Carers Trust Wales response to Charging for Social Care Consultation

About Carers Trust Wales

Carers Trust Wales is part of Carers Trust, a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Our vision is a truly caring Wales, in which unpaid carers are recognised and able to access the support they need.

Overview

1. A carer is anyone caring, unpaid, for a friend or family member who without their support would not be able to cope.

2. Wales is a uniquely caring country with the highest proportion of carers in the UK. Carers in Wales are also, on average, caring for more hours a week than carers elsewhere in the UK.

3. There are 370,000 unpaid carers in Wales saving the state £8.2 billion worth of care costs every year. It is therefore vital that the well-being of unpaid carers is paramount in building a sustainable future for social care in Wales.

4. Carers Trust Wales believes the increase in maximum weekly charge from £60 to £70 does not strike the right balance between helping to raise additional income for local authorities and being fair and affordable for people in receipt of non-residential care, and would have an unfair impact on unpaid carers.

5. In order to improve the sustainability of social care in Wales, Carers Trust Wales is calling for the implementation of a Carer Well-being Fund, a ring-fenced fund of...
£1.4m that would provide up to 50,000 hours of respite care breaks for unpaid carers, significantly reducing the risk of carer-breakdown and subsequent impact on the health service.

6. There are a number of significant factors contribution to the current social care problems, and an overhaul of the system is required in order to find a sustainable solution.

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### Consultation Response Form

**Your name:** Sophie Douglas  
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### Charging for care and support – capital limit

The capital limit in relation to charging for residential care will increase to £30,000 from next April. This is part of a phased approach to delivery of the commitment to increase this limit to £50,000.

1. **Are there any consequences of the decision to increase the capital limit that you would wish to make Welsh Government aware of?**

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Please provide a description of the consequences, and any mitigating actions, that you think might be necessary.

Carers Trust Wales welcomes this commitment from Welsh Government. However, we would welcome clarification on when the proposed limit of £50,000 would be reached.
Financial assessment for care and support – full disregard of War Disablement Pension

A full disregard of the War Disablement Pension will ensure veterans in receipt of this, regardless of the amount, can protect its full value from charging to use as they wish.

2. Do you have any observations on the decision to apply a full disregard of the War Disablement Pension?

| Yes | ☐ | No | ☒ |

Please use this space for any comments you wish to make.

Financial assessment for care and support – maximum weekly charge

The maximum charge ensures consistency across Wales in the maximum weekly amount a person is asked to pay for their non-residential care. This addresses the wide variations in charges that local authorities previously made for similar care of a similar level. Around a third of those receiving non-residential care pay the maximum. The remainder receive their care free or at a charge up to the maximum due to their level of weekly income. The maximum charge will increase to £70 per week from next April for inflation and to ensure local authorities have sufficient funding to maintain the care they provide, and the quality of it.

3. Do you agree that this increase strikes the right balance between helping to raise additional income for local authorities (to help meet increasing cost pressures in providing care and ensuring the quality of the care provided) and being fair and affordable for people in receipt of non-residential care?
Carers Trust Wales does not agree that this increase strikes the right balance between helping to raise additional income for local authorities and being fair and affordable for people in receipt of non-residential care.

Carers Trust Wales considers this proposed increase to be unfairly onerous on people in receipt of non-residential care. For those paying the maximum weekly charge, a £10 weekly increase in care costs equates to an extra £520 per year, which would not be considered affordable for most people. Previous increases in the maximum weekly charge rose in £5 increments.1

If a household is having to spend an extra £10 on care costs every week, leading to a shortfall of £520 every year, any unpaid carers within the household may find themselves having to work more hours to make up the shortfall, or provide more unpaid care themselves to save money.

Furthermore, this increase is not in line with inflation. An increase from £60 to £70 is a 16.7% uplift. Inflation in December 2016 was at 1.6%.2 Even accounting for the two years since the previous increase, a 16.7% increase is hugely disproportionate to inflation.

Therefore Carers Trust Wales considers the proposed increase to fall short of being fair and reasonable, as required by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 4 and 5 Code of Practice.3

Carer Well-being Fund

There are 370,000 people in Wales providing care, unpaid, for a friend or family member, saving the state £8.2billion worth of care costs every year. It

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1 Future of paying for social care in Wales - second report to the Welsh Government, LE in Wales, p15: ‘The current charging system is assumed to be in place over the next 25 years, with the weekly maximum on care charges set at £50 for 2012/13 and 2013/14, increasing to £55 in 2014/15 and £60 in 2015/16 and rising in line with the rise in real unit costs thereafter.’

2 Source: Office for National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices

3 Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Part 4 and 5 Code of Practice – 4.2 Charging
is therefore vital that the well-being of unpaid carers is paramount in building a sustainable future for social care in Wales.

If a carer does not have access to breaks from their caring role, the impact on their own physical and mental health can lead to a breakdown. If a carer breaks down, this puts additional strain on the health and social care system.

Therefore Carers Trust Wales is calling for the implementation of a Carer Well-being Fund. A ring-fenced fund of £1.4million would provide 50,000 hours of respite breaks for unpaid carers, helping to prevent carer breakdown, and reducing pressure on the provision of health and social care. Welsh Labour committed to investigating the benefits of such a fund in their manifesto for the National Assembly for Wales election in 20164.

The Welsh Government is interested in understanding the impact of the proposals in this consultation on groups with protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; gender; and sexual orientation.

4. What impacts do you think the proposals in this consultation will have on groups with protected characteristics? Please describe them.

57% of unpaid carers in Wales are women.5 Therefore these proposals could have a negative impact on women, if the uplift in the maximum weekly charge applied to non-residential care is brought into effect. If a household is having to spend an extra £10 on care costs every week, leading to a shortfall of £520 every year, any unpaid carers within the household may...
find themselves having to work more hours to make up the shortfall, or provide more unpaid care themselves to save money.

5. We have asked a number of specific questions. If there are any issues related to the proposals raised in this consultation which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to tell us about them.

There are a number of factors contributing to the problems in social care that need to be addressed.

Increased demand caused by an ageing population combined with increased burdens on social care providers such as the National Living Wage and other additional costs such as automatic pension enrolment, together with difficulties with recruitment and retention exacerbated by more favourable terms and conditions with the Welsh NHS, has led to the current situation. On top of this, local authorities are commissioning services based on cost rather than quality, meaning poorer quality care is being provided and services are forced to undercut one another.

The Welsh Government’s commitment to a further £10m of funding for social care will not fix the system - it is like providing a plaster when surgery is needed. Until the funding of social care and the commissioning process is overhauled, and until the relationships between local authorities and local health boards are re-evaluated, we are still some distance from a sustainable solution that works for Wales’ army of unpaid carers.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: