

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Social Services, Housing & Community Safety Cabinet Board**

**8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

Report of the Head of Adult Services (Angela Thomas)

**Matter for information**

**Wards Affected:** All

**Report Title:** Unpaid Carers

**Purpose of the Report:**

1. The purpose of this report is twofold; it is to provide Members with the findings of an initial review into support for adult unpaid carers and to inform Members of the Ombudsman's own initiative investigation proposal into the undertaking of Adult Carers Needs Assessments.

**Executive Summary:**

2. A desktop evaluation of support provided to adult unpaid carers highlighted several areas for improvement, including the provision of information, advice and assistance, completion of carers assessment/care plans and streamlining of support.

**Background:**

3. Under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the local authority has a legal duty to support unpaid carers through the provision of preventative services, information, advice and assistance, carer needs assessments and where eligible, a dedicated care and support plan.

Neath Port Talbot (NPT) local authority area has the highest proportion of people who provide any amount unpaid care. It also has the highest proportion of people who provide 50 or more hours of care a week, as well as having the joint highest proportion of disabled people in Wales. Furthermore, it has a high proportion of

localities classified as the most deprived in Wales, and data shows a high correlation between higher percentage of people providing unpaid care in the most deprived areas.

Over the next 7 years, the adult population of Neath Port Talbot is expected to grow, with an 18% increase in residents aged 65 and over and a significant 42% increase in residents aged 85 and over (i.e., those requiring more care). This will lead to a growth in older adults providing care and whilst also managing their own health conditions. Most people will experience needing care or become an unpaid carer during their lifetime.

The pandemic has had a notable impact on unpaid carers with many reporting significant increased feelings of loneliness and isolation and worsening mental health. The pressures of caring for others, has also increased, as community services have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels and traditional 'face to face health care, has been replaced by more online or telephone consultations. As such, the opportunities to identify and support carers has reduced.

The existing availability of formal care and mounting pressure on the NHS to release patients from the hospital may also cause carers to provide longer-term care and care for patients with more complicated needs, adding to the pressure already placed on unpaid carers.

The care that unpaid carers provide is essential in the delivery and sustainability of adult social care services. There would be significant costs if a carer were unable to carry on their caring role and therefore supporting carers to remain resilient should help to avoid any breakdown in caring. Research undertaken by Sheffield University and Carers UK, shows that in Neath Port Talbot the cost of replacement care is £618 million.

(<https://www.carersuk.org/media/2d51e03c/valuing-carers-report.pdf>)

#### 4. Ombudsman own initiative investigation

Ombudsman Wales has proposed an Own Initiative Investigation into the undertaking of Adult Carers Needs Assessments in Neath Port Talbot citing a low proportion of adult carers' needs assessments led to a support plan at 2% between 2018-19. The

Ombudsman also proposes to examine how Neath Port Talbot Councils use of a third sector organisation works in practice, as this model is unique in Wales.

### **Service delivery:**

5. The Council, commission the provision of unpaid carers support to a third sector provider (NPT Carers Services) who provide services for carers aged 18 and over. For people aged under 18, support is delivered by the Council's Youth Services with funding provided from Think Family Partnership. Support for 'Parent Carers' is managed by Children's Services and is outsourced to NPT Carers Service, via a separate contract.

Carer's needs assessments can be undertaken by the Carers Service or Social Worker. The majority of assessment however are completed by the Carers Service and where an eligible need is identified a referral is made back to Social Care for further action.

### **The Review:**

6. In 2022, a new Principal Officer post was created within adult services, with the remit of community support services, prevention and early intervention. This includes oversight of the provision of unpaid carers support.

A desktop evaluation of support provided to adult unpaid carers started in November 2022 and comprised of the following elements:

- Data analysis over a 4-year period (2019-2023) relating to demographics and completion of carers needs assessments
- Process mapping of each stage of the carers needs assessment
- Spoke to adult services teams about existing processes
- Gathered evidence of good practice (in NPT and across Wales).

### **Key Findings:**

7. The review highlighted the following:
  - Multiple opportunities for the identification of unpaid carers throughout the system.

- Increase in the number of referrals to Neath Port Talbot Carers Service (NPTCS) from the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) 2022/23 for a carers needs assessment, although only a quarter were identified as requiring further action through formal support.
- Significant number of outcomes captured at the Carers Service, instead of on Oracle.
- Care and support plans are developed in the name of the cared for
- Disconnect between services for Adult Carers, Young Carers and Parent Carers.
- The feedback loop between the Carers Service and Social Care needs to be strengthened.
- Limited triage of Carers needs with an increased focus on the completion of a full carers needs assessment. This can result in a delay in carers receiving IAA.

### **Key Challenges:**

8. ***Separation of commissioning and delivery***, - makes it difficult to get a 'whole system' view of the carers journey, especially the transition from young carers becoming adult carers.

***Information Transfer*** – separate data system between social care and NPT Carers Service has resulted in data variance and hard to track outcomes.

***Access to support*** – high waiting lists for carers assessment, with carers needs often escalated as a driver to seek support (reactive). Same waiting lists for eligible statutory need and non-statutory support.

***Carer involvement*** – No formal structure for carer representation and low involvement from NPT carers at a regional level (Carers Liaison Forum)

### **Next steps:**

- Review of SLA with NPT Carers Service
- Development of a project to support Cluster Network

identification and triage of Carers needs

- Carer engagement – to be supported by Swansea University
- Establish Unpaid Carers steering group
- Establishment of working group to support the ombudsmen investigation
- Expand initial review to include young carers and parent carers.

**Financial Impacts:**

No implications

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

There is no requirement to undertake an integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

No implications.

**Workforce Impacts:**

No implications.

**Legal Impacts:**

No implications.

**Risk Management Impacts:**

No implications.

**Consultation:**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

## **Appendix 1 -**

### **Ombudsman Own Initiative Investigation Proposal**

#### **Officer Contact:**

Mrs. Sarah Waite, Principal Officer, Community Support, Prevention and Early Intervention, Adult Services, [s.waite@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.waite@npt.gov.uk)