
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	16 th March 2022
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Service Area	Social Services
Committee Date	29 th March 2022

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Adult 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 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 Strategy under its Early Help Building Block to Success.

- 3.4 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 Bridgend and including carers themselves, the Cwm Taf Carers Strategy 2016-2019 covers carers of all ages.
- 3.5 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 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.
- 3.6 The strategy is currently under review and now includes Bridgend as part of our new regional footprint.
- 3.7 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg steering group have met several times within 2021/22 to draft an updated version of the carers' strategy. Unfortunately, this work remains outstanding.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

Adult Services

- 4.1 Throughout 2021/22, 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.
- 4.2 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.
 - Carers innovative respite Welsh Government grant
 - Carers support hubs
 - Carer support contract re-evaluated by carer coproduction with a view to retender.

4.3 Worked with Third sector partnership work 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.
- Continued to deliver the Merthyr and the Valleys Mind Carers STAR Project
- Continued to deliver Alzheimer's society dementia connects and side by side programme.
- Funding was secured by Dowlais Community centre to promote carers respite with wellbeing activities
- Funding was secured by Citizens Advice Bureau to create the CAB for Carers project and carers information hub
- Funding secured by Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil to create their project Caring for Cancer Carers

Young Carers

4.4 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.

4.5 During the first three quarters of 2020/21 118 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.

4.6 Social Services report to Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 shared that overall, 61% of young carers who had attended the young carers programme reported an improvement in their wellbeing. Covid restrictions and subsequent changes in service delivery were fundamental components as to why the measure was lower than previous years. However, quarterly rises had been noted (Q1 27%, Q2 84% and Q3 89%). 78% of families that engaged with the service report an improvement in their families' resilience.

4.7 Merthyr Young carers despite Covid pandemic barriers had engaged in participation events, including meeting with the Education Minister and participating in the 'Here I am' Campaign which is now in schools being used as a resource to tackle stereotypes, looking at identity and celebrating differences.

4.8 The Young Carers Service had continued to expand its partnership working to ensure that our young carers and their families are safe, stimulated and supported. The Young Carers Service had continued to work closely with the Early Help Hub and Education to ensure the range of support available to young carers is utilised.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 The pandemic has continued 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 are now available in care home settings with some restrictions are still in place.
- 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
- 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:
- Mechanism for contacting 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 for carers to access innovative respite away from their caring role.
 - 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).
 - Development of a local carers' strategy for Merthyr Tydfil carers
 - Worked with our WCCIS team to identify how many carers have had carers assessments undertaken and work on promoting these.
 - Attendance of young carers transition group to identify carers and their needs before they become adult carers.

Young Carers

- 5.4 During the first three quarters of 2021/22 130 young carers engaged with the Young Carers Service. 36 new young carers assessments were undertaken, all of which led to a support plan. A further 261 young carers support plans were reviewed within the set timescales. You will note that comparatively with 2020/2021 quarter three figures there has been an increase in carers engaged, new young carer assessments undertaken, and the number of young carer support plans reviewed.
- 5.5 This year there is a clear theme that young carers have much more complex needs, requiring longer and even more intensive support due to the increased emotional and mental health need linked to lockdown, bereavement, poverty and social isolation. As a result, through the Local Authority's partnership with Barnardo's there has been intensive one-to-one support alongside the opportunity to engage in group sessions to support and improve young carers mental health and wellbeing. Barnardos undertook 344 socially distanced doorstep visits during Q1, Q2 and Q3. When restrictions were eased Barnardos were very proactive taking the opportunity to facilitate 64 small group sessions over the same period.

- 5.6 The Barnardo's framework shows that 94% of young carers reported improved or maintained mental health, at quarter three 2020/2021 this was at 61% showing a 33% increase in the reported wellbeing of our young carers. In 2021/22 97% of young carers reported improved or maintained social networks and 100% reported improved or maintained development through new experiences/interests. Given that this is reflective of pandemic experiences and restrictions which has impacted access into groups and activities, these results are exceptionally positive.
- 5.7 Young carers and their families have given positive feedback in respect of accessing and engaging with the service, examples include:
- Referring to attending the Royal Albert Hall - 'Oh it was fantastic, I've never been to London before it's awesome. I really enjoyed singing, I was nervous at first but then I just sang and sang'. F aged 17.
 - 'I am so glad I had this opportunity, never been to London before and excited to be staying the night with my dad and gran'. F aged 14.
 - "A better and more patient person now she has strategies for when she gets angry. You have all helped her so much that it's started to heal my family. We have worked hard and we are now really close, but you have given us the tools to do so." Parent Quote.
- 5.8 Young carers continued their commitment throughout 2021/2022 and participated in various awareness raising activities which helped to promote them on a local, regional and National platform. Merthyr Young carers have also continued to ensure that young carers have the opportunity to have their 'Voices heard' whenever the opportunity arises. Partnership work has enabled young carers and their families to access food and confectionary packs, clothing, wellbeing packs, arts and crafts packs. The Service continues to work with various partners to ensure young carers are safe, supported, stimulated and inspired to participate in a variety of opportunities:
- Local Schools – Supporting Young Carer's with Educational issues, helping to raise awareness of Young Carer's
 - Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board – Awareness raising of Young Carer's through various avenues
 - Artis Community – Funding provided for art tutor and workshops for Young Carer's and family members. Ongoing support Young Carer's choir
 - Community Music Wales – Poetry tutor to support music/poetry workshops
 - Poet Laureate Martin Daws – Rap, Rhyme, Music and Poetry tutor
 - Stephens and George Charity – Organising and funding for Hays Winter Book Festival
 - Children's Commissioner Office – Ongoing support for Young Carers Community Ambassador's
 - MTHA Fit and Fed – Funding for healthy snacks and food
 - Local Benefactors – Wellbeing packs, clothing, stationary, Xmas gifts, food, refreshments and confectionary.

5.9 Merthyr Tydfil Young Carers have been keen to engage in various virtual and face to face events. This have included:

- **Rap, Rhyme, Music and Poetry** - Young Carer' s have continued to work with Martin Daws, during the last quarter they have written and added music to pieces of rap, these pieces were paying homage to key working and emergency services and families. These sessions have provided Young Carer's with many new skills and the confidence to demonstrate skills learnt.
- **Choir Sessions-** The choir have been working really hard preparing for two big events these being performing at The Royal Albert Hall London and performing in Barnardo's live streamed Kidsmas 2021 fundraiser at City Hall Birmingham.
- **Family arts and crafts sessions-** Young carers and their family members had the opportunity to attend 10 zoom sessions entitled 'Space for me'. This was a creative arts project that explored making, music and mindfulness. It gave both Young Carer's, siblings and parents the chance to connect through creativity whilst having fun and allowing space for them to focus on themselves. Excellent feedback was received from all participants.
- **Community Ambassadors Meeting-** Merthyr Young Carer Community Ambassadors met with Children's Commissioner Sally Holland, and members of Carms Youth Council, Vale Youth Service and Caerphilly Youth Forum. The groups shared and listened to updates from other groups around work undertaken for children's Rights. They discussed ways forward with possibility of face-to-face meeting, took part in a Christmas quiz and had a Q and A session with Sally Holland. Merthyr young carers spoke about how they have been raising awareness of caring.
- **After School Group Sessions-** With stringent risk assessments in place, we have now been able to recommence face to face working. We have held 6 face to face sessions at The Engine House Dowlais where Young Carer's have met with others. Young carers have said that they are really glad to meet with others, they were all excited to meet each other. Moreover, new young carers took the opportunity to join group, meet with others and have even forged new friendships.
- **Kidsmas Video/film making** - 12 young carers participated in a film making session in the 3G's arts and media Centre. Sam Darby Cooper alongside a filming crew from London worked with the young people to create Kidsmas film 2021. Most importantly the session gave the Young Carer's a chance to tell their story. The filming crew were in Merthyr for 3 days which gave them a really good insight into our wonderful community.

5.10 Young Carers have participated in the development of a Young Carers ID card this is an initiative from Welsh Government. The launch of the YC ID card was scheduled to take place on 16th March 2022 at the Red House Merthyr Tydfil alongside showcasing the book that they have produced entitled 'Rap and Rhyme'. Unfortunately, due to rising COVID cases and subsequent key speaker illness the launch has been postponed.

5.11 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.

- 5.12 In March 2021 Young Carers' Scrutiny Report we shared a clear vision for where we wanted to be. The pandemic continued to create barriers to us achieving the developments we had aimed for in 2020/21. However, we have managed to achieve the 7 actions that were set out whilst continuing to focus on 'safety first' models of support. Barnardos continued to engage with Young Carers despite the restrictions by continuing to adapt a hybrid model of work which is evidenced above.
- 5.13 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 coproduce with carers to ensure their voices are heard.
- Ensures that how we structure and deliver our services are through evaluation work with carers.
- Reduces the level of social isolation that many of our carers face.
- Awareness raising of unpaid carers and what support services are available.
- Supporting carers in a life alongside their caring role and accessing the respite they need.
- Promote a carer friendly workplace for unpaid carers whereby employers are aware of additional time carers may need away from the workplace within their caring role.
- Embed young carer cards for young carers within the Local Authority and develop a sustainable model

6.2 The areas identified in the Cwm Taf strategy are (Currently under review):

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 this, we will continue to engage with carers.

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

- Evaluated our carer support contracts and retender to meet the needs of carers we have coproduced with.
- Increase the number of virtual and face to face groups for unpaid carers
- Identify more carers within the Local Authority and recognising their contributions.
- Identify cares that wish to be a part of a lived experience group to bring their view and the views of other carers that will be filtered to LA's head of services.
- Provide relevant up to date information for carers in a timely manner.
- Implement training and learning opportunities for carers to upskill themselves whilst in their caring role.
- Facilitate carer wellbeing days
- Raise awareness of unpaid carers
- Provide innovative respite for unpaid carers.
- Ensure that all parent carers whose children have support needs identified by the Children with Disabilities Team have the opportunity to access the WG grant in order to access an activity that provides them with a break from care of their choice
- Engage in updating of the regional carers' strategy

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

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

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