

Carers' stories

Carers have a right to be assessed for their own support needs, equal to those who they care for, under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014.

In order to maintain people's independence, it is vital that councils support carers, especially as people in society are now living longer.

We asked carers across Wales what they thought of the support they'd been provided by their council.

Here's what we found...



Carers' rights

It is estimated that there are 370,000 unpaid carers in Wales. However, up until April 2018, less than 4% of these had been assessed for their support needs. Many carers are not clear what it means to be assessed.

"The word 'assessment' is misleading – they make carers think that they're being assessed at how good they're caring for that person. A lot don't understand that the assessment is done for their needs."



Advocacy

An advocate is a person who can help you to communicate your views to make sure that your needs are understood.

We found that just under half of all carers who may have benefited from advocacy were not able to access it.



Accessing information and support

Almost 40% of carers we spoke to did not feel that the information provided to them made it clear what they were entitled to receive. Over a quarter of carers did not feel it was easy for them to request an assessment.

"You have to look for it yourself which can be difficult and time consuming when you are looking after someone."



The assessment itself

Whilst almost two thirds of carers felt encouraged to share their views with their council during the assessment process, only half of them felt that the council actually listened to their wishes.

Only 44% of carers received a written copy of the agreed outcomes of their assessment, making it difficult for many to be certain what was agreed, and the services they are entitled to.

Carers who had been assessed jointly with the person who they care for were marginally more satisfied with the outcomes of their assessment, compared to carers who had been assessed separately.



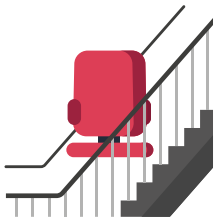
Prevention

Ensuring that people seek support in time to be able to prevent their needs from deteriorating is crucial.

Almost half of all carers surveyed felt that their needs as a carer would have deteriorated without the intervention of the council.

However, ensuring that people seek support in time to be able to prevent their needs from deteriorating is crucial.

“Mum is in a home now...everything came too late...”



Access to support

Carers we spoke to were offered an average of 2-3 services to help them. These range from exercise classes and befriending, to help with transport and providing specialist housing.

40% of carers had been signposted to services in their local community, but some still feel unable to access the support they need.

“It was as if I could meet my needs myself without help from the council.”



So what were the outcomes?

Almost half of the carers we spoke to felt that the outcome of their assessment had a positive impact on

their well-being.

“If the assessment and support wasn't there he'd be in a home, but because of the help by the council he can live happily in the community.”

However, only 35% felt they were coping better since being assessed.



Our national report concludes that despite some progress, carers are still not getting equal access to services and support. We recommend that public bodies improve access to the front door to adult social care and increase carers' awareness and understanding of their rights.

Read our report on 'The Front Door to Adult Social Care' on our website – www.audit.wales

This infographic summarises the key findings from a national survey of carers, delivered between November 2018 and January 2019. A total of **582** carers completed the survey, with representation from all **22** local authorities in Wales.

