeting their potential.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

6.1 Our vision as a Local Authority for how we support carers is overarching for both adult and young carers. We are committed to work with our Local Authority carers in a way that:

- Continues to ensure that we co-produce with carers to ensure their voices are heard.
- Ensures that how we structure and deliver our services are led through evaluation work with carers.
- Reduces the level of social isolation that many of our carers face.
- We want to have arrangements in place to support unpaid carers in their role.
- We want to increase our awareness and identification of all carers to ensure that they are provided with the right support at the same time.

- We want to ensure our carers receive the right support at the right time and that their personal outcomes as carers are considered in their own right.
- Implement young carer cards for young carers within the Local Authority.

6.2 The areas identified in the Cwm Taf strategy are:

- *Aim 1:* Identifying Carers of all ages and recognising their contributions.
- *Aim 2:* Providing up to date, relevant and timely information, advice & assistance to Carers of all ages.
- *Aim 3:* Providing support, services & training to meet the needs of Carers of all ages.
- *Aim 4:* Giving Carers of all ages a voice, with more choice & control over their lives.
- *Aim 5:* Working together to make the most of our resources for the benefit of Carers of all ages.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

7.1 To support where we want to be we will continue to engage with carers.

7.2 In support of this within Merthyr Tydfil we are undertaking the following:

- Continual review and support developments in the services commissioned.
- Implement a carers emergency ID card to help professionals identify that a person is a carer.
- Increase the number of virtual groups for adult unpaid carers.
- Identify more carers within the Local Authority and recognise their contributions.
- Provide relevant up to date information for carers in a timely manner.
- Produce a monthly newsletter to carers that will be available on our Merthyr Tydfil carers social media group and posted out to those who do not have access to social media.
- Implement training and learning opportunities for carers to upskill themselves whilst in their caring role.
- Relevant Council Officers and Barnardos staff will continue to work closely to maximise the opportunities for our young carers and support them to access wider services.
- We will continue to advocate for our young carers to retain visibility of their needs and access to any additional resources as part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Strategy.
- We will continue to work alongside education to support the awareness of the support needs of young carers within education settings.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The work we are undertaking around carers links with the Living Well Wellbeing objective.

This area of business and the Council's offer under the Children's Services Strategy Early Intervention and Prevention - Children and their families receive the right help at the right time to prevent escalation of need. In line with our overall vision:

Children and young people are safe and healthy; have the right help at the right time; are supported to live with their family or close to home; and, have stable and successful lives.

LISA CURTIS JONES
CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)

COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Young Carers Scrutiny Report December 2019	December 2019	
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No