



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/21**

<b>HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No: 4</b>
<b>8TH FEBRUARY 2021</b> <b>REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY &amp; CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>	<b>Adult Services: Covid-19 response and summary of the support offered to Adult Carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report to provide the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with an update on Adult Services on-going response to Covid-19 and a summary of the support offered to adult carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf during the pandemic.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Acknowledges the information contained within the report; and
- 2.2 Scrutinises and comments on the information provided.

**3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with an update on Adult Services on-going response to Covid-19 and the support offered to adult carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf during the pandemic.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge for all of Welsh society but none more so than the health and social care sector. The Council and our social care services, including its provider partners have been pushed to their very limits in trying to respond to, and deliver services in, what has been an exceptional public health emergency. The pandemic has placed a spotlight on the incredibly valuable role social care plays - social care staff have been on



the frontline throughout this crisis doing an incredible job in extremely challenging circumstances to protect those they care for.

- 4.2 At its meetings on 14th September 2020 and 8th December 2020, the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee received updates in relation to Adult Services on-going response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.3 As reported previously, the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that Adult Services has needed to implement extensive new national guidance and new ways of working, in partnership with health and social care providers and partners, to ensure the continued delivery of quality care and support services through the pandemic.

## **5. ADULT SERVICES ON-GOING COVID-19 RESPONSE**

- 5.1 Since the last report to Scrutiny on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Wales entered Alert Level 4 restrictions on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020 in response to the new strain of coronavirus that had seen a rapid acceleration of transmission and an increase in case rates.
- 5.2 Despite these new restrictions, Adult Services continues to work within the statutory duties of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, although there continues to be some temporary disruption while we prioritise services and modify care and support offers, based on assessed need and risk.
- 5.3 Assessments continue to take a person-centred approach as far as practicable, although our focus will be on those with greatest need. However, under Alert Level 4 restrictions, there has been a need to return to doing more work over the phone – for a lot of people we can do everything we need to do in this way. This will reduce the number of visits to people but, where necessary, we will continue to undertake some critical visits in agreement with the person and, where applicable, their carer. Single of Point Access (SPA) and social work duty arrangements will also continue to operate across all our Teams to ensure people can speak to skilled staff about their care and support needs and, where relevant, appropriate action is taken.
- 5.4 However, as the pandemic continues, we experience growing pressures as more people need care and support, and workloads across Adult Services remain high and caseloads become increasingly more complex. There remains a waiting list of cases awaiting allocation, across Care and Support and in the ACE (Occupational Therapy) Team. Additional external support continues to be commissioned to reduce assessment and review backlogs across Care and Support.



### **Hospital Discharges**

- 5.5 The period since the beginning of December 2020 has continued to be demanding in relation to hospital discharges, although the position is now starting to stabilise. The Council is continuing to work in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) and our commissioned providers to support individuals, with care and support needs, to discharge safely from hospital.
- 5.6 Additional Winter Protection Plan funds for 2020/21, mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 update to Members, are being used by Adult Services to increase social work assessment and home care capacity across “Discharge to Recover and Assess” pathways, which is impacting positively on discharges and ensuring people are able to return home from hospital as quickly as possible.
- 5.7 However, despite care homes supporting the admission of patients from hospital, wherever possible, if they can provide the appropriate care safely, on-going Covid-19 outbreaks and the subsequent Public Health Wales (PHW) Covid free restrictions placed on admissions, is limiting care home placements (in particular, nursing and dementia), resulting in some discharges taking longer to complete.
- 5.8 From the start of December 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Adult Services has supported over 160 in-patient discharges and over 140 Stay Well @ Home discharges. The success of this response is testament to the strength of the established partnership with CTMUHB and our providers.

### **Care Homes**

- 5.9 Members will be fully aware of the profound impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on care homes. Despite this, all care homes continue to provide care and support to their residents, and we continue to review regularly.
- 5.10 As of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021, there are 19 care homes under PHW Covid free restrictions following outbreaks during the last 20 to 28 days. Of these care homes, 3 currently have 7 residents with suspected or confirmed Covid-19.
- 5.11 Homes without PHW Covid free restrictions continue to take new placements, but only for people assessed and agreed as critical due to their own needs, hospital discharges or crisis situations. However, there will continue to be no planned respite care and only critical respite placements will continue to be made in line with national guidance.
- 5.12 Since the introduction of the Alert Level 4 restrictions on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020, in line with Welsh Government guidance, the position relating to care visiting changed removing the ability to arrange risk assessed internal visiting, except



in exceptional circumstances only, including, but not restricted to, end of life, as they have been throughout the pandemic. For compassionate reasons, care home visits are permitted under Alert Level 4 restrictions, but these should be restricted to outdoor visits, or visits within visitor pods or similar enclosed spaces. These outdoor visiting arrangements will be suspended in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak at the care home.

- 5.13 The Covid-19 outbreak status at individual care homes changes frequently, and the majority of care homes have been subject to PHW Covid free restrictions since 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020, resulting in limited opportunity to provide outdoors visits since the start of the new Alert Level 4 restrictions. However, where possible, some outdoor “window visits” have taken place in line with risk assessments and PHW and Welsh Government guidance.
- 5.14 The ultimate decision on whether, and in what circumstances care home visits take place, rests with the individual care home provider, which includes the Council for our in-house care homes. In each case, the care home needs to put in place appropriate risk assessments, social distancing and safety measures before allowing visits.
- 5.15 The Council, and care home providers, recognise the importance of visiting to residents and their families, and we will continue to review risk assessments and arrangements for visiting in light of the current and any new guidance. In the interim, the Council and care home providers support opportunities, where possible, with virtual visits and calls through various forms of technology to ensure residents, where possible, remain connected with family members.

### **Domiciliary Care**

- 5.16 While there has been a real focus on protecting vulnerable adults in care homes, we should not lose sight of the support and services that are given to vulnerable adults in the community – those in supported living and extra care accommodation and particularly those receiving domiciliary care at home. Increased service demands and pressures are being felt by care at home providers. The impact on domiciliary care supply and demand gaps are monitored closely with our providers following the high levels of discharges from hospital into community settings. As a result, some individual care and support packages may be affected, which may affect either the frequency or the timing of the visits. We are doing everything we can to minimise disruption to services and to ensure that care and support visits are provided.

### **Day and Respite Services**

- 5.17 Services continue to offer essential care and support, even during the new Alert Level 4 restrictions:



- Older People Day Centres - Whilst these centres remain temporarily closed, we have developed a new temporary outreach service to support people, assessed as critical due to their own or carer's needs in their own homes and community.
- Older People with Dementia Day Centres - The Council operated Cwmni Dda Day Centre in Trecynon remains open to provide a limited prioritised day service only for those people assessed as critical due to their own needs or crisis situations. The Health run Lewis Merthyr Day Unit in Treorchy and Tonteg Day Unit in Pontypridd have been temporarily closed following the start of the new Alert Level 4 restrictions, which is attributable in part to some staff being realigned to support critical pressures in hospital settings. As a result, we contacted people to ensure that there was alternative care and support at home for those affected by the temporary closures.
- Learning Disability Day Centres - Some centres and specialist provision for people with autism remain open to provide prioritised day care and support only for those people assessed as critical due to their own needs or crisis situations, including: Llwynypia Learning Curve, Abercynon Learning Curve, Gadlys (Aberdare) Learning Curve, Danymynydd Autism Centre in Porth and the Autism Life Centre in Trealaw. Treforest, Gilfach Goch and Wattstown Learning Curves and work-based projects have been closed throughout Covid-19.
- Learning Disability (accommodation based) Respite - Services continue, but only for people assessed and agreed as essential due to their own needs or crisis situations. All Council learning disability respite homes (excluding Clwyd Wen in Miskin, Pontyclun) and the facility commissioned from DRIVE in Brynsadler, Pontyclun remain open. Clwyd Wen is currently supporting an emergency accommodation placement and cannot be used for additional respite at this time.

5.18 During the pandemic, we have ensured, where necessary, based on assessed need and risk, that there is alternative care and support at home for people affected by the reduced service offer.

### **Vaccination and Testing Programmes**

5.19 The Council has worked closely with CTMUHB and our social care providers and partners on the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccination programme to ensure a coordinated response across the sector. As of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021, all care homes (Priority 1 Group) in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region will have been visited, with all residents and staff (assessed as medically fit) receiving their first dose of vaccine. Plans are being put in place to revisit homes where individuals were not able to receive their vaccine the first time around.



- 5.20 The roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine is also underway for social care staff in the Priority 2 Group, commencing on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020, which is being led by our partners in Health. Data on the numbers of social care staff vaccinated is being collated and a verbal update will be provided by the Director of Adult Services in the meeting.
- 5.21 The challenges of implementing a robust testing regime for social care has been difficult throughout the pandemic and well documented, although asymptomatic testing of care homes residents and staff is now in place.
- 5.22 In addition, we are currently working with the Welsh Government, PHW and regional Health and local authority partners to support the roll out of twice weekly asymptomatic lateral flow testing initially to social care workers, including domiciliary care workers, social workers and other professionals visiting care homes and other social care settings and now more recently care homes staff and family visitors.
- 5.23 There have been a number of concerns raised regarding the roll out of the asymptomatic lateral flow testing and we are working together to address them. A phased roll out of lateral flow testing to domiciliary care staff in supported living and home care commenced in January 2021 following approval by Welsh Government and the learning will inform a wider roll out of the programme across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

### **Workforce**

- 5.24 As Members will be aware from previous updates, the social care workforce has been extraordinary during the pandemic and it has had a significant impact on people working in social care; particularly those working in residential care. Whilst we have started to notice some stabilisation in staff absence and signs of an improvement, the intense pressure on these workers and the impact on their current and future mental health and wellbeing continues to be a source of concern.
- 5.25 At the previous meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Members were informed of the work undertaken with Human Resources to ensure our staff is appropriately supported. This work has continued in the short term, but over the medium to longer-term, we remain concerned about the physical and mental toil the pandemic will have taken, and we are examining new ways with Human Resources and Health to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on this workforce group. Social Care Wales is also expediting the wellbeing theme of the national integrated workforce strategy and it is going to be vitally important that all the support mechanisms are in place to aid workforce recovery.



### **Support to Providers**

- 5.26 A range of measures remain in place to ensure, as much as possible, the on-going resilience of our commissioned care providers in ensuring safety, capacity and sustainability of provision. This includes continued support to adult social care providers to mitigate the Covid-19 impact through the distribution of the Covid Hardship Fund.
- 5.27 Feedback from our commissioned care providers continues to be positive and supportive, reinforcing our long-established relationships.
- 5.28 The Adults Purchasing and Commissioning Team also continues to work closely with colleagues in Environmental Health, PHW and Health to support providers to manage the stringent requirements on infection control and PPE to keep the people they support safe.
- 5.29 As mentioned above, the Council along with its regional Health and local authority partners, have recently started to work with the sector to plan and support the roll out of asymptomatic lateral flow testing to frontline social care staff, along with the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

### **6. SUPPORT TO CARERS**

- 6.1 As Members will be aware from previous updates, some people and their carers have elected through the pandemic to decline services because of concerns about Covid-19 and, as a result, some people have relied disproportionately on carers and family during the pandemic - support for carers is becoming an increasing issue. However, these cases are lower at the moment and we are now seeing more people needing our help or reluctant to reduce care and support at home than we did earlier in the pandemic.
- 6.2 On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Members requested further information on the support offered to adult carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf. A summary of the support offered to adult carers during the pandemic is attached as Appendix A and some key points are included below:
- The Carers Support Project (CSP) has provided one-to-one telephone support to carers throughout the pandemic and from September all support activities have been delivered virtually. This has included social events, workshops and learning events and opportunities to improve mental and physical wellbeing. Project staff have also delivered various packs with at-home activities including art and wellness packs.
  - Currently the Happy @ Home grant scheme allows carers to apply for up to £300 for items to boost their wellbeing at home. This is proving extremely popular and is likely to be oversubscribed.



- CSP staff have also ensured distribution of personal protective equipment for carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The Carers Counselling service attached to CSP has experienced high demand and has successfully obtained short-term additional funding until the end of March 2021 to help to reduce the waiting list.
- A pilot project to improve the uptake of and process for carer assessments, called Carer Conversations, saw new guidance issued to staff at the start of 2020. An audit of completed carer assessments during the year was carried out in December 2020, highlighting excellent practice and identifying areas of further work.
- Respite services has continued to support unpaid carers, ensuring they are able to have a break from their role and look after their own wellbeing. Residential and nursing placements, sitting services and day centre provision for adults with learning disabilities or dementia, have continued to operate despite the restrictions.
- Once restrictions allow, all-age carers services in the County Borough will be co-located in a newly refurbished office in Gelliwastad Road, Pontypridd. Grant funding has provided equipment and furnishings to allow the space to be used for carer events, workshops, training and meetings and the office will effectively act as a carers hub for Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- A scoping exercise is currently underway to establish the possibility of the Council achieving the Carer Friendly Employer accreditation awarded by Carers Trust. This will require input from all Council departments and all levels of management and is aimed at supporting our working carers.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This is an information report - there are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 This is an information report - there is no consultation required for this report.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 This is an information report - there is no financial implications aligned to this report.



## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 This report identifies the work of Adult Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf that allows the Council to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

## **11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 11.1 This report supports the Council's People corporate priority - promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.
- 11.2 The work of Adult Services outlined in this report contributes to the following wellbeing goals, namely: a Wales of cohesive communities, a healthier Wales and more equal Wales and due regard has been made to the five ways of working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 Whilst it is not possible to cover all of the work undertaken across Adult Services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, this report highlights some key issues and acknowledges the work and dedication of all care staff and providers in Rhondda Cynon Taf to provide quality care and support to people and carers through the unique and highly complex circumstances of this Covid-19 pandemic.



# **ADULT CARERS: Support offered during the pandemic**

## **OVERVIEW**

This year has been a challenging and different one. With the global pandemic it has been necessary to adapt working practices and find new ways of supporting carers of all ages. Many carers found their roles changed significantly almost overnight with the normal support networks unavailable, whilst others took on caring roles for the first time. For many, caring was coupled with additional anxiety in terms of catching or spreading the virus, as well as additional pressure to work and looking after children.

This report summarises the support provided to carers through Adult Service during this turbulent year. It covers the work of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Carers Support Project (CSP) and includes data from day service provisions, sitting services and formal respite provision and attempts to recognise some of the key developments achieved despite extremely challenging circumstances.

## **BACKGROUND**

Prior to the implementation of the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act 2014), Health Boards in Wales had a lead role under The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 to prepare, publish and implement with partners a strategy for the benefit of unpaid carers. This has since been replaced by a regional Statement of Intent for Carers.

The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 was repealed following introduction of the Act 2014. A new national plan for carers was recently published by Welsh Government, with the public engagement due to end in January 2021. Once confirmed a Regional Action plan will be required to implement the national priorities and recommendations established in the new national plan.

A Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group was established to monitor the implementation of the Statement of Intent and promote the integration of services for Carers, as required by Part 9 of the Act 2014.

Welsh Government provided transitional funding of £1million per annum for Wales in 2020/21 (£161k for Cwm Taf Morgannwg) to protect and build on progress to date and to support the expansion of carers rights under the implementation of the Act 2014.

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF CARERS SUPPORT PROJECT**

### **Project statistics**

<b>CSP statistics (Apr 2020 - Jan 2021)</b>	
Number of referrals	159
Number of events	39
Number of carer attendances at events	342
Carer Emergency Card applications	18
Leisure Card Discount applications	7
Max Card applications	9

Please see Appendix 1 for some of the feedback received from carers during the year.

## **Activities**

The CSP continued to provide information and assistance online and via telephone during the first lockdown in March. A special Covid-19 edition of Carers News was distributed in June containing a wealth of advice, support and information. Carers who were struggling or known to be especially vulnerable were contacted on a weekly basis by project staff between March and July.

Once staff were equipped to work from home an ambitious programme of online events was published in the Carers News in September. This included our regular monthly social sessions delivered via Zoom, as well as special cooking workshops with ingredients delivered, crafting events with materials provided and a 10-week wellness course. There was also an afternoon tea for Carers Rights Day in November and Get Fit sessions delivered by the Council's leisure team. The various packs offered by the project – such as Boredom Buster packs, Movies and Munchies packs, art packs and wellbeing packs.

Other key achievements include:

- A new 'Listening Ear' Project has been offered to Carers, whereby a member of the Project is available for a one-to-one telephone conversation to discuss, needs and concerns.
- A 10-week course called "Lifestyle with Lynds" has proved extremely successful, particularly as a pilot programme for using WhatsApp to engage with carers. What started as more of a fitness/health challenge, evolved into increasing motivation, setting personal challenges and forging new friendships. The WhatsApp Group has been 'handed over' to the carers, and they are continuing to support each other.
- The Schools Award was re-introduced in September to ensure young carers are identified and supported in school.
- The Express Yourself Project encouraged Carers to submit their creative work which showed their experienced of Covid – some of which has been showcased in Spring 2021 Carers News.
- One-to-one Zoom training sessions made available to carers by CSP Staff, to encourage their involvement in CSP events and overcome digital challenges.
- Provided 10-week Look Lively exercise classes with Rhondda Cynon Taf Sports during Autumn 2020. A new scheme Active Together is due to start 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.
- Easter Family Bunny Boxes available from 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
- Listen to Action task and finish group has been developed to progress recommendations from the Carers Listening Project on behalf of the Together for Mental Health Programme Board.
- Nominate a Carer scheme established to highlight and reward unpaid carers.
- CSP are currently running an engagement survey to establish what carers need in terms of support going forward.

An issue of Carers News was distributed in January with a similar programme of events until April 2021. The project's events and activities will continue to run online for the foreseeable future and the long-term aim is to provide a mix of online and face-to-face support. The impact on carers of moving support online is currently being

researched through a survey and several focussed interviews and this will hopefully give a clear picture of the benefits and challenges for carers.

### **Happy @ Home grant**

The project is also administering a Happy @ Home grant, funded by the Winter Pressure grant, allowing carers to apply for up to £300 worth of items to support their wellbeing at home. This could include items such as cookers and beds, technology such as tablets, subscriptions, equipment etc. The grant has proved hugely popular so far and 75 applications have so far been received with more expected before the closing date in mid-February.

### **Carers Hub**

Following the closure of Heddfan and a move to the old housing advice office, the Carers Support Project office in Gelliwastad Road required refurbishment in order to accommodate additional staff from Action for Children (the commissioned young carers support service) and make it suitable as a permanent office space. The Council invested in the refurbishment, installing a kitchen and re-designing the room layout to allow Action for Children their own room within the office.

This was achieved through a capital grant via the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) to allow the newly refurbished office to be used as a Carers Hub for carers of all ages in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Items such as soft seating, a projector and screen, tables and chairs, soft furnishings, external signage and window transfers, a TV and kitchenware was funded by the grant to allow workshops, social events, skills sessions and young carer groups to use the space on a regular basis once restrictions allow.

### **Carer Counselling Service**

The Carers Counselling Service, commissioned via Impact Counselling, has been provided via telephone since March 2020 and has experienced high demand this year, particularly after the summer:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Attended</b>	<b>DNA</b>	<b>Cancelled</b>	<b>Closed</b>
April	8	26	5	0	5
May	2	27	5	0	8
June	0	32	0	1	4
July	21	28	3	1	8
August	11	17	3	2	3
September	11	30	8	0	5
October	6	24	4	0	5
November	6	32	1	0	3
December	4	17	0	0	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	69	233	29	4	48

As psychological support for carers continues to be in high demand, with the waiting time exceeding 20 weeks for much of the year to date, the project successfully bid for an additional £5,000 from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg regional carers grant in order to support existing counselling services for carers in the borough until March 2021. This is helping to reduce the waiting time in the short term, although it's likely the demand

for this service will remain high in 2021/2022 considering the widespread adverse effects the pandemic has had on carer wellbeing.

The counselling service anecdotally noted the below trends during the year:

- Anxiety and depression levels exacerbated.
- Carers feeling alone/isolated.
- Services/support not available/not knowing what was available.
- Grief and loss exacerbated due to lockdown and not seeing loved ones in hospital or care home.
- Finding it more difficult to cope.
- Feelings of powerlessness/hopelessness increased.

### **Personal protective equipment (PPE) for carers**

The Welsh Government have tasked local authorities with ensuring unpaid carers have access to PPE. This has been administered by the CSP team throughout the pandemic with carers completing a short form detailing what they require. The PPE can then be collected from a council office.

### **YOUNG ADULT CARER SERVICE**

The Young Adult Carer (YAC) Service has a dedicated part-time worker who is funded via a Families First grant. The worker is responsible for assessing the members of the group, which is currently 84, to provide evidence of how the service helps them develop resilience and mental wellbeing. The aim of the service is to support YACs with personal growth through educational workshops and some social events. It also provides a break from the caring role and a chance to learn new skills.

The service has been delivered exclusively online from March 2020 and young adult carers (YACs) have been provided with information and assistance via their closed Facebook group. Several events have taken place to help support YACs through this difficult time and provide some light relief from caring, including mindfulness sessions, yoga, baking workshops, anxiety workshops and quiz nights.

The YAC service also supports the Caring and Supporting Each Other (CASE) group, which was set up as a charitable community interest group by the YACs. The CASE group has successfully applied for funding from the regional carers grant to allow them to organise a programme of educational and skills workshops this year, including a wellbeing festival, cooking skills, budgeting workshops, CV writing and how to write grant applications.

### **CARER CONVERSATIONS**

In total, 245 carer assessments (also referred to as Carer Conversations) were completed between April and December 2020. That's an increase of nearly 7% compared to the same period in 2019 – the number of assessments completed between April and December was 228.

Following extensive engagement work with carers and staff, a pilot project was launched in December 2019 across Care and Support, Short Term Intervention, Disabled Children's Team and Learning Disabilities and Mental Health, to improve practice around statutory carer assessments and increase the uptake of this active offer among carers. Carer assessments were renamed Carer Conversations as carers felt the term "assessment" was unhelpful and acted as a barrier. New guidance was produced for practitioners, closely linking relevant questions for carers and their circumstances to the existing statutory assessment process.

An audit of the Carer Conversation pilot was carried out in December. Staff and carers in the sample were approached for their feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive (see Appendix 1).

The audit report highlighted some excellent practice, including:

In 92% of the assessments there was evidence that carers discussed their needs and wishes to achieve a life alongside caring. This is an important national priority identified by the Welsh Government. Linked to this, the barriers faced to achieve a life alongside caring were also discussed in 80% of cases.

There was also extensive evidence of discussion around the carer's own health and wellbeing in the assessments: The impact of caring on own health and wellbeing was discussed in 80% of cases; the management of the carer's own health was evidenced in 80% of the assessments and the potential effect on health, wellbeing and family life of not achieving identified personal outcomes (such as a life alongside caring), was discussed in 88% of the sampled cases.

Reassuringly, there was evidence in 80% of assessments that information and advice was offered or given to the carer.

Areas of improvement included:

- Arguably the most pressing area of improvement was the need to consider contingency or emergency plans during the assessments. There was evidence of this in only 40% of the sample.
- Similarly, consideration to the sustainability of the caring role (how long the carer can continue caring) was only evidenced in 40% of cases.
- The long-term plan for the Carer Conversation project is to adopt the approach as the preferred method for carrying out carer assessments across social services. Following the audit we are able to develop a training programme for staff and complete an improvement plan to address the areas of development identified above. Work will also continue to ensure the Carer conversation approach is promoted and highlighted to staff going forward to maintain momentum and capture new starters.

## **SERVICE LINES**

### **Sitting and respite services**

With many regular support services closing or reducing due to the pandemic, the Council were required to support carers in different ways. The table below outlines the respite and sitting services offered between April and December 2020.

A year-on-year comparison shows a significant decrease in numbers accessing these services. Of note the pandemic and the risks of accessing respite has led to people accessing services for critical needs only.

Service <sup>1</sup>	Clients Apr-Dec 2020	Clients Apr-Dec 2019
Placement - RCT - Nursing - Respite	11	39
Placement - RCT - Residential - Respite	136	441
Service - RCT - Domiciliary Care - Day Sitting	13	32
Service - RCT - Domiciliary Care - Night Sitting	1	3

### Learning disabilities

Across our day services for people with a learning disability 68 people have attended throughout the period. They are offered between one and five days dependant on need. All the people attending were offered a service to support their carers in their caring role. People attending are complex and would have been assessed as in critical need of the service to ensure the risk of attending was warranted

### Day services

The Older People's Day Service has provided outreach support to 11 people within the community over the last year who have been deemed by the care and support teams as high priority. These visits last for approximately two hours and occur once a week. The reasoning for a visit can vary but generally it is to relieve the carer whose situation is considered as critical and where the care plan is at risk of breaking down

The outreach service is participant led, where staff empower people to participate in several activities to promote both mental stimulation and/or physical activity. This might include chatting and reminiscing or games etc. whatever the individual desires. This support provides valuable respite for carers which enables them to take a break, recharge and have some time for themselves. During this unprecedented time the combination of lockdown restrictions and temporary closure of day centres has meant that some people have limited social interaction. Consequently, during each outreach visit staff endeavour to comfort both the people receiving care and their family members where they may be feeling low, anxious or in need of further support.

Day Service outreach staff monitor and report any changes or emerging concerns to the Care and Support Teams so that potential problems are addressed at the appropriate time.

Currently 22 people are rostered to attend the Cwmni Dda (dementia) Day Centre as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> All data extracted from WCCIS

- 11 people have x 2 sessions (weekly)
- 11 people have x 1 session (weekly)
- 1 person x 1 outreach session (weekly)

The number of people who can attend the centre at any one time is limited due to social distancing and national restrictions. Attendance has lowered lately as some attendees are receiving specialist respite services, whilst others are either in hospital or are unwell. Due to limitations regarding the availability of residential respite options the centre continues to operate to provide carers with a valuable break during this challenging time.

Specific support in the community from Cwmni Dda is only provided in exceptional circumstances, however, advice and support has been offered over the phone to family carers when required.

### **Health-run dementia day units**

Some Council staff work within the above units. Prior to the units closing for patient attendance due to the tier 4 restrictions, 6 patients a day were attending (due to social distancing). There were approximately 30 patients in each day unit so around 60 people being supported for Rhondda and Taf.

### **CARER FRIENDLY EMPLOYER ACCREDITATION**

We are scoping the possibility of achieving the Carer Friendly Employer accreditation, awarded by the Carers Trust South East Wales, in order to support working carers. This will require coordinated effort across all areas of the Council in order to adopt a Carers Policy for staff, maintain a staff carers network, ensure carers within the workforce are identified and supported and that all staff receive carer awareness training.

## APPENDIX 1

### Comments received by CSP

30m · 🌐

I've been caring for my husband for over 20 years. when I found the project it really helped me focus on different activities/events/classes I have been attending these for about 20 years. you get the chance to meet people who are going through the same as yourself. I have made lots of friends during this time. even now with the pandemic we meet up through zoom. we need this now more than ever. the team are all fabulous and will help you if it is within their power.

 Start a private conversation with Allyson Tantum in Messenger.

[Message](#)

Thankyou Jodie and Steph for a jolly session I'm really enjoying it I haven't laughed and had so much fun for years I just wish my arms legs +hips would coordinate 😊





👍 1 2 Comments

 Like  Comment  Share 

Most Relevant ▾

 Comment as Cynllun Cynnal y Cynhalwyr / Rhondda Cyn... 🗨️ 📷 📧 🗑️

 **Veronica Preece**  
Thank you for a really nice afternoon tea very much appreciated❤️ missed everyone today. You put a lot of thought into the afternoon tea it was very kind of you. A big thank you to all of you xxx🥰

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · 1h  1

Most Relevant is selected, so some replies may have been filtered out.

12:01, 1 Dec

Claire and Rebecca thank-you for this morning we really enjoyed ourselves talking to you all even people we don't know 👍👏 if you get any cancellations to your group's let me know we would like to join in more if u got space we on reserve list for get busy with becs 17Dec thank-you both for this morning you really uplifted me first time in a long time 😊 xx



Thank you so much for movie and munch package much appreciated beautiful basket put together and delivered by lovely lady xx



Write a reply...

Hi,

Thought I'd drop you a line to say how I've really enjoyed these sessions with Lyndsie and all the other lovely ladies of our group.

She gave me motivation to get out there and walk, the Fitbit helped and gave me more inspiration to beat my steps from the day before.

It was hard at first because I had a call and broke some ribs, which was painful to walk.

But got there in the end. Tgen when the bad weather came in Lynds gave us suggestions to look around our homes to find something that you have been meaning to do but Bern putting it off.

I now have a new kitchen, and only the cost of paint etc plus a lot of elbow grease. Looks fan I must say. 😊

Then my next challenge was to clear out all the wardrobes x 3 and drawers x 9 and donate to charity shop and recycle to a friend.

I also have a leather suite I'm donating to BHF to sell on and funds go straight back into BHF.

I now feel that I gave helped others and also myself. I am less stressed, not so lonely, anxiety levels are down, and a lot fitter.

And this is all thanks to Lynds and the Carers Project.

Kindest regards

### Feedback received during the Carer Conversation audit

“[The Carer Conversation made] a massive difference – because I have equipment available to help my mother in law this has enabled me to return to sleep upstairs, therefore I am having a more restful sleep. I also felt the needs I identified were understood.” (Carer)

“She [the assessor] was really easy to talk to, gave me information and put things into place for us as a family. She was patient with my son who finds it hard to engage and went the extra mile.” (Carer)

“[The Carer Conversation] made me realise there was plenty of help and support available. Helped me to realise I needed support as a carer.” (Carer)

“It allows me to gather additional information that I maybe would not thought of asking certain questions while assessing, prior to working with the guidance.” (Staff)

“I feel it also provides you with guidance to ask about financial implications that their caring role is having on them and discussing their own personal outcomes should it be returning to work themselves and how this can be achieved. Prior to this guidance this may not have been discussed as you can tend to focus on only the care being provided.” (Staff)

“Makes me focus more on the carer and not the cared for individual. Also gives me the carer’s own words and feelings.” (Staff)

“It has made me more confident when completing carer conversations, and basically not afraid to touch on sensitive matters as being a carer is sometimes not a chosen path for some people.” (Staff)

“It was informative, it helped me with what questions to ask the carer. I feel it gave me the first steps which led to other questions about the carers individual caring role, I feel I may have not explored certain area if I didn’t have this guidance. I have since done a few more assessments using this as a tool and find it very useful.” (Staff)