

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE**

**3 DECEMBER 2020**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING**  
**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND LOCKDOWN ON PEOPLE WITH CARING RESPONSIBILITIES**

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on people with caring responsibilities and the additional support that has been available during the pandemic.

**2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities**

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The rights of unpaid carers have been recognised by Welsh Government within the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 which came into force in 2016. This gave carers an equal right to have their needs assessed to those that they care for.
- 3.2 In 2017, this commitment to carers was re-affirmed with the announcement of three ministerial priorities:
- Priority One – Identifying and recognising carers:
  - Priority Two – Supporting a life alongside caring;

- Priority Three – Providing information, advice and assistance.

- 3.3 The Carers Trust, in its Carers Week 2020 research report, suggests that there has been an increase in unpaid carers in Wales with unpaid carers amounting to one in four people – an indicative 196,000 additional unpaid carers in Wales since the coronavirus outbreak. Within the context of Bridgend, local estimates would indicate the population could include 24,300 adult carers and 2,700 ‘young carers’ and it is recognised that these estimates may be conservative.
- 3.4 There will be many people providing unpaid care for an ill, older or disabled family member or friend and a large number may not identify themselves as unpaid carers. The amount and type of support that is provided will vary considerably and can range from assistance with daily tasks (e.g. shopping) to providing extensive emotional or personal care.
- 3.5 Carers Trust have suggested that in addition to a national growth in the number of unpaid carers due to the pandemic, there has been a growth in the challenges that many have faced due to lockdown.

#### **4. Current situation/proposal**

- 4.1 It is reasonable to assume that the challenges faced by carers across Wales will also have arisen in Bridgend. The report describes the range of services and support that may have been of assistance in Bridgend.
- 4.2 Carers Trust research identified the following challenges to unpaid carers identified across Wales:-
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|--|-----|
| • Not being able to take time away from caring         | 74% |
| • Managing stress and responsibility                   | 73% |
| • Negative impacts on physical and mental health       | 73% |
| • Impact on other personal relationships               | 65% |
| • Financial impact of additional care costs            | 53% |
| • Negative impact on ability to do paid work           | 50% |
| • Not having anyone to talk to about caring challenges | 46% |
- 4.3 BCBC has representation at the Welsh Government ministerial advisory group, the All Wales Carers Officers Learning and Improvement network and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Carers partnership group. This ensures that the local voices of carers can contribute to identifying what is needed and the resources to support this.
- 4.4 To support the 3 ministerial priorities for carers, a £1 million allocation is made to regional carer partnership boards and for 2020-21 an additional £1 million Covid Support Fund for carers has been established.
- 4.5 During the period of national lockdown and beyond, the Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service has continued to be operated by Carers Trust South East Wales (CTSEW) with the following aims to support life alongside caring:-

- Build and maintain emotional resilience;
- Maintaining physical and mental health;
- Accessing education, training and employment;
- Building and developing relationships with family;
- Understanding and applying for welfare and benefits and entitlements;
- Improving financial and housing situations;
- Distribution of a carer's emergency card.

- 4.6 Despite the need to maintain social distancing, the Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service has adapted and worked flexibly to meet carers' needs across Bridgend. This has ensured information, advice and assistance has been provided including digital and telephone communication. The telephone support service has been extended to cover seven day, 24 hour cover with staff available on a rota basis.
- 4.7 The curtailment of carers' assessment has been a national concern for Carers UK but, during lockdown, and in Bridgend, CTSEW have undertaken 293 carers assessments and supported 1217 contacts. Virtual approaches have been used where appropriate to offer 'face to face' carers assessments. There has been close working with BCBC Adult Services to prioritise support. Anecdotal information has suggested some carers have valued the remote support approach.
- 4.8 During the first four months of lockdown CTSEW provided a Carers Emergency Grant Scheme supporting 83 local carers with financial support of up to £300. The key themes of identified needs included food, home supplies, fuel and transport costs. A further round of carers grants will be delivered from December to March along with winter planning support programmes.
- 4.9 CTSEW have also been supporting the operation of a distribution and collection point for personal protective equipment (PPE) which has been another area of national concern for carers and CTSEW have supported a signposting approach by the local authority. Since July the Council has provided 7020 items of PPE to CTSEW to distribute to carers within the County Borough.
- 4.10 The Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service has been able to make virtual sessions and activities available to support social engagement. A series of virtual events to celebrate Carers Rights Day will take place in November in partnership with BCBC and other third sector organisations.
- 4.11 CTSEW has secured investment via WCVA to increase use of volunteers. This will include a specific focus on recruiting befrienders and activity volunteers. This will add value to the work of BAVO and the Community Companions programme.
- 4.12 The work co-produced in partnership with BAVO as part of the transformation programme will have provided significant support to those shielding and with caring responsibilities. During lockdown the Connecting Communities volunteer programme supported 3,484 beneficiaries, (some who received more than one type of support), in the following areas:-

- Shopping support 102 volunteers supported 662 beneficiaries
- Prescriptions support 73 volunteers supported 2261 beneficiaries
- Foodbank support 17 volunteers supported 383 beneficiaries
- Telephone befriending 97 volunteers supported 166 beneficiaries
- Shielding support check-ups 30 volunteers supported 1126 beneficiaries
- In addition 27 volunteers provided pen pal writing support

- 4.13 A new support programme 'Connecting Carers' has been commenced working with Wales Co-operative Centre and Digital Communities Wales in response to the challenges of digital inclusion. In the first phase, 114 carers have been engaged and 4 distinct programmes identified to build carers networks. There are 12 partners working collaboratively.
- 4.14 There have been specific areas of focus developing in partnership with Halo and Awen that can support carers and cared for. The 'feel good for life' programme is supporting people living with dementia and achieved the UK Active Award and concessionary prices have been negotiated for people receiving carers allowance for leisure access. The 'Stronger Together Bridgend' digital platform has promoted carers and related issues relating to lockdown.
- 4.15 Carers Trust have also identified how the pandemic and increased isolation caused by the lockdown have affected the mental health and wellbeing of the UK's young people with caring responsibilities.
- 4.16 The pressures that they identify may have been significantly increased include:-
- 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers indicating mental health is worse;
  - 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers more worried about the future;
  - 66% of young carers and 74% young adult carers feeling more stressed;
  - 69% of both groups feeling less connected to others;
  - Both groups reporting increases in their caring responsibilities.
- 4.17 Young carers support services have continued to be delivered on behalf of BCBC by Action for Children and also information from the Young Carers in Schools project has been circulated by the Director of Education. Carers Trust have identified the need for greater support from education providers to manage caring roles alongside school.
- 4.18 During the first phase of lockdown BCBC and partners recognised the importance of young carers being prioritised in food shopping and provided letters of support following liaison with supermarkets.
- 4.19 BCBC was the first local authority to establish a young carers ID card and this has now become a national scheme. BCBC has secured £14,000 to work with young carers to develop a new approach including advocating the needs of young carers to stakeholders.

- 4.20 Between March and October 2020, 50 young carer assessments were undertaken by BCBC, with a young carer officer in post, and 46 young carers cards were issued. The number of assessments and carers cards issued are less than when compared with last year, but this is likely to be attributable to the limitations on the young carers officer to access these young people in as many ways as usual.
- 4.21 Action for Children have been able to provide financial assistance of up to £250 for young carers and families who were experiencing financial difficulties.
- 4.22 Schools have been very supportive in providing educational support to young carers including provision of laptops to keep up with school work.
- 4.23 BCBC, through working with Digital Communities Wales, have secured 20 chrome books to distribute appropriately including data and tuition for young carers 16-18 years.
- 4.24 To support social connections, services have delivered goody bags and afternoon teas to young carers and there have also been physical activities delivered virtually alongside fun quizzes and cookery sessions.
- 4.25 **Adult Social Care.** In March 2020, Adult Social Care changed its operating procedures to continue to delivery on the statutory services and to respond to the pandemic. This plan has been reviewed and updated frequently throughout the last 8 months. At the core of the services we sought to continue as many services as 'business as usual' and we explored and took opportunities to deliver services in a different way to ensure we adhered to the changing guidance in relation to direct personal care, support to individuals and families and carers, working for home, care home visiting and face to face contact.
- 4.26 Both the in-house and independent residential care staff have been at the forefront of caring for vulnerable people and providing a direct link to family and friends for those residents. Domiciliary care has continued to provide personal care and support for individuals and carers who live in their own homes in the community.
- 4.27 When the decision was made by the Council mid-March 2020, to close our in-house Learning disability respite service, all staff from this service continued to work and were delivering respite in different settings including the person's own home. The service maintained frequent contact with carers and families and provided individuals with one to one support in many circumstances to support the home situation. In August 2020 in line with the easing of lockdown restrictions an operational plan was devised and approved to reopen the service on a limited basis. This plan will continue its current operation and be regularly reviewed.
- 4.28 In March 2020, the adults' day care provision was changed from a building based service to an individual support, which includes welfare calls, support with food and medication and support within people's homes. This was reviewed weekly and adjusted accordingly. Some individuals still attended Bridgend Resource Centre with bespoke packages of care. By making these decisions it did enable us to continue to deliver core services to those most in need. A comprehensive workplace risk assessment was produced and implemented and is being reviewed and revised frequently. In place now:

- The service has established a picture of individuals who would need support in the community, and has scheduled and deployed day service staff in support accordingly. This has been to support carers and individuals. A 'contact, monitor and record' system is in place where day service staff have had regular telephone contact;
- A 'panel' is in place to assess the information provided through the RAG recordings which facilitated decisions on individuals returning to either the Community Hubs or Resource Centre via the 'Best Interests' process. The panel meets weekly and will continue to operate to identify those most in need and action accordingly. The service recovery has been gradual as it needs to assess/evaluate the practical delivery of the support provided;
- All four Community Hubs in addition to Bridgend Resource Centre are now delivering a day service to individuals 5 x days per week. Each service setting is operating at approximately one third capacity (between 10 and 12 individuals at Community Hubs and between 12 and 16 persons at BRC). This is reviewed frequently;
- Support in the community is continuing but this will need to be reviewed regularly as the demand for attendance at day service settings increases;
- The main constraint on the service in moving forward will be to maintain the 2M distancing guidance between individuals who use the service;
- Subsequently the building environments will dictate safe numbers;

**4.29 Social Work Services and Managed Care and Support.** In terms of our social work, assessment, and managed care and support requirement, in the main this has also been business as usual. All adults social work teams have gone through a process of identifying all the people/families/carers known to these teams who are vulnerable or at risk in the current situation:-

- These people/families/carers have been prioritised by the teams and all of them are contacted to check on the situation and provide assistance where needed;
- Where people are in receipt of care and support from direct care services, the LA is able to receive feedback from the support workers and any registered professional involved. Concerns can be resolved or escalated as appropriate;
- Staff are proactively making 'welfare call' to people and their families/carers on open caseload unless requested not to. This approach is to prevent personal, carer or family crisis by adopting an early intervention preventative approach. It is also supportive in nature because people know they can still contact their Social Worker or discuss any concerns rather than waiting for a crisis to happen; examples of feedback and situations are as follows:

*A social work assistant (SWA) had a thank you card from the daughter and main carer of Mrs X. She told the SWA that she really appreciated the welfare calls and that it had really helped her to know that she could call and get information and help during the crisis should she need to.*

and

*A gentleman's wife had weekly welfare calls, that have provided regular support to her as the main carer through a dreadful time in her life (the lock down and husband poorly) and the welfare calls became a life line and an opportunity to enable the carer to share her concerns which enabled the worker to gain an excellent understanding of the barriers experienced. As a result of the regular calls and gathering detailed info the social worker instigated contact with the Palliative Care Team which identified that the gentleman was end of life and the process ensured that he and his wife had timely access to the appropriate support.*

- Home visits are being made as required and risk assessed. So as a general rule, people receiving care and support will only be visited if it is risk assessed to be necessary following an appropriate initial assessment or review;
- The operating procedures continue to be frequently reviewed. The services are currently experiencing a rise in the need for carer and family support and the service is preparing to manage the increase in demand for intervention as we move into the winter period.

In terms of how these adjusted services have been received, between April and November 2020 we have received 116 compliments about the service; this is an increase of 20 to date, when compared with last year's figures. Examples of feedback are as follows: *'I must also mention yourself X, for your efficient handling of my initial cry for help and subsequent telephone follow up call.'*

and

*'This is from X's wife as a thank you for checking in with them during Lockdown'*

*Mrs X advised she "wanted to pass on a message of thanks"*

*'She said that she cannot speak highly enough of Bridgend council and has told everyone about the amazing support her mother has received. She doesn't think there is any service like this in X and said BCBC is responsible for letting her mother stay at home an extra 2 years. She said her mother has rung with inappropriate requests ie referral for a plumber but her mother has been dealt with in the most kind and caring manner.'*

#### **4.30. Direct impact on young carers:-**

- Many young carers lost the ability to socialise with friends which has led them to feel isolated and trapped within their homes.
- Many young carers have felt additional stress and anxiety in relation to their education. Their education provision was a break from their caring responsibilities and an opportunity to concentrate on themselves in terms of their learning and social interaction.

- Young carers have experienced a reduction in the time they have to themselves within their home as by virtue of being at home their caring responsibilities have increased.
- Due to the closure of venues young carers have had little escape from their home lives and caring responsibilities impacting upon their emotional wellbeing.
- Anxiety and mental health issues have increased amongst young carers due to the restrictions placed on them as a direct result of the Covid.
- In addition to their caring responsibilities some young carers have had the added responsibilities of managing their carer's emotional wellbeing who have also been adversely impacted by COVID.
- Many young carers have lost the help from external family support due to rules about social bubbles which has again directly resulted upon them.

## 5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There are no identified effects upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

## 6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 This report is for information purposes and as such no equalities impact assessment has been concluded.

6.2 Despite no equalities impact assessment being conducted the information contained in the report positively describes support being made available to those providing care.

## 7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales. Promoting the right of an individual to be involved in the development and provision of support and services, to encourage feedback and to enable a person to make a complaint about the support or services they receive contributes to ensuring the Authority works to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

**Long Term** – the report identifies that it is important to ensure carers are supported in their roles as part of a longer term approach to sustainability of services and communities.

**Prevention** – the support of carers enables people to maintain independence in community settings and prevent needs from escalating.

**Integration** – a collaborative approach to understanding the needs of carers allows the broadest range of partners to effectively and efficiently provide any assistance required.

**Collaboration** – the report identifies the collaborative efforts of government, local authorities, health and social care providers, and third sector organisations.



**Involvement** – the report identifies the need to understand the lived experience of those providing care and to engage them in the design and improvement of services.

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Equalities note the information contained in this report.

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**Background documents:** NONE