



Are we caring for our Carers?

What we found out about carers services in Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Flintshire and Neath Port Talbot



This document was written by the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)**. It is an easy read version of 'Are we Caring for our Carers?'

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How to use this document



This is an easy read document. You may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 31**.



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About Us



We are the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. We call ourselves **PSOW** for short.

We have 3 main jobs to do. They are:



- Look into complaints about public services. These are called investigations.



- Look into complaints about councillors who may have broken rules called the Code of Conduct.



- Try to improve the standards of local councils.



We are independent and fair. Our service is free.

About this report



This is a report about carers who are unpaid. For example, a person who has to look after a relative for many hours because of a health issue.



A law came out in Wales in 2014 called the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).



This law says that local councils must carry out **carers' needs assessments**. These are checks for carers to see if they need support.



Carers have a really important job looking after people. We need to make sure they are supported and their rights.



It is important to make sure their health and wellbeing is looked after too.



We looked into 4 local councils in Wales to see if they had done their jobs well for carers.

We looked into these things:



- If councils were following the law [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) and [The Care and Support \(Assessment\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2015](#).



- If carers knew about their right to have a **carers' needs assessment**.



- If councils are managing the assessments well.



- If the assessments are done as the law says.



The 4 local councils (also known as local authorities) we looked into were:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Ceredigion County Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council

To find out if councils had done their jobs well, we collected information. We did this by:



- Collecting information about carers. We call this **data**.



- We looked at the work councils had done. And we interviewed some senior staff members from each council.



- We talked to organisations who carry out assessments on behalf of councils.



- We spoke to staff.



- We spoke to carers.



- We spoke to some relevant organisations. For example, Carers Trust.

What we found

The main things we found were:



- About 10 in every 100 **people** in Wales are carers. This is 10% of all people in Wales.



- Only about 3 in 100 of these **carers** had their **needs assessed**.



- Only about half of those who had a **needs assessment**, had a support plan.



- Many carers did not know about their rights. Or that they are able to get support themselves.



- Sometimes **carers' needs assessments** are called other things. This has confused carers.



- There is not enough information about assessments and support.



- When assessments are done, they are usually done well. Apart from some young carers' assessments.



- The way assessments are written down and recorded could be improved.



- Councils should be checking their completed assessments for quality in some areas.



- Carers should be offered **advocacy**.

Advocacy is when someone speaks up on someone's behalf to share their views.



- Councils and health services should work together more to support carers.

Work being carried out by the Welsh Government



The Welsh Government have seen our findings. They say it is really important carers get an assessment if they need one.



A group has been set up as part of the **Ministerial Advisory Group of Unpaid Carers**.



This is a group who represent unpaid carers. It is made up of carers, staff and organisations from across Wales.



The group has given surveys to all local councils. They are looking into **carers' needs assessments** and advice services.



The Welsh Government are carrying out other work to find out about carers' experiences of services.



They are also doing a lot of work to improve the support carers get. For example, the easy read version of the Strategy for Unpaid Carers.

What we think



Overall, all councils did some things well and could make some improvements.



There were carers from each area that had good things to say about the services they had.



Carers' needs assessments are normally done well. There could be improvements in some assessments for young carers.



We think there could be some other improvements. Such as, making sure the cared-for person is involved. Also, checking the carer is happy with the assessment.



Local councils need to make sure carers know they have a right to an assessment and support.



There needs to be better information for carers about assessments. And what services offer.



This could be given as a factsheet. It should also be offered in Easy Read.



It is really important that social workers recognise carers and offer them assessments and support. Staff working in Information Advice and Assistance roles should do the same.



Many staff need more training about carers and their rights.



It needs to be clear to carers what a carers' needs assessment is. Sometimes they are called different names.



All information given to carers should also be clear. And the process of supporting them.



More should be done to make sure other council staff know about carers' issues and their rights. For example, housing teams.



Sometimes other organisations carry out **carers' needs assessments** on behalf of the council. But it is important that the council check the quality of their work.



All local councils need to make sure carers are told about **advocacy**.



There also needs to be better recording of all information about carers. And any advice and support they are offered.



All councils should make a plan about working with health services.



Councils should check that **direct payments** are working well for carers if they use them.

Direct payments are when people who need care or support receive the money themselves. They then choose which services they want.



We found that usually people are supported in the language they choose.



All councils in Wales should look at this report and put the actions in place. Although they do not have to.



All councils are welcome to contact us to let us know what they have done.



We will be working with the 4 councils to see what actions have been taken.



All 4 councils have agreed to put the actions in place within 6 months of this report coming out.

Hard words

Advocacy

Advocacy is when someone speaks up on someone's behalf to share their views.

Direct payments

Direct Payments are when people who need care or support receive the money themselves. They then choose which services they want.