

A HEALTHIER WEST WALES:

West Wales Carers Development Group

Annual Report

2020-21



Introduction

This report summarises the activity of the West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG) during the period 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021. The WWCDG is a formal sub-group of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB) which includes representatives of Hywel Dda University Health Board (Health Board), the three Local Authorities of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, as well as Third and Voluntary sector organisations, and representatives of service users and Carers in West Wales.

This report provides an overview of the work which has been taken forward utilising the Carers funding provided by Welsh Government to Health Boards, the Integrated Care Fund and core funding from partner organisations, 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. Welsh Government set out their expectation that health, local authorities and the third sector will work in partnership to support Carers under the Act by:

- Supporting life alongside caring - providing opportunities for Carers to have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring.
- Identifying and recognising Carers - improving Carers recognition of their role and ensuring they can access the right support.
- Providing information, advice and assistance - providing appropriate advice where and when Carers need it.

Responding to the requirements above form the basis of this Carers Annual Report 2020/21, which provides evidence of progress against each of these areas and the benefit experienced by Carers.

The Needs of Carers in West Wales

The West Wales RPB published its first Population Assessment for West Wales in April 2017, and following this developed the West Wales Area Plan 2018-2023. 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 recent work to develop a regional Carers Strategy for West Wales.

The 2011 Census indicated that there are more than 370,000 unpaid Carers of all ages in Wales and experts have calculated that Welsh Carers contributed the equivalent of around £8.1 billion to the Welsh economy in each year. These figures include anyone caring for as little as an hour a week. Most people who spend only very limited time on caring will not require any additional support. However, Wales also has the highest proportion of older Carers and Carers providing more than 50 hours of care a week.

Within the West Wales population of 348,000, the 2011 Census indicated there are approximately 47,000 Carers but we know that this is likely to be much higher given that people do not always recognise themselves as Carers. Previously, around 9,000 adult Carers and over 400 Young Carers had been identified via GP practices, social services and education settings in West Wales. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen an increase in the self-identification of unpaid Carers and a National Survey for Wales report in June 2020 showed a 35% increase in the number of individuals who said they look after or give help and support to family members, friends and neighbours.

The Health Board has been proactive in supporting unpaid Carers with access to Covid Testing and more recently supporting the identification of unpaid Carers as part of their eligibility for Covid vaccination. This has resulted in over 2,600 unpaid Carers self-identifying themselves to the Health Board who have not previously registered as a Carer with their GP practice. As part of the Health Boards action to make every contact count, the Health Board Carers Team provided follow up information to each newly identified Carer including information about third sector Carers support services and the Introduction to Looking After Me courses delivered by the Education Programme for Patients.

Carers Information and Support Service across West Wales have seen increases in the number of requests for support. In Carmarthenshire, Carers Trust Crossroads Mid and West Wales reported that during 2020/21 the number of Carers had increased by 31%, from 4,613 to 6071. Hafal Crossroads who provide information and support in Pembrokeshire saw the number of Carers registered increase from 2,570 to 2,918 and Ceredigion Carers Unit saw a rise of 267 Carers, taking them from 825 Carers to 1092.

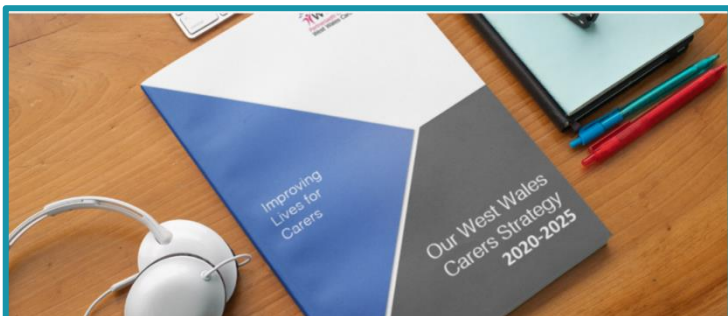
In West Wales, the local authorities and third sector organisations have responded very well to the Covid-19 pandemic, quickly adapting their services and in some cases moving activities online. For example, the Newport Carers group in Pembrokeshire went from meeting face to face to meeting on Zoom supported by a Community Connector. As a result the Carers group became more accessible to Carers across the County, attracting new Carers looking for online peer support. Another example is Ceredigion Carers Unit who provided a full programme of workshops, training and discussions around Carers rights over the last six months of 2020-21. This followed on from the successful online training and activities provided for Carers week when 147 Carers took part in 20 training courses.

All young Carers services have continued to operate and adapted ways of working, utilising Zoom, WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams. Regular contact has been maintained with young Carers and their families to address issues. Whilst the majority of contacts have been virtual, socially distanced walks and home visits have been undertaken where national guidance allowed. Group sessions have been run online but take up has been low, with young people stating that they would rather meet in person. All services have observed a decline in both young people's and parents mental health over the year and services have responded by offering appropriate support.

Key Developments & Progress – 2020/21

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


During the course of 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 next four years. Throughout our Carers strategy, we have used the ‘Teulu Jones’ family members to help us think about how our priorities could make a difference to Carers in our communities. ‘Teulu Jones’ aren’t a real family but they have been designed to be typical of some of the people living in the Hywel Dda area and the types of caring roles within families.


OUR FOUR PRIORITY AREAS:




1. Improve the early identification and self-identification of Carers, including Young Carers and Young Adult Carers.

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

3. Support Carers to access and maintain education, training and employment opportunities.



4. Support Carers to become digitally included.



The following sections of this report outline the ways in which we have been delivering on these priorities and the difference they have made to those with Caring responsibilities.

Spotlight on the 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. IiC provides the foundation for work with health professionals in primary, community and acute hospital settings to raise awareness of the needs of Carers. However, unlike some other areas, IiC 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.

The IiC Scheme now enables settings to progress through three levels; bronze, silver and gold and during the year progress was made to establish an on-line 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.

What's been achieved during 2020/21

- **12** settings achieved a new Investors in Carers Award (**9** achieved their Bronze level, **2** achieved Silver and **1** achieved Gold level). **4** settings also achieved their bronze revalidations.
- Another **44** settings are currently working on their bronze, with **6** settings working towards Silver and **2** working towards their Gold. In total (since March, 2013) 95 settings have achieved bronze IiC awards, 8 Silver and 3 at Gold
- Some settings have had to re-prioritise due to the pandemic however support is being given to **87** settings in different ways to continue with either working towards an accreditation or to maintain their existing level.
- **2309** Carers have registered with GP surgeries across the health board area (bringing the cumulative total of carers registered with GP surgeries to **10792**).
- **1087** Carers were referred to the Carers information service via the GP surgery registration and referral process (bringing the cumulative total of referrals by GP surgeries to **5582**).
- The number of Carers registered with the GP increased during March 2021 as a result of a health board campaign to identify unpaid Carers for vaccination. In addition, over **2,600** unpaid Carers were identified in April - May 2021 which are not reflected in the above figures.



Crossroads Sir Gar receiving their Gold level certificate and plaque at a socially distanced presentation.



Pembrokeshire College the first to submit their bronze level evidence electronically.

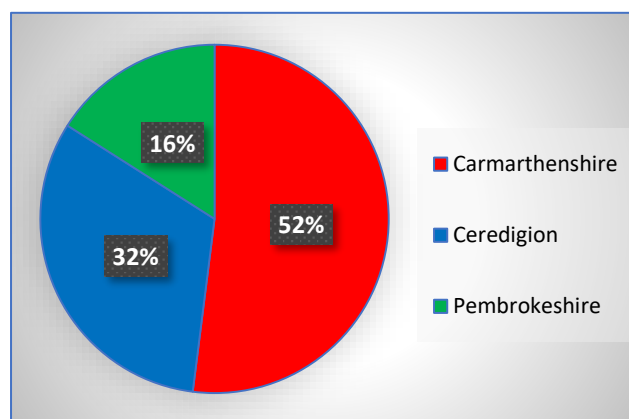
Carer Lead events

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 in order to bring different settings together providing an opportunity for peer support, joint learning and updating on new local initiatives. In November 2020, to support Carers Rights day, three sessions were delivered via MS Teams to 32 Carer Leads.

Since January 2021 another seven events have taken place with a total of 84 attendees from the three counties.

Feedback from participants include:
'I thoroughly enjoyed it and looking forward to getting our bronze and then onto our silver.'

"Having conversations this afternoon online has got me thinking about what evidence I need for my folder, what I need to do for our Carers, what I need to do for our staff; and it brings it back up on the list of priorities"



Making a difference to Carers

1. Improve the early identification and self-identification of Carers, including Young Carers and Young Adult Carers.

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



"To be honest I've never thought of myself as a Carer. After all, they are my parents and looking after them as they get older is just what you do. I got talking to a staff member at my local library about mum and they made me realise I was actually a Carer, they gave me lots of information on help and support available"



Spotlight on links to statutory and commissioned services

In Ceredigion the County Council Carers Unit provides the Carers Information Service and works closely with other departments within the Council, in particular social care. During lockdown some Carers were experiencing difficulties accessing essential shopping. In response, the Ceredigion Carers Unit developed an Adult Carers Card which was recognised by all major supermarkets when offering preferential shopping and delivery slots. Work is now progressing to implement this regionally.

Despite the difficulties presented with home working during the pandemic, the links with commissioned service providers have been strengthened through attending each other's meetings via on-line methods. At the beginning of pandemic the local authority and commissioned services worked together to ensure all Carers known to the local authority were offered Welfare Calls. In addition, over 800 welfare bags were delivered to Carers during Carers Week as part a partnership between the local authority library van drivers and leisure staff and commissioned services.

In Carmarthenshire, the Young Carer and Young Adult Carer steering group has continued to meet on a regular basis to share information and address any unmet needs. A Young Carer grants programme was successfully established and 68 young Carers were awarded support through this scheme. Grants were requested for a variety of purposes including: Food vouchers; laptops; tablets; bikes; TVs; webcams; bedroom furniture; sensory equipment etc. Carers in Carmarthenshire have been supported to access funding to enable alternative approaches to accessing a break from their caring role. This flexibility gave people choice and opportunity to be creative to respond to their individual circumstances.

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One young Carer aged 12-18 spends 21-35 hours a week caring for a parent with multiple disabilities and mental health ill health. A grant of £225.97 was approved to purchase a dressing table and a printer.



“The printer has helped my daughter in so many ways. She can do school work, and print art. She can research new make-up techniques and photo and film techniques. She loves the new dressing table and uses it to practice make-up as she wants to be a makeup artist. These items have definitely lifted her spirits and are a great help. Thank you.”



Spotlight on discharge from hospital planning

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). Carer Officers (who are third sector employees) have been based in 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. They also work closely with the Family Liaison Officers in each hospital who refer patients and their families to the Carer Officers. 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.

The Carer Aware e-learning was launched in November 2018 by Social Care Wales has been cascaded out to staff working in statutory and non-statutory services via a number of different means. During 2020/21 164 staff in Hywel Dda completed the e-learning, along with 80 colleagues in Ceredigion County Council.

What's been achieved during 2020/21

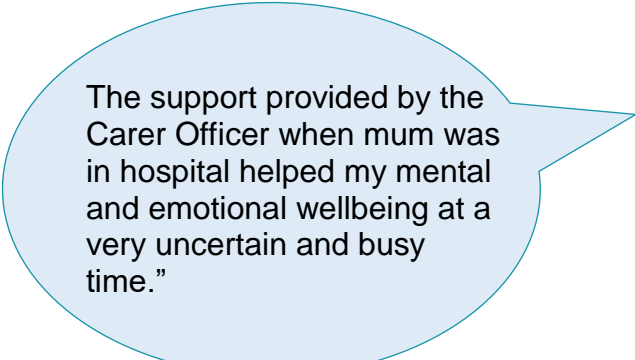
The Carer Officers:

- Supported **303** Carers as part of the discharge planning process for their family member
- Responded to **199** enquiries from ward staff and undertook **270** ward visits
- Distributed **481** hospital information packs and **118** carer information packs
- Delivered **105** Valuing Carers awareness sessions to **587** staff

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The support provided by the Carer Officer when mum was in hospital helped my mental and emotional wellbeing at a very uncertain and busy time."






Spotlight on supporting Young Carers

Recognising Young Carers

Ceredigion County Council has worked with Carers Trust Wales to launch the Welsh Government funded Young Carers Card. Work is progressing with partners across West Wales to share learning and offer support to enable neighbouring counties to develop a card that will align and create some consistency for young Carers. A regional ID card is also being considered.

As part of Young Carers action day Ceredigion launched their first young Carers Newsletter, distributed to those young Carers registered with the information service as well as those receiving support from Action for Children, the commissioned service for Young Carers in Ceredigion.



The Wellbeing toolkit couldn't have come at a better time for my son Ben. He loved it, thank you."



Supporting Young and Young Adult Carers

The Health Board funded Crossroads Sir Gar to deliver increased support for young Carers and Young Adult Carers. This was the first time sessions had been delivered to a wide age range from 5-25 years old. In total 123 attendees participated and the sessions were hugely popular and engaged Carers who were previously not attending Zoom sessions.

Action for Children with support from the Health Board have developed a new Wellbeing toolkit for all young Carers and young adult Carers in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. This tool kit is designed to help find new ways of supporting their own wellbeing. The box contains a pack of cards with different calming activities to do as well as useful websites and contact details for additional support.

In Pembrokeshire, Action for Children worked with Pembrokeshire County Council to provide 148 young Carers with Christmas vouchers, family Christmas hampers and toys.

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Spotlight on Carers Resilience

The Health Board has been working closely with the Education Programme for Patients (EPP) team to promote the Introduction to Looking after Me (I2LAM) courses for Carers across the region. The aim of this programme is to give Carers the opportunity to learn skills to enable them to take care of their own health whilst caring for someone else, or support Carers to make plans for the future.

Ceredigion County Council have been leading on a regional project to roll-out the Carers Resilience & Well-Being (CR&WB) programme. Previously this was delivered in a traditional face-to-face setting, but during the year this has been rewritten in order to be delivered interactively online also. A range of modules have been developed including; Young Carers 8-13, Young Carers 14–17, Adult Carers in the community, Train the Facilitator and Resilience and Wellbeing Taster sessions.

The Carers Resilience Project was established in partnership with care managers and 3rd sector partners to address the needs and additional pressures encountered by Carers in Carmarthenshire as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and supporting them to continue their caring role. Support initiatives delivered through the project are identified through a ‘What Matters’ conversation with a Key Worker and the outcomes of involvement are measured utilising the Carers Outcome Star. The response takes account of the broad range of services from preventative interventions (e.g. Technology Enabled Care and Carers Emergency Card) that promote long term resilience through to intensive short-term input. The project also provides a safely coordinated pathway to accommodation-based care and support for complex needs (respite).

What’s been achieved during 2020/21

- **4** virtual Looking After Me courses were delivered with **17** carers completing the I2LAM course. **85%** of Carers that attended the said the range of activities provided were good to excellent
- **24** professionals from across the region with responsibility of working with Carers attended a Carers Resilience and Well-being programme taster session and in total the facilitator training course was attended by **16** professionals, with a further **17** professionals on a waiting list for the next course.



“I think the ‘Looking After Me’ course was very good and the guided relaxation exercise at the end will be very beneficial, excellent tutor and everything was well explained”

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Spotlight on Regional Carers Innovation Scheme

The Regional Carers Support Innovation Fund was established in 2020-21 with funding from the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) to offer opportunities for third sector organisations to apply for short term funding to deliver projects that would support Carers across Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. This fund was administered by Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS), in collaboration with Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS) and Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVO). Applications were invited to address key themes aligned to the regional Carers strategy. The fund provided up to 100% of revenue costs and up to £5,000 was awarded for projects in one county area and up to £15,000 for regional projects. Applications had to show clear and direct benefits for unpaid Carers, demonstrate value for money and match funding was encouraged. The safety of Carers was a priority and all projects were asked to take into account the current COVID restrictions.

Outcomes of the scheme

In total, **7** county based projects and **2** regional projects were funded.

- Carers physical fitness support sessions (Hafal, Carmarthenshire)
- Telling the stories of different carer's groups (Radio Aber Ltd)
- Sports reminiscence sessions (Haverfordwest AFC)
- Paid respite for carers (Newport Forum)
- Additional respite sessions (Shalom House)
- Watch me cook and dine with me (The Camomile Club)
- Online sessions for exercise, craft and social (VC Gallery)
- Respite retreat days for carers (Holistic Yoga Care Wales cic)
- Targeted support for older carers (Age Cymru Dyfed)

Online Carers Sessions

EVERY THURSDAY 10.30- 2.30
 10.30 -11.15 Catch Up
 12.00 -12.45 Speaker
 1.15 -2pm Art with Ann Mills
 4th March Daffodil painting



Making a difference to Carers



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



Spotlight on working together to support Carers

- In Pembrokeshire, a Carers Provider Forum was established in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Facilitated by PAVS, membership includes organisations providing, or wishing to provide, services to unpaid Carers of all ages. The Forum aims to enable effective networking and collaboration and make an effective contribution to the planning and delivery of services.
- A Living with Dementia forum was created by PAVS to enable people living with dementia and their Carers to use their valuable experience and knowledge to influence the development of strategies, policies, procedures and decisions relating to dementia services. The group identified Young Onset Dementia (YOD) as an area of focus and held an event to highlight the experiences of people diagnosed with YOD and their Carers. As an outcome of this work it is hoped that a day service specifically for YOD will be developed in West Wales.
- The Community Connectors support a Carers Group in Newport continued to meet online using Zoom and when restrictions eased the group met for regular wellbeing walks in the area.
- Pembrokeshire Dementia Supportive Communities in partnership with the West Wales Walking for Wellbeing project with the National Park has launched several walk and talk dementia supportive groups across the County. The group provides the opportunity for people living with dementia and their Carers to socialise and improve their physical and mental wellbeing.
- In partnership with Strength Academy Wales exercise sessions have also been run to provide people living with dementia and their Carers the opportunity to try out an exercise class.
- Ceredigion's Carers Alliance has continued to go from strength to strength in working together to ensure there has been a large offer of support activities for Carers and maintaining a sharing of information amongst all its partners, which include 3rd sector organizations, health and local authority representatives. The alliance was a major contributor to the counties' and regional response to the Welsh Governments consultation on the National plan for carers.



"After so much time feeling isolated this year, it was great for our wellbeing to meet the group and take regular walks"

Making a difference to Carers

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Spotlight on 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.

Hywel Dda University Health Board developed a Task and Finish group to take forward a number of internal initiatives including:

- Achievement of Employers for Carers Confident Level 1
- Approval of a Health Board Carers Policy for staff
- Encouraging staff with caring responsibilities to share their views and experiences via a staff survey which gained responses from 88 staff
- Introduction of Staff Carer Peer Support Group sessions. Staff who have benefited from our Carer Peer Support Group Sessions talk about their experience in this video:


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAzzbtUAfLQ>

Ceredigion County Council are progressing a Carers policy which will include the introduction of the Carers Passport and the added provision of 5 paid days of Carers Leave. Guidance for managers and Carers has been written for this policy and will go to scrutiny and cabinet in May 2021 with the launch of the policy due to be held during Carers week in June 2021. In the meantime the Carers Unit, jointly with Human Resources, have introduced monthly online drop in sessions for employee Carers.




“I am a Carer, and I joined the Peer Support Group and I found it really helpful. I was a little shy at first and unsure if I'd be able to speak and I was slightly emotional hearing others speak about their experience, but it was wonderful to realise that I'm not alone and that I can connect with others who understand, who get it. So, I did speak, and I felt better for it.”

Making a difference to Carers



3. Support Carers to access and maintain education, training and employment opportunities.



Spotlight on Digital Inclusion

The pandemic has resulted in an increased use of digital methods of communication with Carers and many support services have been operating 'virtually'. Some examples of this are shown below.

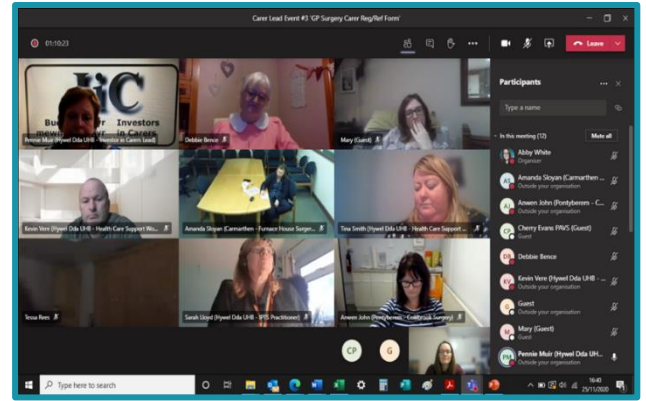
The Pembrokeshire Digital Connections partnership was formed during the pandemic to support people, including unpaid Carers, to access digital equipment and technology. This partnership includes the Local Authority, Health Board, PAVS, DELTA Wellbeing and Digital Communities Wales. Chromebooks were distributed to young Carers aged 16 – 20 in collaboration with young Carer support services.

The summer edition of the Ceredigion Carers Magazine, focused on the benefits of digital technology for Carers with advice and guides for Carers of all ages. Articles included:

- A Delta Connect case study of one of their service users who was benefiting from their wellbeing calls and how he uses a red button lifeline
- NHS apps and web links to enable Carers to seek help to support health and wellbeing
- An explanation of video calling services and a 'how to' guide
- Age UK's top tips for supporting friends and family who are new to using devices and technology
- Details of impartial organisations who can assist people to get online
- Positive ideas for Young Carers to stay connected during lockdown

The Pembrokeshire Community Connector service were successful in applying for GP Cluster funding to develop a digital tablet loan scheme - Connect IT. 100 tablets were loaned out to people registered with a GP in Pembrokeshire, including unpaid Carers.

The liC team have delivered a number of online Carer Awareness training sessions which complement the Social Care Wales e-learning programme by building on this content and offer local context and information. The pandemic has enabled the team to embrace technology by using MS Teams video sessions which have increased engagement across the region. In total 54 sessions were delivered with 329 people attending. Feedback has suggested that there has been a 100% increase in participant's knowledge on the areas covered in the session: who are Carers, issues they face, the liC scheme and the GP Surgery Carer registration/referral form and process.



“Very informative and a great insight for an organisation working towards Bronze. We will certainly look at the Silver Award in time.”

Coleg Ceredigion adapted their Carer Partnership Scheme in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and Coleg Ceredigion students supported Carers Week in a variety of ways including:

- Developing an opening video of support for Carers by Coleg Ceredigion students to make Carers more visible online and raise awareness of Carers Week.
- Creating a Coleg Ceredigion's general knowledge quiz
- Holding a “Raise a cuppa” (social media campaign) to acknowledge the fantastic job that Carers are all doing.

All partners have made use of digital means and social media to post a number of Carer videos stories during Carers week 2020.

Pembrokeshire County Council delivered a Facebook Live Q&A session around employment rights and getting back into work. In Carmarthenshire, third sector partners have found new and different ways to deliver their services to Carers as a response to Covid-19. Age Cymru have provided a Digital Inclusion project, ensuring that there was appropriate and reliable support for people to access information and opportunities online.

In addition, an online recording of ‘An informative overview of ‘Carers Rights and the Law’ by Professor Luke Clements’ which made available for anyone across the region. Ceredigion Carers Unit also offered 3 live online sessions with Luke Clements; Carers rights, Carers rights for parent Carers and Carers rights for Professionals working with Carers.

Making a difference to Carers



Priorities for 2021/2022

Carers and the Carers' agenda has been established a priority within the Area Plan for West Wales. The Regional Partnership Board has adopted Carers as an integral priority, particularly recognising the cross-cutting impact and links across all its key programmes of work.

The key actions of our regional Carers strategy are based on the views and feedback from Carers and key stakeholders and we will continue to work to implement the principles which will underpin the regional strategy:

- 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 A Healthier West Wales Transformation Programme

Some of our priorities for 2021/22 include:

1. Leading a review of the Carers needs assessment drawing on existing and new data and evidence to inform a refresh of the West Wales Population Needs Assessment.
2. Continuing to develop the 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.
3. Reviewing the support offered to Young Carers in West Wales and engaging Young Carers in the process to ensure a best practice innovative service is recommissioned for 2022/23.
4. Rollout the Resilience and Well-being facilitator training, to extend the support offered to those in employment with a caring role. This will coincide with the launch of the Ceredigion Local authority's Carer's policy in June 2021.
5. Actively promote the regional Employers for Carers membership, focusing in particular on working collaboratively with other public sector services as well as small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).
6. Continuing to encourage involvement in the Investors in Carers accreditation scheme and support progression through the award levels.
7. Work with others, including commissioned services to maximise the potential of digital services.

Conclusion

Carers are a fundamental focus within the West Wales Area Plan 2018-2023 which sets out our communities needs across West Wales and how we will work in partnership to respond to these. We are facing unprecedented changes in Health and Social Care and with an aging population, as well as the need to deliver services differently in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the number of unpaid Carers who have self-identified themselves has increased significantly during the year. 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 their health and social care journey.

This Annual Report has provided an overview of the wide range of activity which has been on-going 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, ICF 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.