



Glamorgan Voluntary Services

Response from Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) to the National Assembly Health, Social Care and Sport Committee Inquiry on How much support is there for carers in Wales.

Introduction to GVS

Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) is an independent charity and has a flourishing membership of voluntary and community organisations active in the Vale of Glamorgan. We help to improve the quality of life of people and communities by supporting volunteers, volunteering opportunities and voluntary groups.

GVS delivers an array of quality services to meet the needs of voluntary groups. We are a one stop shop for the voluntary sector. We champion best practice throughout voluntary organisations so that they excel in delivering their aims and objectives.

GVS empowers voluntary groups, providing many channels of engagement and quality services to enable them to excel at serving their communities. Our role is to provide information, advice and guidance on all aspects of volunteering for both volunteers and recruiting organisations.

The Health and Social Care Facilitator in GVS supports the third sector and statutory partners in a number of ways:

- Promoting partnership working within the sector and across sectors
- Promoting third sector organisations and services to statutory partners and vice versa
- Representing the third sector at strategic planning and partnership groups
- Engaging the sector in consultations and engagement about health and social services

1) Background

1.1 The answers in this response will include information on how the third sector provides support for carers, identified gaps, examples of good practice in the Vale and Cardiff and areas for future development.

1.2 GVS facilitates the Cardiff and Vale Carers Support and Information Network Group (CSING) which has been in existence for over 10 years. It began as a Vale group and was expanded some years ago to become a regional group. It provides an opportunity for staff who provide front line carers' services to meet, share information, find out about new services, promote what they do and identify gaps in service. CSING forwards information to the Cardiff and Vale Carers Workstream and other partnerships and planning groups as appropriate.

1.3 GVS, in its role in supporting third sector organisations, has facilitated many engagement and consultation events over recent years. In preparation for the production of the Cardiff and Vale Population Needs Assessment in 2016, we analysed the outcomes of these events, going back to 2012, in terms of themes and identified needs which related to carers and older people. This found that the same gaps were being consistently

identified over the years in terms of services for carers. These were transport, access to social activities and peer support, access to information, access to advocacy, respite care especially during emergencies, financial advice including information about Lasting Power of Attorney and a simplified way of finding information about services which are available. We understand that, although this analysis was done two years ago, the gaps remain the same.

2) Answers to Inquiry

Assessment of need

2.1 GVS is aware anecdotally, from our facilitation of CSING, that carers do not always know that they are entitled to have an assessment of need or that the definition of a carer has changed. A major issue is that carers do not always identify themselves as carers and do not therefore recognise that they have rights. There is some excellent awareness raising work in terms of promotion of carers' rights via third sector organisations such as Carers Wales and Carers Trust Wales and by statutory organisations.

2.2 Carers Wales is undertaking some innovative work via their Track the Act survey for carers. This was set up to monitor and gather information on how the changes in the law have affected carers and they produce briefings on the survey results.

"I have been directed to another organisation whose support met my needs, but not by the council. I am not sure whether I have had an assessment. I have support in part. Getting respite is impossible". Track the Act respondent
(Carers Wales, Track the Act, Briefing 2, September 2017)

2.3 Some positive work was undertaken by partners in Cardiff and the Vale (Health Board, local authorities and the third sector) under the Carers Measure in terms of raising awareness amongst health and social care staff about carers and encouraging them to identify when someone is a carer and support them appropriately. To some extent this work lost momentum in the transition from the Carers Measure initiatives to the implementation of the SSWB Act. However, in Cardiff and Vale a positive outcome has been the strong partnership working between staff in the Patient Experience Team in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, carers leads in the local authorities and the Health and Social Care Facilitators based in GVS and C3SC and this continues.

2.4 Over the last two years the Health Board, Cardiff Council, Vale Council and GVS have been involved in a project in partnership with, and led by, the Carers Trust South East Wales (SEW). This includes engagement with carers, further work in raising awareness of carers and their need for support and assessing the feasibility of implementing a carers' service in Cardiff and the Vale.

2.5 In relation to carers' assessments, focus groups carried out with carers in Cardiff and Vale, by Carers Trust SEW, found that there appears to be general confusion. Some carers were unsure as to whether they had actually had an assessment and some considered them to be a "perfunctory exercise".

2.6 Both the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff Council have taken steps to raise awareness of the right to a carers' assessment and this is to be welcomed.

2.7 However, it is clear that there is much more to do in terms of raising awareness of carers rights and this could be further improved via a more focussed and co-ordinated

approach to information and advice, by providing information sessions in community settings where carers are and possibly consider resourcing of third sector organisations so they can undertake carers' assessments.

3) Provision of support, including respite care

3.1 As stated earlier, GVS analysed the outcome of engagement and consultation events held over recent years and identified consistent gaps in services for carers. These were transport, access to social activities and peer support, access to information, access to advocacy, respite care especially during emergencies, financial advice including information about Lasting Power of Attorney and a simplified way of finding information about services which are available.

3.2 We believe, from our contact with front line staff in all sectors, that these gaps are still there and we are therefore concerned about the limited progress in addressing these, especially in the provision of respite care (emergency and short term services) and access to information.

3.3 We are aware of various third sector projects which provide respite, either directly or in an indirect way. The Gofal DIAL project in Cardiff and Vale is an excellent example of a project which provides access to interesting and social based activities for people with dementia. Their carers can also attend or utilise the opportunity for a break from their caring role.

3.4 GVS manages the Connected Carers project in partnership with the Parents' Federation and Touch Trust. Connected Carers provides opportunities for social networking and peer support for family carers for people with a life-long or life-limiting condition.

3.5 However, these projects often end up with a waiting list because they are so popular. In addition, they tend to be funded on a short term basis. This highlights some issues in terms of third sector community services. Statutory assessments often result in referrals to third sector services and there is a current emphasis on social prescribing, again often to third sector services. The third sector is ideally placed to support people in their community, but will be unable to cope with increased referrals unless there is an increase in resources.

3.6 With regard to respite for carers of people with dementia, the Welsh Government grant allocated to local authorities provides some funding, but this is for all types of respite and so is spread very thinly. The recent dementia Team around the Individual funding was welcome. We are pleased that there are some grant funding opportunities for the third sector included in the Cardiff and Vale proposals, although this will be for relatively small amounts and short term only. GVS believes that this funding could have been utilised to provide a more sustainable response to the desperate need for respite for carers of people with dementia and we hope that there will be some leeway in the Cardiff and Vale proposals to accommodate this.

3.7 Finally, a recent discussion at a CSING meeting highlighted the following areas where there could be improvement:

- Carers are fed up with consultations, want action and hands on support.
- Both Cardiff and Vale local authorities have seen an increase in assessments – there is no time to do any follow ups.

- IT systems are not compatible and third sector cannot always access statutory systems, even if they are co-located.
- Progress on the development of a Carers Centre.
- Benefits advice/form filling and help with benefit appeals for carers.
- Support for people who want to stay in the workplace.
- Resource/Capacity issues for organisations that are being signposted to.

4) Provision of Information, Advice and Assistance

4.1 Consistently, over many years, carers have expressed concern and confusion about how to find information about their rights and about services which might be able to support them. It is inevitable that any engagement and consultation with carers will find them expressing these views. It is therefore not surprising that many carers have engagement and consultation fatigue and are cynical about anything actually happening in response to their expressed needs. It is difficult to estimate the number of carers who aren't even involved in these conversations, as they will be the carers who do not identify themselves as carers or the carers who haven't yet found out where to go for help.

“You don't know where to turn, where do you find help? I approached many agencies until I found one.”

(Carers Trust South East Wales, Carers services support models. Options and best practice standards for developing high-quality carers' services in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, 2018)

4.2 There have been some positive developments in ensuring a more holistic provision of information. Third sector organisations are co-located with the Community Resource Service in the Vale and Community Resource Teams in Cardiff. Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale has a Third Sector Broker co-located in the contact centre in the Vale. These services provide support and information in response to specific referrals, but cannot act as a dedicated carers' service. GVS believes that it is now time to respond to the expressed needs of carers in terms of their difficulties in accessing information.

“Carers would value a one stop shop where they could get information on support and services for them from one phone number.”

(Cardiff and Vale Population Needs Assessment, 2016)

“A one stop shop is an excellent proposal and would do much to alleviate stress of the carer and also enables them to easily be kept informed and access information in a simple, one step manner.”

(Vale of Glamorgan Council Adult carers' support and services consultation. Summary of responses and key findings, 2013).

“Of the 19 carers who commented (about the idea of a one stop shop for carers in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan), 17 agreed with this and thought it was good idea. Two carers questioned the location and accessibility.”

(Cardiff Council, Adult Carers Support and Services Consultation. Summary of Responses and Key Findings, 2013)

4.3 To this end, the project mentioned earlier in this response, which is being led by Carers Trust South East Wales, in partnership with Cardiff Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and GVS, has looked at the feasibility of establishing a 'one stop shop' carers' service in Cardiff and the Vale. After taking into account the views of carers, the proposed model would involve a dedicated phone number

and email for carers to access, a co-ordinating Hub where staff will be based to deal with enquiries and a series of regular drop in sessions for carers in community settings. The service will integrate with other initiatives, such as the development of Wellbeing Hubs, and will not be a stand-alone service. As such, it is similar to the recently set up Cardiff and Vale Integrated Autism Service; ie a service which responds to the special and specific needs of an important section of our community. A proposal was put forward to the ICF Programme Board in February this year and we await confirmation as to whether funding will be available for this financial year and ongoing.

5) Considering broader Welsh Government policy on carers

5.1 There is no need to document here the vital contribution which unpaid carers make to our society. This is clearly recognised as a fact, and also documented financially in terms of how much unpaid carers save public finances by carrying out their often demanding caring role. However, our collective recognition of this does not always transfer into developing services which support carers and enable them to carry on caring. This appears to be evidenced by the fact that the same gaps in service and same needs expressed by carers keep coming up in engagement and consultation.

5.2 This Inquiry provides an opportunity for some decisive action in relation to supporting carers. GVS would welcome a Welsh Government directive as to how front line, preventative services for carers can be adequately, and sustainably, resourced in localities and regions.

If you would like further information, please contact:

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<http://www.gvs.wales/>

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