



GRŴP CYFEIRIO RHANDDEILIAID STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP

DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:	18 July 2023
TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:	Carers update report 2022/23
CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:	Lisa Gostling, Director of Workforce and Organisational Development
SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:	Anna Bird, Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion

Pwrpas yr Adroddiad (dewiswch fel yn addas)

Purpose of the Report (select as appropriate)

Er Gwybodaeth/For Information

ADRODDIAD SCAA SBAR REPORT

Sefyllfa / Situation

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the Health Board to provide information, advice and assistance to unpaid Carers. The important role of unpaid carers was recognised by the Health Board by assigning a specific Planning Objective during 2022/23.

Two reports are attached to provide assurance to the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) of the work which is on-going to support unpaid carers, including staff who work for Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDdUHB) and have unpaid caring responsibilities in their home lives:

- The first report was presented to the Planning, Organisational Development & Culture Committee (PODCC) in February 2023 to provide assurance that the Health Board planning objective has been implemented (appendix 1).
- The second report is the Annual Report of the Regional Partnership Board's West Wales Carers Development Group and highlights the ongoing work of all the statutory partners, in conjunction with third sector organisations, to supports unpaid carers (appendix 2).

Cefndir / Background

Work to drive forward the delivery of the Health Boards Planning Objective 2A (2022/23) was led by the Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Team of the Workforce and Organisational Development Directorate. The team co-ordinated an internal Carers Strategy Group to bring together representatives from a broad range of departments and services to develop and implement actions aligned to the regional Carers Strategy.

HDdUHB has a small carer-specific core budget delegated to the Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Team to commission support services for unpaid carers. Over 95% of this budget is used to commission services delivered through third-sector partners, although the increase in the number of unpaid carers who self-identified and requested support during the pandemic has impacted on lengthening waiting lists. In addition to the specifically

commissioned carers support services, there is also considerable work being undertaken by Health Board teams to raise awareness of and support the early identification of unpaid carers as part of their own core business and delivery of health and care services to patients.

The Health Board also works in partnership with other statutory and third sector organisations. The West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG) is a formal sub-group of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB), and includes representatives of HDdUHB, the three Local Authorities of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, as well as representatives of the voluntary sector and service users and carers in West Wales.

In November 2020, the West Wales Regional Partnership Board published the West Wales Carers Strategy 2020-2025: Improving lives for Carers. This presents four priority areas to set a clear vision for how agencies will work together to plan, develop and deliver services that will improve outcomes for unpaid carers and their families. The priorities are based on the principal of equality and fair access for all and have a clear synergy with the national Carers Strategy published by Welsh Government in March 2021.

The four regional priorities are:

- 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 well-being 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.

The services provided to date have been informed by the 2011 Census as well as local engagement with carers and a significant number of people came forward during the pandemic to self-report their unpaid caring role. 2021 Census data has now been published and while on a UK level shows that the number of unpaid carers has dropped overall, the number of people providing over 20 hours of unpaid care each week has risen. Locally in Hywel Dda 11% of the population aged 5 years or over are providing some form of unpaid care each week.

Table: Number of hours of unpaid care provided per week, usual residents aged 5 years and over, age-standardised proportions, 2021

Area name	Provides no unpaid care (age-standardised proportion)	Provides 19 or less hours unpaid care a week (age-standardised proportion)	Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week (age-standardised proportion)	Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week (age-standardised proportion)
Carmarthenshire	88.9	4.9	2.4	3.9
Ceredigion	89.5	5.3	2.0	3.2
Pembrokeshire	89.3	4.9	2.3	3.5

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Asesiad / Assessment

The Health Board Carers Strategy Group includes representation from corporate and operational teams across HDdUHB and there has been a high level of commitment to the work to improve outcomes for unpaid carers. The group has established an action plan and individual teams and directorates have committed to take forward a range of actions. In order to make effective use of time the group meets digitally via MS Teams and this has proven successful at maximising both attendance and contributions.

The attached report (Appendix 1) presented to PODCC, provided a summary of the work undertaken during 2022/23 to meet the needs of unpaid carers who are patients, family members, Health Board staff and the wider community. The report is shaped around the four priority areas in the regional strategy, highlighting the contributions of teams across HDdUHB as well as actions led by the Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Team.

Included in the report are some quotes and feedback from unpaid carers to illustrate the difference and impact this has made to their caring role. Collecting qualitative feedback and the experiences of unpaid carers is an on-going priority and such illustrations can bring services to life as well as play an important role in understanding what matters to unpaid carers. The Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Team were working collaboratively with the Value Based Healthcare Team to establish Carer Reported Outcome Measures (CROMS) which will add to a body of qualitative and quantitative evidence of impact to inform future investment plans. This work has now been transferred into an Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice (EQIIP) project to ensure momentum of this programme of work.

The second report (Appendix 2) is the Annual Report of the West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG) and will be presented to the Regional Partnership Board on 17 July 2023. This includes information on a range of services which are provided across the Hywel Dda area by local authorities, the Health Board and third sector organisations. The joint working through the WWCDG ensures a continuum of services which are integrated and connected with individual organisations working in partnership to maximise the benefit to unpaid carers.

There is some natural overlap between the two reports; the first reporting specifically on work co-ordinated or led by the Health Board, and the second report reflecting the broader work of all partners. They have been written for different audiences, but are presented to the SRG to provide a holistic overview of the actions which are being taken forward in West Wales.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

The Stakeholder Reference Group is requested to take **ASSURANCE** from the attached reports that there is a broad range of work on-going to improve the experience and support available to unpaid carers.

Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau) Objectives: (must be completed)	
Committee ToR Reference: Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor:	2.1.3 Feedback to the HDdUHB on the impact of the HDdUHB's operations on the communities it serves.
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix a Sgôr Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	Not applicable
Parthau Ansawdd: Domains of Quality Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	7. All apply
Galluogwyr Ansawdd: Enablers of Quality: Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	6. All Apply
Amcanion Strategol y BIP: UHB Strategic Objectives:	4. The best health and wellbeing for our individuals, families and communities
Amcanion Cynllunio Planning Objectives	7a Population Health
Amcanion Llesiant BIP: UHB Well-being Objectives: Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives Annual Report 2021-2022	4. Improve Population Health through prevention and early intervention, supporting people to live happy and healthy lives

Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol: Further Information:	
Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. • West Wales Care Partnership Regional Carers Strategy 2020-2025: Improving the lives of Carers. • Strategy for Unpaid Carers¹ published by Welsh Government. • Planning Objective 2A (2022/23) <i>“Develop a Health Board specific plan that contributes to reducing inequalities for unpaid Carers and responds to the priorities set out in the national and regional Carers Strategy. Ensure an annual</i>

	<i>update on progress and outcomes is provided to Board by 31st July each year.</i>
Rhestr Termau: Glossary of Terms:	WWCDG – West Wales Carers Development Group RPB – Regional Partnership Board
Partion / Pwyllgorau â ymgynhorwyd ymlaen llaw y Grŵp Cyfeirio Rhanddeiliaid: Parties / Committees consulted prior to Stakeholder Reference Group:	People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee

Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)	
Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:	Limited carer specific corporate budget available to commission carer specific support services. The Carers Discharge Support Service and Investors in Carers scheme is now funded from Welsh Government RIF funding and match funding will need to be identified to meet the requirements of the new Health and Social Care Innovation Fund.
Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:	Improved early identification of unpaid carers of patients, or carers who themselves are patients will ensure that consideration is given to their needs so that HDdUHB's ambition to provide care as close to home as possible can be maintained.
Gweithlu: Workforce:	All staff have a role to play in identifying unpaid carers and signposting them to carer specific support services to meet their needs. This includes managers and colleagues supporting staff with caring roles in their home lives.
Risg: Risk:	Services commissioned by HDdUHB to provide support to unpaid carers have insufficient capacity to provide support to the increasing number of unpaid carers who have self-identified themselves during the pandemic. This is resulting in waiting lists for support.
Cyfreithiol: Legal:	Duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to provide information, advice and assistance to unpaid carers.
Enw Da: Reputational:	Not applicable.
Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:	Not applicable.
Cydraddoldeb: Equality:	Not applicable.

Improving lives for unpaid Carers: Update on Planning Objective 2A

February 2023



Report Author: Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Team



Introduction

The important role of unpaid carers has been recognised by the Board through the allocation of a specific planning objective, PO2A: “Develop a Health Board specific plan that contributes to reducing inequalities for unpaid Carers and responds to the priorities set out in the national and regional Carers Strategy. Ensure an annual update on progress and outcomes is provided to Board by 31st July each year.”

This report has been written by the Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion (SPDI) Team in collaboration with members of the Health Board Carers Strategy Group, who have been convened to drive forward this objective. The group includes representation from corporate and operational teams across the Health Board and there has been a high level of commitment to the work to improve outcomes for unpaid carers.

The West Wales Carers Strategy – sets out 4 priority areas to set a clear vision for how agencies will work together to plan, develop and deliver services that will improve outcomes for carers and their families. The priorities are based on the principal of equality and fair access for all and have a clear synergy with the national Carers Strategy. The four regional priorities are:

- 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 well-being of carers of all ages, in their life alongside caring;
- Support carers to access and maintain education, training and employment opportunities; and
- Support carers to become digitally included.

Welsh Government published its Strategy for Unpaid Carers¹ in March 2021 which set out a refreshed set of national priorities to improve the recognition of and support of unpaid carers. These priorities are consistent with the regional strategy and are used to inform the commissioning of services for carers across the Health Board.

The Health Board’s Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion is a member of the Ministerial Advisory Group for carers, and also chairs the West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG) which is a formal sub-group of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB). This offers opportunities to ensure clear synergy between national, regional and local priorities.

This update report provides an overview of the work which has been carried out by the Health Board and evidence is provided of progress against each of the priorities outlined above which form part of the Health Board action plan. The report also aims to illustrate the impact and outcomes experienced by unpaid carers.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/3/2/1616489674/strategy-unpaid-carers.pdf>



SPOTLIGHT ON PRIORITY 1 - Improve the early identification and self- identification of carers of all ages.

In the State of Caring in Wales 2022 report, Carers Wales estimate that the total number of carers in Wales is around 500,000 and that carers' support during the pandemic is valued at £33 million per day. However, it is acknowledged that this comes with personal costs to carers who find that relationships, as well as their own health, can be impacted. At the time of writing this update the detailed 2021 Census data has not yet been published but a high level overview shows that the number of carers providing over 20 hours of unpaid care has risen since the last Census.

The Health Board has a broad range of actions to support the early identification and self-identification of unpaid carers of all ages which are illustrated below.

Investors in Carers

On behalf of the West Wales Carers Development Group, the Health Board leads the regional Investors in Carers (IiC) scheme and co-ordinates delivery in partnership with Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales. IiC provides the foundation for work with health professionals in primary (GP practices and pharmacies), community and acute hospital settings to raise awareness of the needs of unpaid carers, which is a national, regional and local priority. The IiC scheme has been designed to be utilised by a wide range of settings extending beyond health, including: schools, libraries, local authority teams, Job Centre Plus and third sector organisations. Evidence of participation in the scheme is also being written into a number of commissioned third sector provider contracts, and acting as a further catalyst to support the early identification of carers in health and social care settings.

The IiC scheme enables settings to progress through three levels; bronze, silver and gold and continues to encourage an electronic submission process for IiC evidence. A core element of the IiC scheme is providing a simple system that enables unpaid carers to register as a carer with their GP, which in turn instigates a referral to their local Carers Information Service who can provide information and additional support. In total since the inception of the scheme in March 2013, 113 settings have achieved bronze IiC awards, 15 Silver awards and 3 Gold awards.

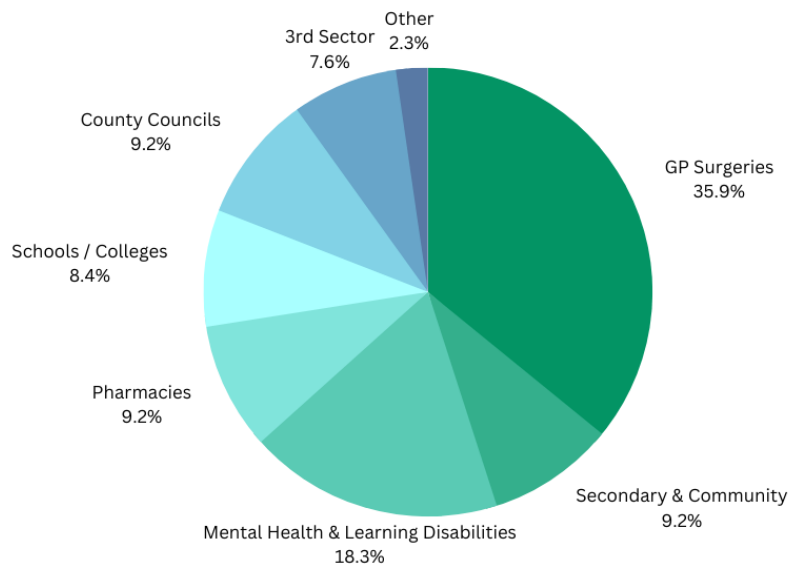
What's been achieved during 2022/23 so far?

- 3 health settings achieved a new Investors in Carers Award.
- 40 settings are currently working on their bronze, 20 settings are working towards Silver and 4 working towards their Gold.
- The IiC team are actively supporting 110 settings.
- An additional 310 carers have registered with GP surgeries across the health board area (bringing the cumulative total of carers registered to 11,973).
- 530 carers were referred to the carers' information service via the GP surgery registration and referral process.
- 30 carer awareness training sessions have been delivered with 394 people attending.



Pictured: Adult Speech and Language Therapy achieving their bronze certificate

The chart below provides an overview of the types of settings that have received Investors in Carers awards as of 31st December 2022:



Outcomes

Understanding the benefits and outcomes to carers is a key focus for the Carers Strategy Group. An important piece of work has been undertaken by the liC team during the year to gain feedback on how the scheme has made a difference specifically to carers who are beneficiaries, as well as to the settings and carer leads involved. A sample of carers were asked for feedback on how the setting has helped them. 19 out of 29 carers asked had not known they were a carer prior to the support they had from the setting accredited with the liC bronze level. They were also asked what difference the support they had made to them. Examples of feedback and benefits are illustrated in these quotes from a member of staff and a carer:

“The liC scheme does help confidence. I am now able to raise awareness to others and make the carers feel more supported. ‘As a result I can go home knowing we have helped and provided a good service.’”
(Health Care Support Worker)

“A massive difference at the time. Just being recognised as a carer as we were run off our feet.”
(Carer)

Awareness raising activities

During Carers Week in June 2022 and Carers Rights Day in November 2022 a number of information stands were held in the main hospital sites across the three counties. These were manned by representatives from the Carers Discharge Support Service, Admiral Nurses, Workforce Advisors and the Community Outreach team. The stands were visited by patients, carers and staff and provided a chance for a one to one introductory chats, to highlight support services and sources of information which were available immediately, or how to find these at a later date. Also importantly, it provided a chance for staff to network.

Whilst these are examples of specific awareness raising activities, the Health Board Carers Team are proactive at sharing information and opportunities for unpaid carers throughout the year using Global emails and social media channels as appropriate.

The Carers Team works closely with the Patient Experience team to facilitate training and maintain strong links between the Family Liaison Officers (FLO) and the Carers Discharge Officers. FLOs are in a unique position in their ward based roles to help identify unpaid carers who may benefit from being signposted to the Carers Discharge Officers at the earliest opportunity to help them access support and information. Following attendance at training one FLO said:

“Since having the training I have been able to help many relatives to register themselves as carers at their local GP surgery”.
(Family Liaison Officer)

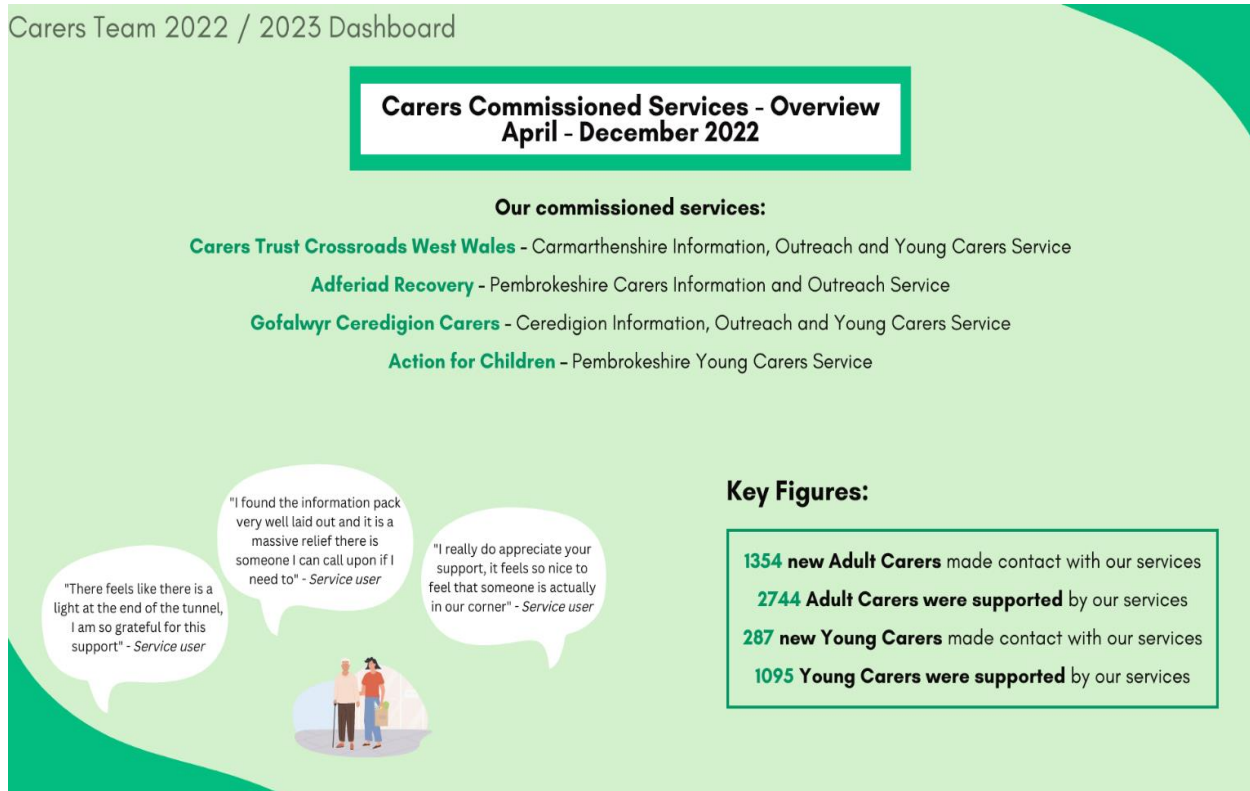
The Health Improvement Team (specifically those who work in the field of substance misuse) have continued to maintain a strong link with Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service who are regularly engaging with the public as part of their Home Fire Safety work. Via their use of the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach, they focus on identifying and signposting unregistered carers to support which has been commissioned by the Health Board. They directly furnish people with literature about support for carers as well as other targeted health messages e.g. alcohol harm reduction information. Dyfed Powys Police Community Support Officers are rolling out a similar way of working with those who are more vulnerable in their communities and are now also providing information in the same way.



SPOTLIGHT ON PRIORITY 2 - Ensure a range of services is available to support the well-being of Carers of all ages, in their life alongside caring.

The Health Board has a small dedicated core budget to support the commissioning of specific support for unpaid carers in line with the statutory duties set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. In Hywel Dda, support for unpaid carers is primarily provided by third-sector partners and the Health Board acknowledges the additional social value that working collaboratively with charitable organisations can bring. The Health Board commissions information and advice services as well as community based outreach support to identify and address individual needs, helping to signpost to other services which can help and support people with a unpaid caring role.

Carers Information Services have continued to take referrals and provide one-to-one support for unpaid carers across Hywel Dda and illustrated below is an overview of the activity from our commissioned services based on contract monitoring data for the first nine months of the financial year 2022/23.



The number of unpaid carers supported by our third-sector partners has continued to increase. Based on the same period the number of adults supported rose from 1787 in 2021/22 to 2744 in 2022/23. In light of on-going budgetary constraints the impact has been that carers are waiting longer for support and the opportunity for a “what matters” assessment, which is a crucial first step to identify actions that can help with a caring role.

Admiral Nurses

The Health Board, in partnership with Dementia UK, launched a new nursing service to support the carers of people living with dementia at the end of March 2021. The Admiral Nurse Service is a significant addition to the current support available to people living with dementia and their unpaid carers. Between January and December 2022, the service received **672** referrals.

As part of a feedback questionnaire, all respondents rated the service as very good on the Friends and Family Test. One respondent described the Admiral nurses as “a life saver” and another said they “could not have managed without her support”. A testimonial from one service user is illustrated below:

“I was totally lost and didn't know what to do or where to turn until I was given the support and expertise of an admiral nurse. She was kind caring, knowledgeable and a great listener. She gave me sound advice and pointed me in the right direction. With her support I felt very safe and listened to. She understood how I felt and made me feel at ease and better about myself. She is an absolute diamond. Knowing she's there if I need her is extremely comforting.” - Service user

Carers Discharge Support Service (CDSS)

The Health Board and its local authority partners have taken a whole system approach to support and engage carers in the discharge planning of patients and ensure active provision of information, advice and assistance (IAA). The Carers Discharge Support Service was established using Welsh Government Integrated Care Funding (ICF) and now forms part of the Regional Partnership Boards (RPB) Regional Integration Fund (RIF).

The Health Board commissioned the third sector to provide Carers Discharge Officers who have a specific role in supporting hospital staff in the early identification of carers, enabling improved involvement in the discharge planning process and active provision of information and support.

The Carers Discharge Officers also work closely with the Family Liaison Officers, discharge teams and other key staff in each hospital who refer patients and their families for carer specific support. So far during this financial year 408 carers have been supported by this service; this compares to 260 in 2021/22. The Carers Discharge Officers also promote the uptake of the carer aware e-learning training or deliver bespoke sessions and so far this year 146 staff have attended a training session. The Carers Officers have responded to 323 ward staff enquiries. Some outcomes are outlined in the infographic on the next page.

The Carers Discharge Support Service

April - December 2022

supported

408

unpaid carers



responded to

323

ward staff enquiries



146

staff have attended a Valuing Carers training session

552

ward staff have engaged with the service

given out

611

hospital information packs



"Without the support of the Carer's Officer I don't think I could have managed the discharge process"
- feedback from a carer

"A referral to the Carer's Officer reduced the pressure on myself as a Carer and made an immediate impact"
- feedback from a carer

Carer Strategy Group members have also been working in partnership with the local authority and the joint discharge teams to ensure that there are procedures in place when patients are identified as homeless prior to discharge from hospital. This includes people who do not have a home, as well as situations where family members are unable to care for their relative anymore. To assist staff work is ongoing to develop a flow chart to set out the pathway for action and support for the patient.

The Health Board developed a video promoting the Carers Discharge Support Service with Larry (name changed) telling his story. This was promoted on Carers Rights Day in November 2022, and illustrated that family members don't always recognise themselves as an unpaid carer. The video also highlighted the positive impact that the Carers Discharge Officer had made for the carer and the family member they were caring for.

Link to English video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BrVHCIB0AI>

Link to Welsh video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSQSL6E_TcA

Carer reported outcome measures

The Values Based Healthcare team has supported the development of some initial work on the use of a Carer Reported Outcome Measures (CROMS). This helped to establish some key questions in order to more routinely measure the outcomes for unpaid carers who are supported by the Health Board. An application was accepted onto the EQiP Cohort three programme and the focus will be to look at what improvements can be made around identifying carers on admission and ensure that they are supported and included during the discharge/transfer of care process.

Collaboration with carers

This year the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities team led a recommissioning exercise to tender 11 services which are currently delivered by third sector providers, funded by the Health Board. They cover early intervention and prevention services for both Mental Health and Wellbeing services, and Learning Disabilities. Engagement events across the region were held specifically for carers and service users to inform the development of service specifications. The tender is currently still live but evaluation panels will continue to include representation from carers and from service users.

The Young Carers Service in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire also went out for tender. To support the development of the service specification the Health Board working in collaboration with the youth services, engaged with young carers and young carer groups across the Health Board area to ensure that their views and needs were reflected in the service specification.

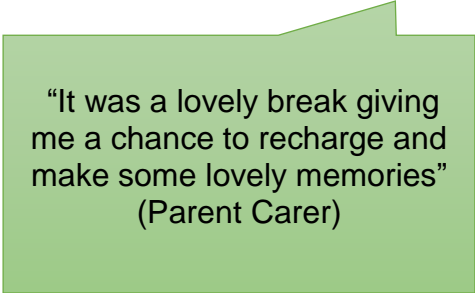
The Paediatric Palliative Care Team

The Paediatric Palliative Care team have been proactively referring young carers and families that are caring for palliative babies, children and young people for short breaks to Bluestone, as well as family days out to Folly Farm. These carer breaks have been funded as part of a short breaks fund overseen by the Regional Partnership Board.

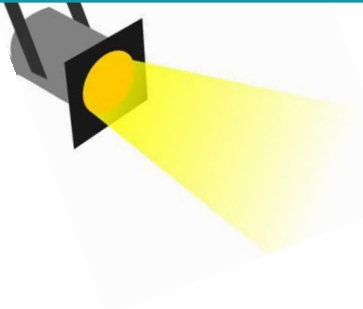
The outcomes of these short breaks are:

- Prevention of crisis points for carers
- Reduced visits to GP / A&E
- Less or shortened hospital admissions as families feel supported
- Reduced stress and improvement in mental health and wellbeing
- Good partnership working practices
- Improved quality of life, mental health and well-being
- An opportunity for families to make memories together

One Carer said:



“It was a lovely break giving me a chance to recharge and make some lovely memories”
(Parent Carer)



SPOTLIGHT ON PRIORITY 3 - Support Carers to access and maintain education, training and employment opportunities.

The Health Board has delivered a range of actions to identify and support our staff who are unpaid carers. This work included: the development of an annual staff survey; information leaflet for staff; a Carers policy; delivery of lunch and learn training for line managers; establishment of a staff Carers peer support group.

Employers for Carers

The Health Board benefits from membership of the Carers Wales Employers for Carers Scheme which is a regional membership arrangement overseen by the West Wales Carers Development Group of the Regional Partnership Board. The Health Board was awarded Level 2 – Accomplished in April 2022, gaining 106 points out of a possible 110.



Staff Carers peer support group

The peer support group for Health Board staff who have a caring role continues to be run fortnightly over MS Teams and is facilitated by the Carers Team. Three guest speakers have attended sessions: Workforce Advisor, Advocacy and Learning Disabilities services. To make the sessions more accessible and provide a variety of

times to suit the needs of different staff, we are now running these fortnightly on a Wednesday lunch time and a Tuesday afternoon.

“The peer support group has also provided significant sense of being valued and visible and is an essential touchpoint to additional services and support avenues for staff.”

(Staff member with caring responsibilities)

Carer Aware e-learning

The Carer Aware e-learning was launched in November 2018 by Social Care Wales and this forms part of the e-learning within the NHS Wales ESR system. During the year the training has been promoted to staff working across the Health Board and between April–December 2022, 220 staff in Hywel Dda completed this programme.

With effect from January 2023 this course has now been marked as mandatory for all new starters and further awareness raising activities will take place in March 2023 to support the wider roll-out to all staff.

Carers Staff Survey

The annual staff survey was launched on Carers Rights Day in November 2022 using MS Forms and was completed by 111 health board staff. The survey and feedback provided by staff provides a “temperature check” and valuable insights into the impact of caring roles for our staff who self-identify as unpaid carers.

The Carers staff survey report will be used by the Carers Strategy group to identify further actions which can be taken to strengthen support for staff with caring roles, for example working with the OD Relationship Managers, Culture and Change Managers and Workforce teams to increase promotion of the Carers passport.

What staff said in the 2022 Carers staff survey

- 87% said their line manager knew about their caring responsibilities.
- 25% of those who hadn't told their line manager, said they feared they would be seen as unreliable.
- Only 31% said that caring hasn't affected their work negatively but 85% of those said they were worried it would in the future.
- Agreed flexible working arrangements was the most used support for carers, followed by the carers policy and the carers pages on the intranet.

Results from the Staff Survey in the previous year (2021) suggested that managers across the organisation could be better informed about the impact of caring responsibilities and the issues some staff might face juggling work and caring. To address this a bitesize video was produced to provide some introductory information for line managers to increase their understanding on how to better support any team member who might have a caring role in their personal lives. This training can be accessed via the Carers SharePoint:

[Supporting unpaid carers - bitesize training for line managers - YouTube](#)
[Cefnogi gofalwyr di-dal - hyfforddiant byr i reolwyr llinell - YouTube](#)

A number of bespoke training sessions have been delivered to Workforce Advisors and Occupational Health Advisors to enhance their confidence at how to support working carers. Discussions have also focused on how the Advisors can support line managers to increase their awareness of how to support staff with a caring role. 36 Workforce and 16 Occupational Health staff have attended these sessions. One participant highlighted the benefits saying that:

“As a result of the training sessions I'll be sharing information gained with staff members and line managers to help with their individual situations”.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRIORITY 4 - Support Carers to become digitally included

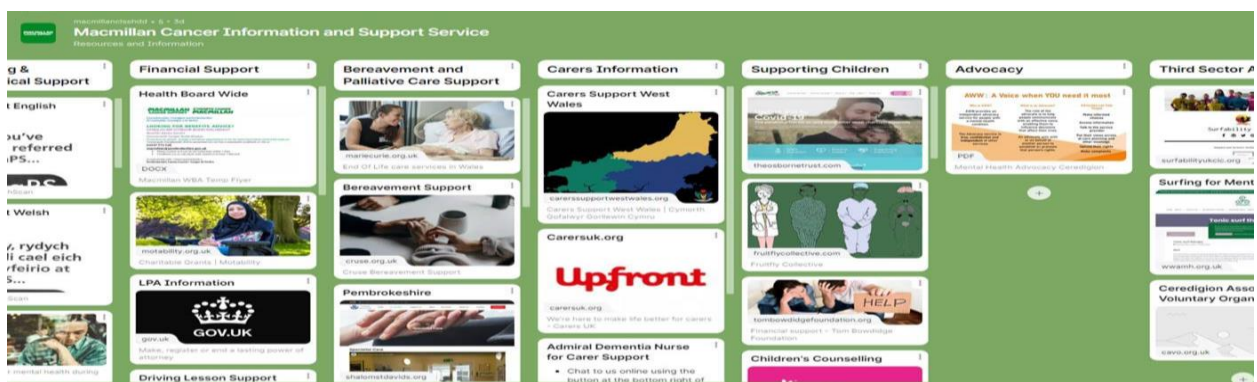
Hywel Dda Health Board has many communities in rural areas which can provide challenges when trying to access services and stay connected with family and friends. Digital connectivity has been an important theme throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and we are continuing working towards supporting carers to become digitally included.

The Education Programme for Patients team have a course especially for carers called Introduction to looking after me (I2LAM). These used to be delivered face to face prior to the pandemic however the option to attend via MS Teams is now available. Since April 2022 three courses per quarter were planned to take place both physically and virtually however no carers came forward to take up the offer of physical attendance, which may reflect the difficulties carers experience taking a break. Two virtually delivered courses are planned for February and March and extensive promotion is taking place to encourage carers to attend.

Digital inclusion has been a key aspect of the Regional Partnership Board's Transformation Programme and Carers Discharge Officers, Family Liaison Officers, Admiral Nurses and other teams provide a key link to signpost unpaid Carers to support to help them to become digitally included.

The Health Board has been part of a task and finish group which helped to develop a dedicated online platform for carers funded through the Regional Integration Fund. The Carers Support West Wales website was launched on Carers Rights Day in November 2022 and is designed to be used a central place for carers from all three counties in the Hywel Dda area to access information. The link to the platform is here: [Carers Support West Wales | Cymorth Gofalwyr Gorllewin Cymru](#)

The Carers Strategy Group have also identified that there's an opportunity for Health Board I-pads and tablets to be uploaded with links to information for carers, making it easier for Family Liaison Officers, Carers Discharge Officers and ward staff to signpost carers to information that could assist them in their caring role. As a result of attending the Carers Strategy Group the Cancer Information Support Service have added a section on unpaid carers to their Padlet, which is a digital resource for staff so they can easily access information across all three counties in one place. A screenshot of this can be seen below:



A Healthier West Wales

West Wales Carers Development Group

Annual Report, 2022-2023



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Introduction

The Needs of Carers in West Wales

In June 2022, the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB) published a new Population Needs Assessment for West Wales. A significant amount of information about the needs of the population was gathered through direct citizen engagement. This was further enhanced with the data and citizen feedback collected during our previous work to develop a Regional Carers Strategy for West Wales.

The main source of published data supporting the Population Needs Assessment was the 2011 Census. The 2021 Census results have been released since its publication and offer the most up-to-date data on the population in Wales. In total, around 311,000 people of all ages in Wales reported that they provided any amount of unpaid care in a typical week in 2021. At 10.5% of the population, this represents a 2% decrease in the number of carers reported on the 2011 census.¹

While the overall number of people reporting themselves as unpaid carers in Wales has decreased since 2011, this is primarily driven by a substantial decrease in the proportion of people providing 19 or fewer hours of unpaid care per week. Most carers in Wales (44%) provide fewer than 19 hours of care for week, but 34% provide 50 or more hours of care a week, with little change in this figure since 2011 (Figure 1).

Carers Wales' 2022 report estimates that the total number of carers in Wales is closer to 500,000; this gap of 189,000 carers represents 'hidden carers', who may not recognise themselves as carers and therefore may be missing out on support.² Experts have calculated that Welsh carers contributed the equivalent of around £8.1 billion to the Welsh economy in each year. Most people who spend only very limited time on caring will not require any additional support. However, Wales has the

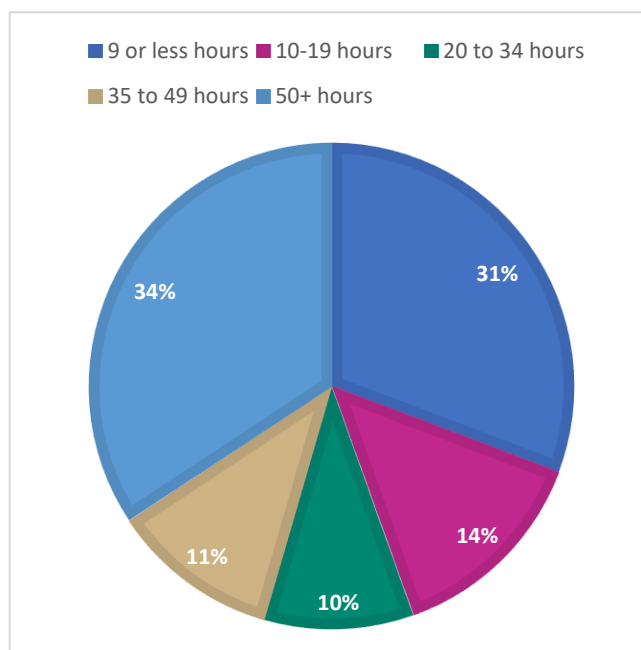


Figure 1: Weekly hours of care provided by unpaid carers in Wales (2021 census)

¹ Welsh Government (2023) Health, disability and provision of unpaid care in Wales (Census 2021).

<https://www.gov.wales/health-disability-and-provision-unpaid-care-wales-census-2021-html>

² Carers Wales (2022) State of Caring in Wales 2022: a snapshot of unpaid care in Wales.

highest proportion of older carers and carers providing more than 50 hours of care a week.

40,535 people in West Wales identified themselves as carers on the 2021 Census. Like national trends, this represents a 1.5% decrease in the proportion of the population identifying as carers since 2011; the breakdown by hours of care provided also aligns to the national picture, with most carers in West Wales providing 19 or fewer hours of care per week. Approximately a third of carers of all ages in West Wales provide over 50 hours of care per week; however this rises to 51% of the over-65 population of carers who provide over 50 hours of care per week. Data from the Office of National Statistics illustrates that the number of people aged over 85 is projected to increase by 27.8% between 2021 and 2031, whereas the working aged population is projected to fall by 3.1% over the same period. This is likely to place increasing pressures on the need to identify and support unpaid carers. Age Cymru's 2022 Older Carers Survey highlighted the following themes amongst carers aged 50-89:

- Average self-assessed wellbeing score decreased as the number of hours caring per week increased, with an average score for those caring for more than 50 hours a week at only 36 out of 100.
- 72% of carers who completed the survey reported they do not currently receive support for their caring role.
- Lack of access to carers' services in Welsh.
- The oldest age group (80-89) had the highest levels of reporting that information for carers isn't easily accessible. This may be linked to digital inclusion, as this age group were most likely to use physical documents as a source of information and reported the lowest rates of social media usage at 11% (compared to 53% amongst those aged 50-59).
- Access to respite (34%) and financial help (27%) were areas that most respondents felt would make their lives easier.³

Figure 2 shows the number of unpaid carers supported through Carers Information and Support Services each year. The services saw significant increases in the numbers of requests made for support during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to additional initiatives to identify carers as part of support being delivered throughout the pandemic. From 2021/2022 to 2022/23 there was a 6% increase in the number of carers supported across the region. This reflects positively on work across the region to improve identification of carers.

³ Age Cymru (2022) A Report on Age Cymru's 2022 Older Carers Survey. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-cymru/documents/carers-project/carers-survey-report-final-v9.pdf>.

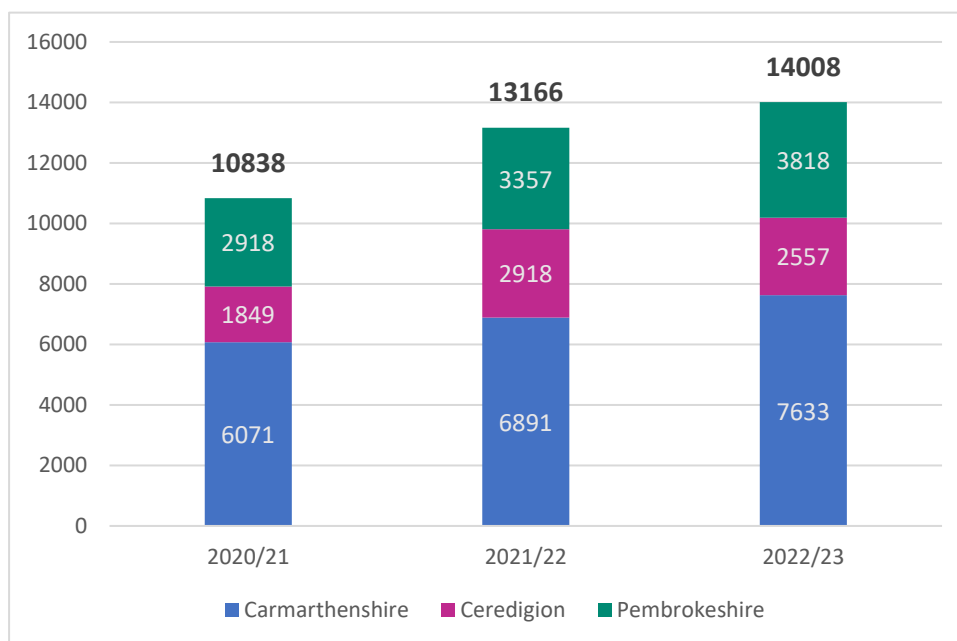


Figure 2: Number of carers supported through Carers Information and Support services

As of 31st March 2023, a total of 12,260 carers were registered at GP surgeries. This is a 6% increase on the number of carers registered at end of March 2022 (11,505). However, when compared to the 2021 census figures, this means only 30% of people in West Wales who self-identify as carers are registered with their GPs. This highlights a gap between self-identification and registration with services that can offer support to carers.

The Population Needs Assessment highlights the following gaps and areas for improvement to support carers in the region:

- Continuing improvements in the consistency of approach, information, advice, and assistance provided across the region, within a more integrated system
- Reviewing information provided to carers to ensure it is current, relevant, more accessible and easier to find
- Extending use of social media and technology to identify and provide information to carers and maintain regular contact, particularly for young carers
- Developing a single point of contact to help people navigate the system
- Ensuring respite care fits the needs of both the carer and the cared for
- Addressing the challenges of accessing support in rural areas
- Improving the statutory carers assessment process, which can be challenging, often takes too long and may not always consider carers needs appropriately
- Improving delivery of the “active offer” through the medium of Welsh. Carers want to feel comfortable using their preferred language of choice, including languages other than English and Welsh.

The Carers Wales' 2022 report highlighted the stark impact of the cost-of-living crisis on carers and the need for additional support for carers to manage their finances and access hardship funds. The Income Maximisation project launched in 2022/23 will continue into 2023/24, as this is a key project which has been prioritised by the West Wales Carers Development Group.

Another priority for the Carers Development Group in 2022/23 was to continue reviewing the support offered to young carers and engaging young carers in this process. Carers Trust Wales' 2020 report *Support Not Sympathy* found that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a significant impact on young and young adult carers, with 35% reporting that they care for more people than they did before the pandemic. Young and young adult carers reported higher levels of stress and poorer mental health. The report identified that young and young adult carers want and need:

- Support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health
- Help to stay connected to friends and their communities
- Breaks from their caring role and the support of specialist young carers services
- More help to balance caring, education and employment
- Support to stay fit and healthy.

Our West Wales Carers Strategy 2020-2025: Improving Lives for Carers

During 2020/21 significant engagement was undertaken with carers, initially via regional and local authority based workshop discussions and then moving to the development of an online survey in response to the pandemic. 558 carers responded to our online survey including 18% who were young carers under the age of 18.

The West Wales Regional Partnership Board published Our West Wales Carers Strategy 2020-2025: Improving Lives for Carers in November 2020. The Strategy has established four key priority areas which take a longer-term view and set the vision for the future. These priorities were reviewed in 2023, and the Carers Development Group added “confident” to priority 4 (formerly “Support Carers to become digitally included”) to reflect that the priority was broader than getting people connected.



This report summarises the activity of the West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG) during the period 1st April 2022–31st March 2023. The WWCDG is a formal sub-group of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board which includes representatives of Hywel Dda University Health Board, the three local authorities of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire, as well as third and voluntary sector organisations, and the service users and carers representatives of the RPB have an open invitation to attend meetings.

This report provides an overview of the work which has been taken forward utilising a range of funding to ensure that carers priorities are embedded in services across the region in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Funding sources include: a carers' grant provided by Welsh Government, the Regional Integration Fund and core funding from partner organisations. Welsh Government set out their expectation that health, local authorities and the third sector will work in partnership to support carers under the Act to deliver the four national priorities set out their "Strategy for Unpaid Carers" (March 2021):

- Identifying and valuing unpaid carers
- Providing information, advice, and assistance
- Supporting life alongside caring
- Supporting unpaid carers in education and the workplace.⁴

Responding to the requirements above, and the priorities set out in the West Wales Regional Carers Strategy, form the basis of this 2022/23 Annual Report, which provides evidence of progress against each of these areas and the benefit experienced by unpaid carers.

⁴ Welsh Government (2021) Strategy for Unpaid Carers. <https://www.gov.wales/strategy-unpaid-carers-html>

Investors in Carers Scheme (IiC)

On behalf of the West Wales Carers Development Group, Hywel Dda University Health Board has continued to roll out the regional Investors in Carers scheme. In addition to funding an Investors in Carers Lead Officer, the Health Board commission regional support for the IiC scheme which is delivered through Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales. The IiC scheme provides the foundation for work with health professionals in primary, community, and acute hospital settings to raise awareness of the needs of carers. The IiC scheme has been designed to be utilised by a wide range of settings including schools, libraries, local authority teams, Job Centre Plus and third sector organisations. Statutory partners are also including participation in the scheme as part of commissioning contracts with third sector providers of direct and indirect carer support.

The IiC Scheme enables settings to progress through three levels; bronze, silver, and gold and since the pandemic settings have been encouraged to collate and submit their evidence electronically. A core element of the IiC scheme is providing a simple system that enables unpaid carers to register as a carer with their GP, and the option for a referral to their local Carers Information Service who can provide information and additional support.

What's been achieved during 2022/23

- **6** settings achieved a new Investors in Carers Award (**5** achieved their Bronze level) **3** settings also achieved their bronze revalidations and **1** at silver level.
- Other settings are currently working on their bronze, with **20** settings working towards Silver and **6** working towards their Gold.
- In total (since March 2013) **205** settings have achieved bronze IiC awards, **9** Silver and **3** at Gold.
- **12,260** Carers have registered with GP surgeries across the health board, and increase of 2.4% on the total registered on 31st March 2022 (11,973).
- **697** Carers were referred to the Carers information service via the GP surgery registration and referral process.



Pembrokeshire Libraries receiving their Silver level certificates



Carmarthenshire Safeguarding team receiving their bronze level certificate

Carer Lead events

All organisations, teams and departments participating in the liC scheme have an identified Carer Lead. Regular Carers Lead events have been delivered throughout the year to bring different settings together providing an opportunity for peer support, joint learning and updating on new local initiatives. During the year 72 sessions have been delivered via MS teams with a total of 811 attendees. During Carers Week and Carers Rights Dy a ‘showcase’ session was added to the online event which enabled other organisations to talk about the support they can give to carers. Some quotes included:

“All the showcase presentations were so useful to me. Excellent. I really got a lot out of the session and feel better able to support and sign post the clients.”

“Thank you for the training, very informative and good to have a better understanding of the current situation.”

On some of the session’s attendees were asked to score their knowledge before and after the training, this illustrates and increase in knowledge:

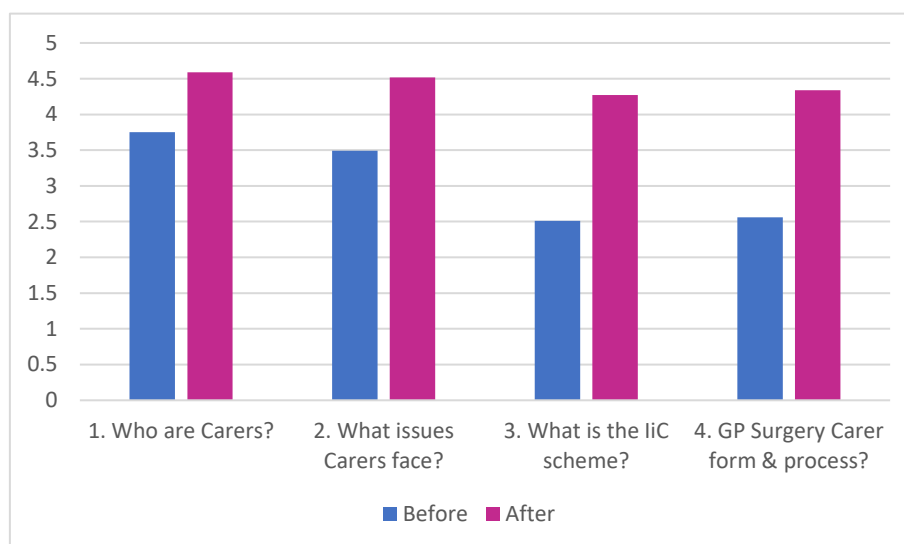


Figure 3: Feedback from Investors in Carers Carer Awareness Sessions- 156 attendees

For the first time since the pandemic, the liC team delivered three ‘in person’ carer lead events attended by 87 people. 98% of participants found the event useful.

Feedback from participants included:

- *Maintain links with people I have met today.*
- *Think more collaboratively and encourage collaborative working within the team.*
- *Use Carer Lead directory and network more.*

Importance of open communication, building trust.

It reinforced the importance of having an informal conversation and asking questions, such as how are you, etc.

Links to statutory and commissioned services

Hywel Dda University Health Board has a small, dedicated core budget to support the commissioning of specific support for unpaid carers, in line with the statutory duties set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. In Hywel Dda, support for unpaid carers is primarily provided by third-sector partners and the Health Board acknowledges the additional social value that working collaboratively with the charitable organisations can bring.

Carers Information Services have continued to take referrals and provide one-to-one support for unpaid carers across Hywel Dda. This year in Ceredigion, the Carers Unit merged with the Community Connectors to form the Carers and Community Support Team. This increased capacity within the team to reach a wider audience, including unidentified carers. All the Connectors are trained in carers issues to carers pathways and work closely with the Carers Development Officers to ensure when carers are identified they are supported to identify their needs and access services.

Illustrated below is an overview of the activity from commissioned services based on contract monitoring data for 2022/2023.

Overview of support provided by Carers Commissioned Services (April 2022 – March 2023)

A summary of data from our commissioned services:

- **Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales** - Information, Outreach and Young Carers Service
 - **Adferiad Recovery** - Pembrokeshire Carers Service
- **Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers** - Outreach Service and Young Carers Service
 - **Action for Children** – Young Carers Service in Pembrokeshire

1583 new Adult Carers made contact with our services

3311 Adult Carers were actively supported.

287 new Young Carers made contact with the Young Carers Service.

1332 Young Carers were actively supported.

What our Carers say

"I found the information pack very well laid out and it is a massive relief there is someone I can call upon if I need to"

"There feels like there is a light at the end of the tunnel, I am so grateful for this support"

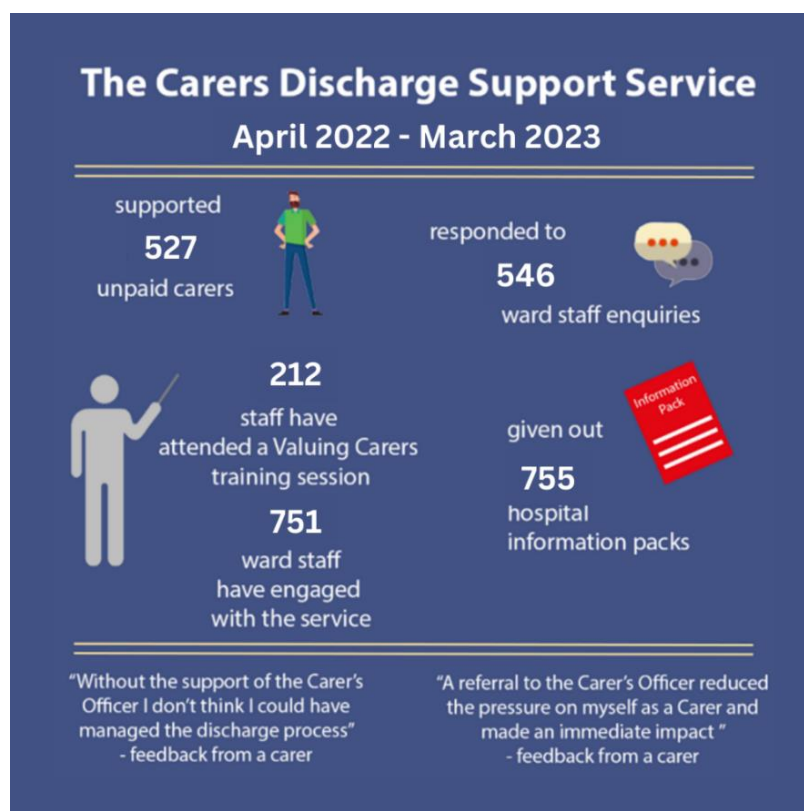
"I really do appreciate your support, it feels so nice to feel that someone is actually in our corner"

"Thank you for spending your time listening and talking to me about how my life has changed since becoming a Carer".

Planning for discharge from hospital

Hywel Dda University Health Board and its local authority partners have taken a whole system approach to support and engage carers in the discharge planning of patients and ensure active provision of Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA). Carer Officers (who are third sector employees) have been assigned to each hospital since January 2020 to support carers and staff. The Carers Officers have a specific role in supporting staff to identify carers earlier, enabling improved involvement in the discharge planning process and active provision of information and support. This service is part of a broader continuum of support that is offered to unpaid carers, who need support to manage pre-admission care, as well as post-discharge care.

The Carers Officers also work closely with the Family Liaison Officers in each hospital who refer patients and their families to the Carer Officers for carer specific support. When access to the hospitals was restricted during the pandemic training and support was undertaken remotely making the best use of digital technology. This included promoting the uptake of the Carer Aware e-learning training. Key figures from the project for 2022/23 are shown in the infographic here.



A multi-professional project team was formed to participate in the Health Board’s Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice programme (EQIIP) to also look at how staff and wards can improve the involvement and experience of unpaid carers during the hospital stay and discharge. Baseline data has been gathered so far from carers and staff as well as the electronic patient record using quality improvement techniques. It is hoped that solutions for improvement will be implemented in 2023/24 and then spread and scaled to other wards and hospitals.

Supporting young carers

The early identification and self-identification of carers of all ages plays an important part in ensuring that they can access the support for their own health and wellbeing. The national Young Carer ID card was introduced in all three local authority areas in 2021/22. The card was created to enable young carers to identify themselves to GP surgeries, hospital settings and schools. Work has continued across the region to promote uptake of the card. At the end of the last financial year, a young carers' bilingual information directory was created. Over 3000 copies were distributed directly to young carers in 2022/23.



Carmarthenshire County Council's Children Services have been working in partnership with Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales to promote the Young Carers ID card, including a scheme which included provision of a LoveToShop voucher on registration for the card, to encourage uptake. The Council issued 82 Young Carer ID cards this year. Several day trips and activities were delivered for young carers in Carmarthenshire including activities such as pantomimes, bowling, and Winter Wonderland; and visits to Heatherton World of Activities, Margam Park, and the All-Wales Young Carers Festival. A total of 34 young and young adult carers participated in the activities. For many of the participants these were new experiences and feedback gained highlighted the value of these activities for providing social outlets and reducing isolation for young and young adult carers.

Case study

In November, Carmarthenshire Young Carers Service took a group of young people to Heatherton World of Activities, Pembrokeshire, where they had the opportunity to participate in a range of indoor and outdoor activities, including go-karting, water-walking, and archery. This included a vulnerable young person, 'L', who lives with her mother, father, and 4 sisters. One of her siblings has an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis, and mum received a cancer diagnosis in 2021 and has suffered various health complications resulting from treatment. While 'L' is not the main carer, her anxiety and stress around the family situation leaves her often highly dysregulated and she has been known to abscond from school when she feels she cannot cope. Due to this risk, she is considered extremely vulnerable, and currently she is not attending school as she is waiting for a place to open at a PRU. Outside of school she has a limited social life due to her parents' concerns about her safety and putting herself in risky situations. Following a robust individual risk assessment, funding enabled the team to provide an extra staff member so that 'L' could be supervised, and her safety ensured throughout the course of the day, thus enabling her to enjoy a break from home and a valuable social experience.

Ceredigion County Council has continued to promote the Young Carers ID Cards to enable the self-identification of young carers, and since launching the Young Carers ID Card, 150 new young carers have signed up to the Carers Information Service. 43 Young Carer ID cards were issued this year.

Pembrokeshire County Council has continued to promote uptake of the Young Carers ID card, and has created a padlet which provides a single location for young carers to access information and support: [Pembrokeshire Young Carers Padlet](#).



"I can show the [Young Carers] card to teachers and reception staff if I'm late and I don't have to explain out loud what it's for. The teachers see the card, ask if everything is okay, and then I can just get on with my day."

-Young carer, Pembrokeshire

Milford Haven Community Society – Young Carers project

Funded via the Supporting Community Action Fund (see page 18), this project delivered a schedule of events to support 40 young people with a caring role who would benefit from opportunities for positive engagement, and the opportunity to improve physical and mental wellbeing. The project's main objective was to offer opportunities for young carers to develop life skills, increase confidence, self-esteem and take a break to improve wellbeing.

The project helped to improve the mental health and support system for young carers with one of the recipients stating that their most enjoyable experience from the project was *“meeting new people and all of the activities”*. Young carers were given the opportunity to take a break from their essential but difficult responsibilities and access support from local authorities and charities.

As a direct result of the project, there is now a weekly support group set up in Milford Haven School where young carers can go to access support, speak to others in a similar position to themselves or speak to a trained professional who is on hand to help them with referrals, signpost to further support and offer the opportunity for someone to talk to.

Added benefits of the project were to continue seeing the carers involved flourish and mix with others, socialise, and explore different skills and activities while still feeling safe in a familiar environment, or with familiar members of staff.

Carers' resilience

Innovative and creative solutions have continued to be made available for carers with support from our third sector partners, to enable carers to access small grant pots for home improvements, resilience funds for sessional or overnight breaks away, funds to overcome barriers to accessing a break such as equipment and transport, funding support for carers events and opportunities delivered by the third sector and community led groups.

Ceredigion County Council

As a follow-on from previous work around carers resilience & wellbeing, Ceredigion County Council have written a **self-help toolkit for unpaid carers**. This free online course is designed to help all unpaid carers, aged 18 and over, at any stage of caring, to find ways to manage the stresses and strains of everyday life. The course launched in spring 2023 and is designed in 5 parts for carers to complete at their own pace.

<https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/social-care-wellbeing/support-for-carers/self-help-toolkit-for-carers/>

Carmarthenshire County Council has continued to commission the Carers Resilience Project in partnership with Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales, providing a single point of access for carers seeking support with their caring role. The project links carers with a dedicated key worker to identify opportunities to promote their wellbeing and provide support to maintain their caring role. The project provides a pathway for low, intermediate, and high level needs to be identified and the key worker coordinates a full range of options such as preventative solutions delivered by third sector partners, technology solutions, respite and resilience grants, and pathways to statutory services. Carers in Carmarthenshire continued to access the Carers Exceptional Circumstance Direct Payment. This typically provides funding of up to approximately £250 and provides an avenue to support carers overcome barriers to maintaining their wellbeing through purchasing practical items associated to the caring role, or short breaks. Some of the items funded in 2022/23 included a contribution towards a specialist conference, visits to family members outside the county, Welsh classes, leisure activities and short breaks, driving lessons, and purchasing household items such as

white goods. A total of 66 carers benefitted from these payments, all for things they would not have been able to do or purchase without this funding.

Carers also accessed the Carers Exceptional Respite Direct Payment. This is a discretionary payment that provides solutions to carers' where they do not have an eligible need for respite but where the social work professional considers it would be appropriate to help the carer, by helping them with respite arrangements or associated costs. This would be in circumstances where it cannot be met by the carer themselves or from their own resources, or within the community. A total of 73 carers benefitted from these payments.

Pembrokeshire County Council delivered a Cost-of-Living Support programme this year, to support anyone experiencing financial hardship and in need of support, including carers, recognising the disproportionate impact of the cost-of-living crisis. 73 grants were issued to carers in Pembrokeshire this year for a range of items to support carers in their caring role. Pembrokeshire Community Hub acted as single point of contact for anyone with concerns or in need of advice and signposting to partners as appropriate. New initiatives included but not limited to:

- Keep Warm, Keep Well – various schemes
- Pembrokeshire Community Support Network being reinvigorated to promote conversations about how communities can support local people

Carers Cards

All three local authorities now offer carers cards and are looking at how they can be used regionally across county boundaries for access to leisure, health, and social benefits, and are considering developing a standard design so that cards are easily recognisable. Counties also have emergency cards which are linked to crisis response schemes and a consistent regional approach to this is being explored.

	Carmarthenshire	Ceredigion	Pembrokeshire
Carers cards issued 2022/23	68	224	493
Total carers cards issued	662	600	1674

In Ceredigion, carers who hold a carers card can now access free membership to the council-run leisure services. Other benefits added this year include discounted access to CADW sites and other leisure destinations in Ceredigion, such as free travel on the cliff railway in Aberystwyth. In Pembrokeshire, carers can now access an annual Scolton Manor pass and the Passport to Leisure scheme, which provides a 6-month free Pembrokeshire Leisure membership.

Pembrokeshire Supporting Community Action Fund

The **Supporting Community Action Fund** is a joint scheme supported by Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS), Pembrokeshire County Council and Welsh Government. The fund is open to constituted voluntary and community groups and social enterprises with established governance structures. The 2022/23 round of the Living Well This Winter funding recognised the ongoing challenges and pressures to providing activities and services to support vulnerable people during the winter months. The fund aimed to directly establish local activity to help alleviate demands, create additional capacity/activity, or extend existing activity. One of the 4 key priorities of the fund was supporting unpaid carers – e.g. ways to help unpaid carers take a break, ensuring unpaid carers can access information and support they need.

11 projects supporting unpaid carers were funded with just over £25,000 awarded. Projects included:

- A series of fully funded pottery and painting courses for unpaid carers, and community-based craft sessions in a community hall
- Entrance tickets to local attractions, craft materials and staff of weekly peer support sessions for young carers at a local secondary school
- Free admission for carers to a local castle and gardens
- Social activities and community cohesion for older people rebuilding lost social groups and supporting new friendships.
- Therapy dogs and robot pets for wellbeing benefits
- Community hot meals and cookery demonstrations with support and advice through the cost-of-living crisis.



Income Maximisation project

In November 2022, Carers Wales published their 'State of Caring' report, based on survey responses to the Carers UK State of Caring online survey between July and September 2022. Over 1,000 carers in Wales took part, and the responses highlighted the unprecedented pressure that the cost-of-living crisis is having on carers. 87% of carers said that the rising cost of living is one of the main challenges they would face in the coming year, and 26% said they were cutting back on essentials such as food or heating.

Recognising this challenge, the West Wales Carers Development Group launched the Income Maximisation project in 2022/23. This project aims to provide support for carers to access financial information, advice, and support to alleviate some of the day-to-day pressures involved in providing care and help to minimise the impact of the caring role. The project was delivered in Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion in 2022/23.

In Carmarthenshire, the funding enabled Carers Trust Crossroad West Wales to deliver a Money Matters Project, supported by a full-time Money Matters Carers Officer who sits within, and complements, Carmarthenshire's welfare benefits service. The purpose of the role was to ensure that carers maximise their income through grants, discounts, and concessions. This sought to bridge the gap between the welfare benefits service and the Carers Information and Outreach Service by providing an enhanced, holistic support service to address financial challenges faced by carers.

In Ceredigion, the funding enabled Gofalwyr Carers Ceredigion to extend their specialist Financial Advice Outreach worker for carers post, deliver outreach work to carers focused on finances, buy in specialist financial support services for case work as and when needed, and delivering events focused on maximizing income for carers.

The West Wales Carers Development Group recognise that this is an ongoing priority area for activity in 2023/24 and additional actions will be to:

- Establish an equivalent service in Pembrokeshire
- Maximise the use of the Regional Carers Website to promote and deliver the service
- Continue rolling out tools and resources that support carer resilience, such as the Money Saving Hints and Tips booklet
- Explore mechanisms to make the service more sustainable, such as upskilling people with lived experience to become peer mentors who could support carers groups with raising the profile of the financial health of carers to promote early intervention.

Carers Breaks project

The Carers Breaks project was launched this year, seeking to develop a new vision for respite and short breaks in West Wales, coproduced with unpaid carers. The project developed a range of person-centred breaks for unpaid carers of all ages across the West Wales region, with the aim to improve the carers wellbeing, supporting them to have a life alongside caring. These have included:

- short breaks and holidays
- access to therapies and spa treatments
- gardening related activities and purchases
- sports, fitness, and outdoor activities
- meals out
- pursuit of hobbies and entertainment

Feedback from participants included:

“Thank you so much for this, [young carer] is extremely excited...she's over the moon.”

“Coming to the Carers group every Weds has changed my life. I have something to look forward to every week, something different.”

In addition to the benefits seen by carers, this project has provided a huge amount of information about what a ‘break’ looks like to different carers. Staff involved in the project said:

“It’s so important to carers that although it is a huge piece of work that takes a lot out of us, we want to do it. It gives us an opportunity to find out how carers are really coping and to reach out to cares who are struggling but haven’t previously asked for help.”

This feedback highlights that the more adaptive and responsive short breaks model is more administration heavy and there is further work to be done to explore how this can be delivered ways which are sustainable for the organisations involved. A total of 1527 carers in West Wales benefitted from this project (Figure 4).

An example of a project funded from this fund, the People Speak Up Hybrid Day Centre Creative Service, can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/d71sN6DC5eo>

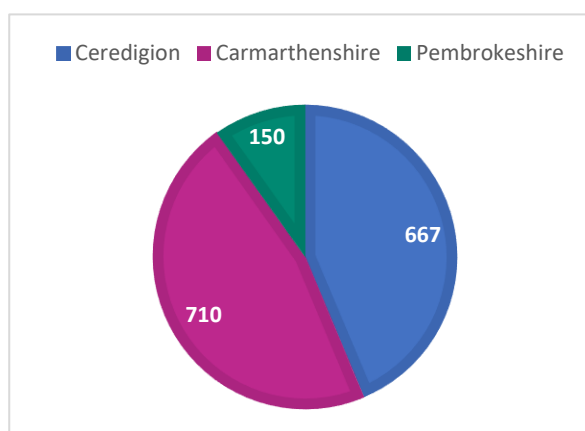


Figure 4: Project beneficiaries by county

Short Breaks for Paediatric Palliative Care patients

Hywel Dda University Health Board's Paediatric Palliative Care and Community Nursing Service has continued to co-ordinate a short breaks scheme for carers of children with life-limiting conditions and complex caring needs. This includes young carers and parent carers of babies, children, and young people aged 0 to 25 years old. The scheme funds short breaks and family days out. Short breaks are also arranged for bereaved families where a palliative child or young person has died. Key links have been built with corporate departments in Bluestone, Folly Farm and Snowdrop mobility who go 'above and beyond' to ensure the palliative children and young people and their families to have a stress-free break.

The all-consuming experiences and demands of caring for someone with palliative care needs can cause physical and/or mental health problems for parents, carers, or siblings from the point of diagnosis through to end of life, death, and bereavement. Short Breaks to Bluestone improve wellbeing for the whole of the family, parents, siblings, grandparents and can contribute to avoiding carer's crisis points. Families are central to the design of the break to ensure it is personalized to the needs of everyone within the family.

Folly Farm subsidises bi-annual family days out for all palliative children and young people, families, and their carers. The family days are organised and supported by the paediatric palliative care team. In recognition of the cost-of-living challenges, food vouchers are included as part of the day out. These days give the children and young people and families the opportunity to share similar experiences as their children are life-limited and threatened, often going through 'near death' episodes. Most importantly, they can spend time together and experience opportunities of being a 'normal' family in exceptional circumstances.

"[R] is severely disabled and has to have 24-hour care which requires a lot of my time and attention every day. With these small breaks we get away as a family. This means I get to unwind not have to worry about appointments and meetings. We get away from our everyday life for few days. We get to spend time together just doing normal family things, just simply being able to go for walks is amazing as a family we don't get to do much. The time we have at Bluestone lets us be a proper family without stress and worries. I don't know what we would do without these small breaks. These mean the world to us. My kids love when we go and smile from ear to ear and that makes me very happy"

Working together to support carers

The **Carers Provider Forums in each county** continue to meet on a regular basis with good attendance from statutory partners, third sector providers and commissioners, to share best practice and encourage collaborative working in developing services for carers.

The Carer Aware e-learning launched in November 2018 by Social Care Wales has been cascaded out to staff working in statutory and non-statutory services via a variety of means. Hywel Dda University Health Board have been monitoring the completion of the course by its staff and during 2022/23 **182** staff completed the e-learning.

A **peer support group for Hywel Dda University Health Board staff** who have a caring role has been running for several years. Sessions provide an opportunity for informal peer support as well as topics presented by guest speakers e.g. introducing the Carers Policy, mindfulness session and advocacy. The Health Board's Diversity and Inclusion Team have been working together with Carers Information Services to engage with the Gypsy and Travelling community, helping to raise awareness of unpaid caring roles. This included signposting to the Carers Discharge Support Services when a lady needed support when her dad came out of hospital. The team have also been looking at new ways to raise awareness of unpaid carers within other vulnerable groups such as Armed Forces Veterans, and individuals with sensory loss and substance misuse.

Carmarthenshire County Council previously delivered a training course in partnership with **Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales** to **raise the profile of unpaid care**. The sessions helped staff to recognise unpaid care, the potential impact of a caring role and how they can support carers by signposting them to carers services. While capacity has impacted upon the ongoing delivery of this training, there are plans to deliver sessions during Carers Week 2023.

Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) have proactively supported the delivery of a range of projects, including leading on the creation of a regional carers platform which officially launched in November 2022. **Carers Support West Wales** (see page 26) is a website which provides a single online front door for carers to access advice and support to help them in their caring role regardless of where they live in the region. A Regional Carers Platform Steering Group, including representation from Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire County Councils was formed and partners work together to support the website. Carers have also been involved in the coproduction of the website.

Employers for Carers (EfC)

The West Wales Carers Development Group participates in the Carers Wales Employers for Carers (EfC) scheme through an umbrella membership. Each individual partner organisation has taken forward specific actions, in addition to their collaboration as part of a regional Steering Group.

Initiatives taken forward by **Hywel Dda University Health Board** include:

- Gained the Employers for Carers Confident Level 2 with exemplary feedback.
- Continued to communicate of the Health Board Carers Policy and passport for staff.
- Targeted awareness raising training with workforce staff who support managers and employees.
- Encouraging staff with caring responsibilities to share their views and experiences
Continuation of Staff Carer Peer Support Group sessions.
- Promoting awareness through sharing of personal stories; A member of this group gave her story conjunction with Carer Rights Day 2022: [Anwen's Story - YouTube](#)

The Health Board annual staff survey was launched on Carers Rights Day in November 2022. The survey and feedback provided by the 112 staff who responded provided a “temperature check” and valuable insights into the impact of caring roles for our staff who self-identify as unpaid carers. 46% said their job is negatively affected by their caring role. 30 people said that they had agreed flexible working arrangements and 9 said they had been issued the carers passport. The carers staff survey report will be used by the Health Board’s Carers Strategy group to identify further actions which can be taken to strengthen support for staff with caring roles, for example working with the Culture and Change Managers and Workforce teams.

Carmarthenshire County Council recruited a Lead Officer for carers in the Commissioning team. The Lead Officer is involved in raising the profile of support available to staff employed by the local authority who also have an unpaid caring role. The Lead Officer also takes part in arranging and delivering ‘Carers Matter’ Training jointly with Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales for staff employed by the county. The Lead Officer has maintained a presence at staff carer sessions on a regular basis which include Carer Champion Meetings (in the workplace), Carers Week and Carers Rights Day. The Lead Officer also has access to the EfC portal to access material to support staff. In 2023/24 the Lead Officer will be looking to introduce the Passport for Carers within the workplace and start the Bronze Award for Investors in Carers.

Ceredigion County Council issues a monthly carers newsletter by email to all staff, containing relevant information to those who are carers. This launched in July 2022. In

conjunction with Carers Wales, courses for managers are being delivered about the carer's passport; these include 'Starting the Conversation' and 'Carers rights for carers in employment'. Staff who are carers continue to access monthly drop-in sessions, in person and online. Some are run jointly with the Carers Wellbeing Officer and focus on specific themes such as Carers Week or cancer.

Pembrokeshire County Council recruited a Commissioning and Contracts Management Officer in January 2022 who took the lead for unpaid carers within the local authority. The member of staff has signed up to the EfC portal to access material to support staff and has attended Carers Wales training as a Wellbeing Champion. The Council are members of the regional EfC working group; this enables staff to work collaboratively and share their views and ideas with the overall aim of supporting carers in the workplace. The Social Care Commissioning team is working towards Investors in Carers Bronze award, and Pembrokeshire Library Service and Action for Children were awarded Silver Investors in Carers award in January 2023 ([Pembrokeshire Libraries scoop Silver award for commitment to unpaid carers - Pembrokeshire County Council](#)).

Digital inclusion

The West Wales Carers Strategy 2020-2025 identified digital inclusion as one of 4 key priorities for unpaid carers in the region based on feedback from a survey of 558 carers from across West Wales in 2019/2020. The survey identified that in a rural area like West Wales, for some carers limited public transport can create challenges when trying to access services. Digital inclusion has been a key aspect of the Regional Partnership Board's Transformation Programme and Carers Officers provide a key link to signpost unpaid carers to support to help them to become digitally included. The pandemic encouraged people of all ages to develop new digital skills to stay connected with friends and families. Some carers accessed increased support during the pandemic due to the increased availability of services online. Others used technology to access health appointments, access useful services such as the delivery of food or medication, access financial benefit advice, apply for benefits such as Carers Allowance, attend training courses or continue education and training. Hywel Dda University Health Board's Education Programme for Patients (EPP) team created a Padlet which holds a wide variety of useful information and support for unpaid carers. This digital system is also available via social media and promoted to everyone attending a course delivered by the EPP team: [EPP Carers Information Padlet](#).

The West Wales Carers Development Group has agreed to adapt the focus of strategy priority 4 to become "Support Carers to become digitally included and confident." This reflected the group's recognition that digital confidence, meaning knowledge and skills of how to use technology safely and effectively, is a key factor in people's ability to become digitally included and connected.

Support for carers to become digitally included and confident

All three counties received RIF funding to support unpaid carers to overcome barriers to getting online, by funding digital equipment for their use. This funding was used differently in the counties to complement existing provision.

In **Pembrokeshire**, the existing tablet loan scheme administered by PAVS was extended to focus on tablet loans for unpaid carers. 45 tablets were purchased, and the loan scheme was promoted by the Pembrokeshire Community Hub and Community Connectors, by the commissioned carers service (PCISS) and by Carers Support West Wales social media pages and the new regional Carers website. By the end of March 2023, 26 carers had a tablet out on loan and feedback has been very positive. This year in Pembrokeshire, Carers Grants also supported some carers to purchase IT equipment to support them in their caring role. All opportunities for carers in Pembrokeshire are promoted via social media and on the Carers Support West Wales website, carers email distribution list and via the [Dementia Supportive Communities padlet](#).



In **Ceredigion** this year, 52 carers were given resources to enable them to be access or increase their digital activity. These included tablets and laptops, Kindles, mobile smart phones, and Fitbits. The majority of applicants cited how connectivity, would enable them to feel more included and they felt their own health would be improved with this technology. In addition to this, Digital Inclusivity training was held in partnership with Cwmpas (Digital Communities Wales) as part of a Welsh Government project to improve digital inclusivity across Wales. Carers attended along with 3 trainers, who provided 1:1 support, and a Digital Connector from the Council’s Carers and Community Support Team. Feedback during the event highlighted that people are being left behind due to the ‘digital by default’ issue, lacking digital skills to access digital support, and that transport issues in rural areas along with access to venues restrict access to digital training. As a result, Ceredigion County Council are currently developing a county-wide action plan to improve digital accessibility to carers and those they care for.

“As a new carer, I was pleased to attend the Digital Taster Session for carers last Tuesday, in Aberaeron. It was nice to meet new young people so enthusiastic in their subject and to be given ideas of equipment and websites that might be of use to us. Our neatly boxed lunch was tasty and very fresh. Thank you to all involved in the occasion.”

In **Carmarthenshire**, third sector partners signpost people who require or would benefit from digital support to available services and support in the county, tailored to their needs and personal circumstances. The Delta Wellbeing CONNECT project also supports people through access to tablets and services through the technology enabled care pathway.

Regional Carers Website – Carers Support West Wales



Acting on behalf of the West Wales Carers Development Group, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) was awarded funding to develop a bilingual regional carers online platform. The website supports the provision and accessibility of consistent information, assistance, and advice for unpaid carers in the three counties, which unpaid carers told us was important to them. The website, named Carers Support West Wales (CSWW) by carers, is a one-stop shop for carer specific information. The website design, branding and content has been coproduced with unpaid carers and providers throughout the region. <https://carerssupportwestwales.org>

The website was officially launched on Carers Rights Day in November 2022. Judith Hardisty, Hywel Dda University Health Board Vice Chair and Carers Champion who is also Chair of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board said:

“I am delighted that the Carers Support West Wales website will provide a bilingual ‘one stop shop’ for unpaid Carers helping them to easily find information to support them in their caring role. The website will include details of local groups and activities, as well as relevant and timely help and support on benefits and financial entitlements. We know that people don’t always recognise themselves as unpaid carers, so won’t be aware of the help and support which is available to support them in their caring role, therefore this new website will be a valuable resource for everyone. The Regional Partnership Board are grateful for the contribution of all our unpaid carers who care for family and friends in their own communities and are committed to ensuring that the needs of unpaid carers are addressed.”

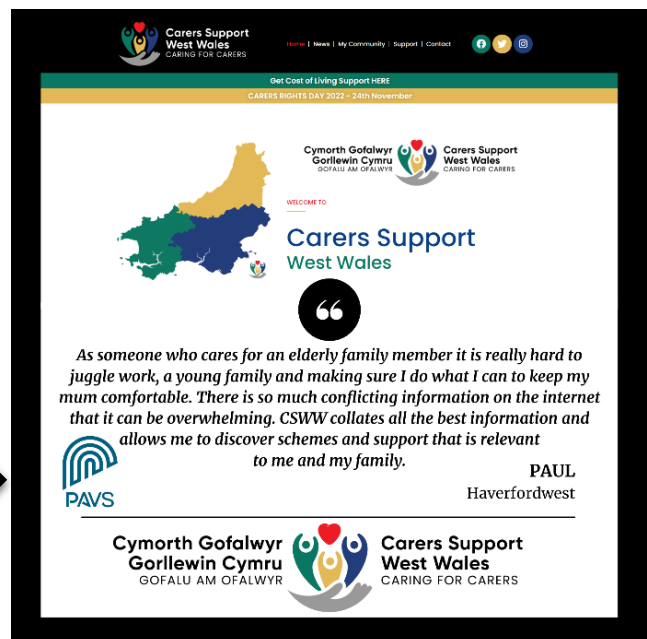
Carers Support West Wales is divided into three distinct sections, allowing carers to easily navigate the platform and explore information locally and regionally. The website has been widely promoted across the region, with promotional materials delivered to GP surgeries,

libraries, hospitals, and other public buildings, for display. The website has been promoted at events during Carers Week, Carers Rights Day, summer community shows and events.

<p>In the 'My Community' section, carers will find local offers, promotions and discounts that can support them in their caring role in their community. An interactive map provides a quick visualization of any activities close by as well as the relevant contact details.</p>	<p>The 'Support' section provides support that is felt could benefit them as a carer such as how to register as an unpaid carer with your GP and how to register for a Carers Recognition Card. Using a filter system to navigate this, carers will be able to search local and national organisations to find the information they need.</p>	<p>The 'News' section shares essential information that is timely and relevant, from a list of support with cost-of-living crisis to carers magazines providing local and national information that may be useful to carers and professionals.</p>

Traffic to the website and social media interactions have shown to be increasing and we have been proactive in ensuring regular posts go up on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. PAVS are monitoring the number of visits to the website and the number of interactions on social media. These are all showing an upward trend.

@carerssupportww
#caringforcars
#gofaluamofalwyr



Priorities for 2023/24

The key actions of our Regional Carers Strategy are based on the views and feedback from carers and key stakeholders, gathered during the development of the refreshed 2022 Population Needs Assessment which confirmed that the existing priorities in the Regional Carers Strategy remained relevant. The West Wales Carers Development Group will continue to work to implement the priorities outlined in the Carers Strategy and:

- Address key requirements, gaps and improvements identified through the West Wales Population Assessment and the objectives within the Area Plan.
- Respond to Ministerial priorities for supporting carers.
- Complement and integrate a range of carers' initiatives across the region to increase the visibility about the needs of unpaid carers.
- Ensure that the needs of carers are represented through the Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund programme.

The West Wales Carers Development Group agreed the following priorities for 2023/24*:

1. Continue the development and uptake of carers' cards and the benefits that these offer, to encourage carers of all ages to self-identify themselves and access additional support which is available via carer's information and outreach services.
2. Map the support offered to young carers in West Wales and engage young carers in the process to ensure a best practice innovative service is provided.
3. Actively promote the regional Employers for Carers membership, focusing on working collaboratively with other public sector services as well as small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).
4. Continue to encourage involvement in the Investors in Carers accreditation scheme and support progression through the award levels.
5. Support carers to be digitally confident through training and access to technology.
6. Develop an annual carers' survey to understand carers' experiences and what is important to them.
7. Explore the use of consistent carers' outcome measures within carers services across the region.
8. Continue to develop short breaks offers within the localities.
9. Agree an approach to develop, promote, and maintain the carers' website and evaluate its impact.

*Priorities 1 through 5 are carried forward from 2022/23, with some adjustments, as while there has been progress against these which is reflected in this report, the group recognises the need to continue to keep these at the top of the agenda.

Conclusion

Carers and the carers' agenda will continue to feature within the refreshed West Wales Area Plan due for publication in 2023, which the West Wales Carers Development Group has contributed to. The Regional Partnership Board adopted carers as an integral priority, particularly recognising the cross-cutting impact and links across all its key programmes of work, including the new Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund.

We are facing unprecedented challenges in health and social care and with an ageing population, a cost-of-living crisis, and the need to deliver services differently as we respond to continued pressures on statutory services. The West Wales Carers Development Group is committed to working together to deliver support for carers in our communities in new and innovative ways, and to ensure that the needs of carers are considered at every stage of caring.

This Annual Report has provided an overview of the wide range of activity which has been ongoing in West Wales to improve outcomes for carers. Whilst the focus of the report has been on the work lead via the West Wales Carers Development Group and how the Welsh Government funding, RIF and core funding of partner organisations has been utilised to support this work, it is acknowledged that there are many other organisations and groups within West Wales who also provide valuable support and services to carers.