

## Appendix 7 - Evidence relating to Ceredigion County Council

### Evidence from the Council

1. Ceredigion County Council provides an in-house service for its adult carers. Since April 2022, young carer needs assessments have been commissioned from Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers, a third sector organisation, commissioned to work with young carers to identify local support available and, when required, complete a formal carer's assessment. The Council said that the provision of support for young carers by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers was very positive, as the support available was very specific for children and young people and it negated the risk of the Council providing support to young people that was more adult focussed.
2. The Council said that it had an award-winning exemplar Carers and Community Support Team which had led the way in Wales in relation to carers in recent times. It said that the service provided a range of support and assistance to informal carers which enabled them to provide their valuable caring role within their communities. The Council provided a suite of information to demonstrate its commitment and focus on supporting young carers and adult carers. This included its web pages, carers' information pack, magazines for carers, information booklets for young carers, annual reports, compliments register and commissioned service reports.
3. Ceredigion County Council said that its 'Through Age, Wellbeing Care and Support Services' had been developed to provide a focussed approach to prevention and early help for those looking for IAA and, when necessary, support. It said that all contacts to the Council were managed through the Customer Contact Centre ("CLIC"), a team of trained and knowledgeable staff. It said that, where appropriate, members of the public were offered information and advice, including signposting to a range of local services and opportunities to meet their needs. The Council said that it was only if the information and advice provided did not meet the customer's request or needs that they would be transferred to the 'Porth Gofal' Integrated Triage and Assessment Service which was its 'front door' to social care and where all contacts, referrals and calls were triaged by social care professionals. The Council said that, if the request was not for a carer's needs assessment but specifically around support available as a carer, and that its staff in the CLIC team were unable to provide the information required, the customer would be transferred to its Carers' Unit, which sat under its 'Porth Cynal' Early Help and Prevention Service. It

said that the Carers' Unit reviews the request and provides any specific, low-level support available and the carer would be offered a carer's needs assessment. The Council said that what it finds in practice is that carers don't actually identify themselves as a carer, they only want a specific need for support met, and did not necessarily want to go through the whole process of having their needs assessed. The Council said that it did try to explain to carers the benefits of having a needs assessment, particularly if the carer was presenting with a significant level of need for support.

4. The Council said that it also identified carers when it received a referral to assess the cared for person, who may be in need of care and support in their own right. The Council said that carers identified in this way would also be offered a carer's needs assessment. The Council explained that, if a carer declined an assessment, it would be added to the cared for person's assessment form with a reason for the carer declining. It said that carers were always made aware that, should they change their mind, a needs assessment could be completed. The Council said that, even if a carer declined an assessment, they would still be added to its carers' register and they would receive regular information about available carer support services.

5. Ceredigion County Council said that it had different processes for adult carers and young carers. For adults, where a carer's assessment was deemed a requirement or a specific request, it was allocated to an appropriate professional to complete. During the assessment process, opportunities to signpost to local support services were routinely considered. When a formal support plan was deemed a requirement, it was completed in partnership with the carer and support identified to meet their needs. For young carers, the Council said that their referral was forwarded to Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. The Council said that, if the services provided by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers could not meet the needs of a young carer, they would be referred back to the Carers' Unit in the first instance, as it is the Carer's Unit that monitors the contract and agreement with Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. The Council said that it would subsequently determine which of its specialist services, who may already be aware of the child or their family, was best placed to progress the young carer's assessment.

6. Ceredigion County Council said that the Carers and Community Support Team works proactively with local communities to develop and enhance universal services and improve access to local opportunities for support, which often negated the need for a formal statutory carer's assessment and support plan.

7. The Council highlighted that:

- It had issued 224 adult carer cards and 43 young carer cards in 2022/2023.
- 1820 adults were registered as carers.
- 150 young people were registered as young carers.
- 199 adult carers were supported through its commissioned service.
- 102 young carers were supported through its commissioned service.
- 774 carers benefitted from the Regional Integrated Carers Fund.

8. Ceredigion County Council said that the carers' 'Referral Pathway', a regional initiative that started in Ceredigion, ensures that carers are encouraged by the local authority, health services and third sector to register as a carer with their GP. Once registered, their details were passed to the Porth Gofal sift/triage team, the Carers and Community Support Team and commissioned service providers of support to carers. Carers were then provided with a Carers' Information Pack containing information about benefit entitlements and community support groups and, where appropriate, a carer's needs assessment. The Council said that they were also given the opportunity to join the Carers Information Service and/or bespoke support through commissioned services.

9. The Council highlighted a recent inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales ("CIW") which recognised that its staff take time to listen to carers and build good working relationships and there had been a notable increase in carers joining its Carers Information Service, a vital part of its early intervention approach to support carers.

10. The Council explained that there was a continuous process for monitoring and reviewing assessments for adult carers, in line with statutory duties for any assessment completed by the Council. It said that it was important, particularly when low level support had been provided, to monitor progress so that, should things escalate or go into crisis, the situation could be picked up quickly and escalated to the more formal route. It said that, if there were significant changes in circumstances, this would be picked up by Case Managers when reviewing the care and support plan of the cared for person as, often, it was an escalation in the cared for person's needs that resulted in the escalation of the carer's needs. The Council said that it was important to see the whole situation in the round. The Council said that, when a carer asked for a carer's needs assessment and the cared for person was not known to Social Services, it was also an opportunity for the Council to consider whether the cared for person had needs for care and support.

11. Ceredigion County Council said that all carers' needs assessments were quality assured by a manager. It said that audit tools had been developed for auditing carers' needs assessments and capacity was being built into its structure to undertake audit work. It said that this included the development of a Quality Assurance Framework and the recruitment of a Quality Assurance Officer and Quality Assurance Support Officer to provide independent oversight.
12. The Council said that its Carers and Community Support Team had a robust system in place to gather regular customer satisfaction surveys and seek feedback from carers as, regardless of which team completed the carer's needs assessment, it was the Carers and Community Support Team that supported the delivery of the plan.
13. The Council provided the investigation with a copy of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board Strategy, which it supports. It said that this allowed the Council to reap the benefits from regional approaches for supporting carers, without losing its local context. The Council said that its officers also sat on the All-Wales Carers Learning and Improvement Network (COLIN) group, providing an opportunity for information to be shared between peers at other local authorities and allowing learning and best practice from across Wales to be shared and considered.
14. The Council provided monitoring information for its commissioned services for young carers. This included details of the number of young carers who had a 'What Matters' Conversation, those provided information and advice, one to one support or respite and those referred for a carer's needs assessment.
15. Ceredigion County Council said that Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers provided a significant amount of performance data to allow the contact to be monitored on a regular basis. However, the Council said that it did not hold the specific details for young carer assessments as they were managed by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers.
16. Ceredigion County Council said that, at present, it had no process in place for the Council to undertake quality checks on carers' needs assessments completed by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. It said that it was currently undertaking a tendering exercise for a Carers' Outreach Services for adults and children and that quality assurance was built into its new specification.

17. The Council said that it did not have a process in place to monitor whether a young carer or person with parental responsibility was satisfied with the outcome of an assessment completed by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. It said that it also did not have a process to monitor whether the outcome of an assessment continued to meet the needs of young carers, but that Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers did contact the Council when it identified that the assessment completed by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers did not meet the needs of the young carer.

18. The Council said that, where there were significant changes in a young carer's outcomes or circumstances, the young carer or person with parental responsibility could request an updated assessment from Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. It said that it was rare for a young carer to decline a carer's needs assessment, but if it was, it would be recorded on the Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers' database, Charity Log.

19. The Council said that the transition of young people from young carer services to adult carer services was managed by ensuring the young carer was highlighted with the Carers and Community Support Team. The Council said that Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers was a 'through age' service and young carers could access the different specialisms of outreach workers for appropriate support as they transitioned. It said that Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers would continue to support young carers if they moved out of county, for example, to college, as long as the cared for person continued to live in the county. It said that Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers linked with key agencies, e.g., Careers Wales, as part of the support that was offered to young carers. The Council said that there was significant support in schools and colleges through the Investors in Carers Scheme which would contribute to assisting young people to make transitions into higher education, further education and training.

20. Ceredigion County Council said that the staff who complete carers' needs assessments within the Council were qualified Social Workers, Social Work assistants and trainee Social Workers. It said that the completion of carers' needs assessments was a focus of the Social Work training and it would not allow anyone to complete a carer's needs assessment if they were not confident that they had the required skills and knowledge. The Council said that, in addition, when carers' needs assessments were allocated to staff, consideration would be given to the complexity of the circumstances before allocation to a staff member. The Council said that there was also a sign off process for all assessments completed, which provides a quality assurance.

21. The Council said that staff in its CLIC team undergo a robust training plan, have crib sheets that they can refer to and their decision-making was quality checked to identify any training needs. The Council said that, over time, CLIC staff have learned to ask questions as callers make “trigger comments” that make the staff member think that they may need a carer’s needs assessment.

22. The Council said that all staff within its Through Age Well Being Programme, including housing, were required to complete a mandatory training module relating to carers to ensure they were able, in their day-to-day work, to identify a carer and explain to them how to seek a carer’s needs assessment.

23. Ceredigion County Council said that its Carers and Community Support Team undertakes promotional work by visiting local community groups in an attempt to proactively identify carers or to assist carers to self-identify. It said that its ‘Community Connectors’, which sit outside of the Carers Unit, also had a role in identifying carers and that there was information in its newsletters and on its website to assist people to identify as a carer. The Council recognised that not all could access digital resources and explained that it also has posters about carers’ support services in libraries and GP surgeries.

24. The Council said that one of the first questions asked by CLIC staff was to confirm the customer’s language of choice and explained that it had Welsh speaking staff to support customers whose language preference was Welsh. The Council said that Ceredigion had a very small minority of residents whose language was something other than Welsh or English but it was, however, able to access translation services if required. In terms of additional needs, the Council said that it took each individual’s needs into consideration when completing an assessment with information available in Easy Read (a picture-based system to assist comprehension by those with learning difficulties) format and staff receiving neurodiversity and equalities training. The Council said that carers were routinely offered advocacy before completing their assessment. It said that West Wales Independent Professional Advocacy Service to adults and Tros Gynnal Plant (“TGP”) provided advocacy services to children and young people. It said that Age Cymru also provided a national advocacy service to carers.

25. The Council said that there had been some challenges caused by the information management system used at the Council, as its early help and prevention services were never brought into the system so, while all the statutory information is recorded on its

information management system, the Carers' Unit, would not necessarily have access to that information, the Carers' Unit collates its information separately and the work completed by the Carers' Unit is reported annually.

26. Ceredigion County Council said that, for adult carers, its system was working very well, with no concerns or need for any changes or improvements. It said that its biggest challenge was its capacity for completing carers' needs assessments and it was considering how it could reconfigure services to have dedicated staff to complete carers' needs assessments as, often, other work/assessments would take priority, e.g., hospital discharge assessments. The Council said that it was considering how it could be more innovative around carers' needs assessments as carers' needs assessments were just as important as any other statutory assessment, but they were often not given the priority due to the demand on services.

27. The Council said that it was developing its technology enabled care service and looking at how it could use technology and digital technology to support a wide range of services, including services to support carers, for example, the use of 'wearables'; any kind of electronic device designed to be worn on the user's body, to allow carers to have a bit more freedom to go out while being able to monitor the cared for and provide reassurance.

28. The Investigated Authorities were also asked to provide the investigation with its recorded equality data for carers who had had their needs assessed in 2022/2023. Ceredigion County Council provided data relating to the gender, ethnicity and language preference of adult carers. It said that data relating to disabilities was available but related to a small number of carers. No data was provided for age and sexual orientation. In terms of gender, 70% of adult carers were female and 30% male. Ceredigion County Council said that 99.9% of adult carers whose needs were assessed were White. The language preference of 12% of adult carers whose needs were assessed was Welsh, with the remaining 88% preferring English.

29. Ceredigion County Council did not hold equality data for young carers within the county. Data for young carers who had their needs assessed in 2022/2023 was provided by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. In terms of gender, 41% were female and 55% were male. No data was recorded for 4% of young carers.



30. A recent performance evaluation inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales (“CIW”) at Ceredigion County Council (May 2023), identified areas for improvement. CIW found that Ceredigion County Council needed to ensure practitioners consistently comply with the general duty to promote the well-being of the carer, by explicitly offering carers’ assessments to people to discuss what support they require, with reasons for refusal of an assessment routinely recorded.

#### **Evidence from Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers**

31. [Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers](#) is part of Credu, a charity that supports unpaid carers. Gofalwyr Ceredigion provides support services to both adult carers and young carers.

32. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that it started completing carers’ needs assessments with young carers in Ceredigion in April 2022. It said that young carers, or their parents, can self-refer, or they can be referred to its service by a professional. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that young carers were offered a home visit by one of its outreach workers to initiate a carer’s needs assessment which could take a number of visits to be completed in its entirety. It said that the outreach worker completes case notes on its database and a separate spreadsheet was kept recording the assessment, a copy of which was provided to the investigation. Gofalwyr Ceredigion was provided an opportunity to provide copies of the case notes, but did not do so.

33. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that, if it was unable to meet the identified needs of the young carer, it would seek support from the most appropriate people to support them, for example, from their family, Social Services, school or a combination of these. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers identified that this was a weakness as, when young carers had more significant needs, it was able to refer them to Social Services but, because it was not part of the Council, it did not have the same level of influence over what may happen next. It considered that this was an area where clarity was required and improvements could be made as, while it was able to support young carers with many aspects of their needs, it could not provide the identified needs in all cases.

34. In terms of the transition of young carers to adult carers, Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers explained that one of the reasons it tendered for the contract with young carers was because it also worked with adult carers and there would be no actual transition as such, as when they become a young adult carer, they could start to attend adult orientated services when they felt ready. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that it also helped young carers with



applying for grants to help with transitioning to further education, provided one-to-one support during transition and encouraged peer mentoring to build transferrable skills and experience.

35. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that, with consent, it passed the details of its young carers onto the Council's Carers' Information Service.

36. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said its outreach workers were trained in Collaborative Communication, developed by Social Care Wales, and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ("SSWB Act") relating to young carers. It said that it was trying to find a provider to deliver Level 4 Social Services Practitioner qualification to its staff, but it was proving difficult to source. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that staffing had been problematic and its staff were spending a significant amount of time completing carers' needs assessments rather than completing activities to meet the needs of young carers.

37. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that it had Welsh speaking staff to meet the needs of young carers whose language of choice was Welsh and it was able to access translation services if the young carer's language of choice was not Welsh or English. In terms of additional needs, Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that it would ask young carers and their family whether they had any additional needs to ensure that they were able to fully participate in their assessment.

38. It said that there were no audits of the assessments completed in 2022/2023, as it was the first year of the contract, but it was carrying out a review of how to record carers' needs assessment information and would build the findings of this investigation into its processes. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that the only oversight in relation to completed carers' needs assessments was through the supervision of the outreach workers. It said there was no formal method for quality checking the completed assessments.

39. In terms of monitoring whether the outcome of an assessment continued to meet the needs of a young carer, Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that it was an ongoing process, with outreach workers monitoring the situation, as they spent more time with the young carer, allowing the outreach worker to respond dynamically to any changes in the young carer's circumstances.

40. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that it did not monitor whether young carers, their family or person with parental responsibility was satisfied with the outcome of their assessment but it did conduct regular surveys to check whether they were happy with the support they were receiving.
41. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that, if a young carer or a person with parental responsibility declined a carer's needs assessment, it would be recorded within the case notes.
42. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers provided copies of contract monitoring reports it provided to the Council. It said that it met with the Council on a quarterly basis to discuss the monitoring report, but the Council did not specifically monitor the completed assessments.
43. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers also provided copies of its information resources available to young carers to inform them about their rights, including their right to a carer's needs assessment.
44. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that, in terms of advocacy, it did not routinely offer independent advocacy to young carers and their families. It said that it, itself, was the advice and support service. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that Tros Gynnal Plant may be able to support if the child's situation met the criteria, i.e., the young person was in need of care and support. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers said that, if a young carer was referred to Social Services, its outreach worker could attend with them as an informal advocate.
45. Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers provided copies of staff training materials and the 'Credur Way' practice handbook, which included the policy and procedure for carers' needs assessments.

#### **Evidence from staff**

46. Details of local authority staff who provide IAA and who conduct carers' needs assessments were provided by each of the Investigated Authorities. Staff from the commissioned service providers, Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers, NEWCIS, Adferiad and Neath Port Talbot Carers Service, were also asked to participate in the investigation and

provide evidence. The evidence was sought via online surveys. A reasonable adjustment<sup>1</sup> was made to allow 1 member of staff to provide their evidence orally.

47. The table below summarises the number of staff surveyed, and the number of responses received:

	Local Authority area	Number of staff surveyed	Number of responses received (*)	Response rate (**)
<b>Information, Advice and Assistance staff</b>	Caerphilly	16	5	31%
	Ceredigion	22	19	86%
	Flintshire	10	7	70%
	Neath Port Talbot	6	0	0%
<b>Staff where carers' needs assessments are part of their role</b>	Caerphilly	168	92 (8)	55% (50%)
	Ceredigion	42	20 (2)	48% (43%)
	Flintshire	14	9	64%
	Neath Port Talbot	227	31 (11)	14% (9%)
<b>Commissioned service provider staff who complete carers' needs assessments</b>	Caerphilly***	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Ceredigion	3	2	67%
	Flintshire	10	9 <sup>2</sup>	90%
	Neath Port Talbot	4	3	75%

\* Incomplete responses

\*\* Completed questionnaire response rate

\*\*\* No commissioned services

## Information, Advice and Assistance staff

48. Respondents said that they had received a variety of training relating to carers' needs assessments – Through Age Wellbeing Training, SSWB Act training, Investors in Carers Service training, Signs of Safety training, Autism Training and Wellbeing Awareness training. Respondents said they were aware that carers had a right to a carer's needs assessment and that a 'smart form'<sup>3</sup> supported them in making referrals for a carer's needs assessment. Some respondents said that they had completed a Carers' Awareness training

<sup>1</sup> A change made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.

<sup>2</sup> One on maternity leave

<sup>3</sup> Allows users to capture data in a structured format.

course with others attending the course at the time the survey was issued. The majority of respondents considered that the training they had received assisted them in undertaking their duties in relation to carers' needs assessments. All respondents said that they knew where to find the process for carers' needs assessments and said that it was easily accessible and understandable.

49. Respondents said that they welcomed contacts and correspondence from carers in both Welsh and English with bilingual staff available. In terms of languages other than Welsh or English, many respondents said that they were aware that the Council was able to access translation services and many said that they would seek advice from managers and supervisors, in such circumstances. Two respondents were unsure what support was available for carers whose language of choice was not Welsh or English.

50. Respondents said that the Council's Customer Services Charter pledged that customers are able to contact its services through the most accessible channel and that Community Connectors<sup>4</sup> could assist people who required additional support. Staff said that the Council had various options to support customers in accessing services, for example, email, a home visit, telephone, My Account (online services) and the use of large print in letters. Respondents said that they had also received autism training to assist with identifying potential communication differences. Respondents said that they would highlight any communication difficulties to the department that was sent the referral with one respondent stating they would also seek advice from a supervisor. One respondent said that they were unsure what measures the Council had to support carers with communication difficulties.

51. Many respondents did not feel that there were any barriers to carers having their needs assessed. Respondents said that some carers felt a sense of duty and did not consider themselves to be a carer or, due to the demands on their time, did not have the time to have their needs assessed in their own right. Some respondents said that some carers feared a carer's needs assessment, as they believed that their capacity to provide care to their loved one would be assessed. Respondents said that there was a need to be able to read between the lines and hear the unsaid, for example, when carers contact the Council to ask for help for the cared for person, they will always be asked whether they have had their needs assessed as a carer and, with consent, will be sent information about their rights as a carer. One respondent said that, on occasion, when GPs refer carers to the

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<sup>4</sup> Staff who work within the community.

Council, the carer was not always aware that the GP had referred them for a carer's needs assessment.

### **Carers' needs assessment staff**

52. Respondents said that many carers did not receive a service in their own right as respite and sitting service were part of the cared for person's assessment of care and support needs.

53. Respondents said that they had completed eLearning training in relation to carers' needs assessments, met with the Carers' Team to raise awareness and attended training in relation to the SSWB Act. Several respondents said that they had also shadowed more experienced colleagues completing carers' needs assessments. The majority of respondents said that the training received helped them either fully or to some extent in undertaking duties in relation to carers' needs assessments.

54. Respondents demonstrated their understanding of the requirements of the SSWB Act in relation to carers, explaining that it was an opportunity for carers to be recognised and to allow for future planning. The majority of respondents said that they knew where to find the process and that it was accessible and understandable. A few said that they did not know where to find the process but were aware of the support available from the Carers Team.

55. Respondents said that they make an Active Offer to carers and have Welsh speaking officers. They said that carers' needs assessment forms were available in Welsh. In terms of languages other than Welsh, respondents said that they were able to access interpretation and translation services, including BSL. A few respondents were not aware of services available to support carers whose language of choice was not Welsh or English, but they said that they would seek advice from a manager.

56. In terms of communication difficulties, respondents said that they had a range of different tools to support carers who may have communication difficulties including offering different methods of communication, Easy Read forms, symbols and pictures, visual aids, hearing amplifiers, Talking Mats<sup>5</sup> kits and the option to seek support from appropriate professionals/joint working, for example, the Speech and Language Service and the Visual Impairment Officer. A few respondents said that they could offer advocacy services, if

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<sup>5</sup> A way to engage with people with communication or cognitive difficulties.

appropriate, who are trained in various communication needs, for example, dementia, speech and language and picture books.

57. Many respondents did not feel that there were any barriers to carers having their needs assessed. Some respondents identified the following barriers to carers having their needs assessed:

- Carers being reluctant to engage for fear of being judged.
- Resources being under pressure which could have a detrimental impact on the time allocated to carers' needs assessments.
- A lack of support for carers, for example, no day centres, a lack of respite provision and delays in care packages being agreed placing pressure on carers and frequently resulting in carer breakdown.

58. In further comments, a respondent said that the Carers Team was very visible and proactive in promoting carers' rights.

#### **Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers staff**

59. Respondents said that a 2-day Collaborative Communication training course was their core training, which covered aspects of the SSWB Act and how to put into practice person centred, outcome focussed and strength-based assessment and support. They said that they received regular refresher training. Respondents said that they were trained to listen to carers so that carers could identify their own solutions which informed their assessment of needs. Respondents considered that the training received supported them in their role.

60. Respondents said that they understood the carer's needs assessment process and that it was easily accessible and understandable.

61. Respondents said that Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers had Welsh speaking staff, should Welsh be the carer's language of choice. They said that, if the carer's language of choice was something other than Welsh or English, they were able to access interpretation services, including BSL. One member of staff said they would seek advice from their line manager in such a situation. In terms of carers with communication difficulties, respondents said that they would seek advice from colleagues, the Health Board or local authority. They said that they aim to support people in whatever way works best for them.

62. Respondents said that there were no barriers to carers having their needs assessed through the service provided by Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers. They said that carers sometimes found it difficult to have a third party in their house or found it difficult to leave their house to attend an assessment, which could act as a barrier to having their needs assessed. They also said that having mental health difficulties or learning difficulties could also be a barrier. They said that geographic isolation could also be a barrier to a carer having their needs assessed.

63. Respondents said that they considered the system to be robust and effective but acknowledged that there was always room for improvement in the way assessments were conducted. Respondents raised concerns about some Council teams being unsure of who was responsible for providing carers' needs assessments where the carer was an adult and the cared for was a child – they said that clear guidance would be useful.

### **Evidence from those with lived experience**

#### **Carer D – Ceredigion**

64. Carer D cared for a parent. Carer D said that she was well informed going into the carer's needs assessment process, due to her vocational knowledge. Carer D said that others in the same situation would not have the same insight as her. Carer D said that her parent's care needs escalated during the pandemic and her parent became socially isolated and out of routine. Carer D said that third sector services "completely dropped-off" and the support available, e.g. electronic devices, were not suitable to meet their needs.

65. Carer D said that, if the Council provided the right people at the right time, the process would work and interventions would be sooner but, in Ceredigion, there were not enough Social Workers or sufficient resources to meet needs.

66. Carer D self-referred for a carer's needs assessment and the assessment initially focussed on her parent's needs. Carer D said that, after her self-referral, the assessment was started the following month, but it took until the following month for the assessment to be completed, as the Social Work Assistant who completed the carer's needs assessment had to refer to a Social Worker to link in with her parent's assessment. Carer D said that it took 6 months to have her parent's needs met. Carer D said that the length of the process was frustrating, but she understood, as health was not linked up with social care.



67. Carer D said that it was really useful to have a carer's needs assessment as it helped to articulate a carer's needs and framed what may be her most important needs. Carer D said that Social Services was listening to problems but the Social Work Assistant, who Carer D said was good, had difficulty actioning support for Carer D. Carer D said that it was only when there was an acute episode that things started to move and a Social Worker was allocated. Carer D said that it all came together once the Social Worker was allocated, who looked at respite and considered the situation as a whole.

68. Carer D said that her needs were not actioned as they were waiting for a care package for her parent, but her parent's needs were changing rapidly. Carer D said that she insisted that her parent could not be discharged from hospital without a care package in place. Carer D said that it would have been helpful if both the carer and cared for assessments were completed together at the start of the process, but she could see that the Social Work Assistant was under so much duress, that Carer D's priority was to have her parent assessed, as Carer D was robust enough to cope with the situation. Carer D said that, if needs were identified but the support required to meet those needs could not be actioned, carers and the cared for should be kept updated, with staff being explicit about timeframes and what can be done in the interim to provide support.

69. Carer D said that the most challenging part was sorting out Direct Payments, as they were complicated. Carer D said that, if a carer was already providing 24-hour care, then to start having to look for care staff, be their employer and deal with National Insurance and Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") checks (a record of a person's criminal convictions and cautions) was a lot of additional work. Carer D acknowledged that Direct Payments could be liberating for some, but not necessarily for carers.

70. Carer D said that they were treated with kindness and respect, but the biggest problem was having anything actioned. Carer D said that the support she received made her caring role better and that the Social Worker was good for signposting to support available in the third sector.

71. Carer D said that she and other carers often feel abandoned when their cared for person moves into residential care; they were no longer eligible for vaccinations and they lost the support they had as a carer – "it's not wrapped up, it just comes to a full stop".

72. Carer D said that she was offered advocacy and the assessment was conducted in her language of choice.

### **Carer E - Ceredigion**

73. Carer E cares for her husband. Carer E said that she found it confusing, when meeting with Social Workers, whether they were assessing hers or her husband's needs. Carer E could not recall how she became aware of her right to a carer's needs assessment but, at some stage, her husband started attending a Day Centre. Carer E explained that the Day Centre closed during the pandemic and had not re-opened, which was a shame, as it was one place where her husband could socialise without her and it also provided her with an opportunity for respite. Carer E said that being unable to exercise was impacting her well-being as she thrived better with exercise. Carer E said that her last carer's needs assessment in 2020 was probably triggered when she enquired about the re-opening of Day Centre services.

74. Carer E explained that they have had a variety of assessments after her husband had a few emergency hospital admissions and that concerns raised by the District Nursing Team "put her on the map", as a carer. Further assessments were conducted more recently after her husband was lost and police referred the matter to Social Services. Carer E said that the Social Worker made clear that the assessment was of her husband's care and support needs and not hers. Carer E said that the Social Worker was very good and assessed the situation but did not assess her needs as a carer. She said that the Social Worker realised that her husband was totally dependent on her.

75. Carer E said that they now receive Direct Payments to provide respite, with both her and her husband receiving allocated hours. However, Carer E said that, on occasion, the care company could not fulfil its contract and she could not attend planned appointments or make any real plans. Carer E said that she would prefer Day Centre services so that her husband could socialise with other men, rather than only with the carers.

76. Carer E said that the assessments were conducted in her language of choice, but she was not offered advocacy services. Carer E said she had no idea whether she had received a copy of her carer's needs assessment.

## **Carer F – Ceredigion**

77. Carer F cared for his elderly relatives. Carer F said that he became aware of his right to a carer's needs assessment very slowly and did not receive a carer's needs assessment until a couple of years after the legislation came into place. Carer F said that his first assessment was as an individual carer, but in his subsequent assessment he was assessed alongside his relative.

78. Carer F said that his first assessment was "less than useless" as he had the impression that staff were telling him what he was entitled to, but at no point was it implemented and his needs were not met. He said that, in his second assessment, staff told him exactly what he was, and was not, entitled to and put those things into action immediately afterwards and the support provided did meet his needs. Carer F said that his first assessment had no impact upon his caring role, but the second assessment had a "major impact" as it was determined that having paid carers was the way forward. Carer F said that there was some confusion about decision-making relating to his right to respite.

79. Carer F said that his assessment was conducted in the language of his choice, but he was not offered advocacy services. Carer F said that he was not offered a copy of his assessment after either assessment.

80. Carer F said that, in future, he would like to see all assessments completed in the company of the carer and cared for person, Social Worker and an independent advocate as a matter of course and that a period of transition should be considered when a caring role ends.

## **Carer G – Ceredigion**

81. Carer G cares for her child. Carer G said that she became aware of her right to a carer's needs assessment through the Council's Children with Disabilities team, 'Tîm Plant Anabl'. She said that she had a face-to-face meeting with a member of staff from the Team and was then sent a completed assessment which she had to check for corrections. She said that the Team helped a lot with the forms, which was useful, as she did not have a lot of experience of completing forms and this took pressure off her. Carer G said that the assessment really helped her navigate a complex system and she could not have done so without the support she had. She said that, to gain access to a lot of services, she needed

the support of professionals behind her to obtain assistance, for example, to have a specialised wheelchair from a charity or to see paediatricians. She said that, without the help she received, they would have been lost.

82. Carer G said that they have ongoing support plans and meet with professionals a couple of times a year, during which the support for her son and herself are reviewed, including how her son can access suitable education and health care and socialisation. Carer G said that she did not know how they would have survived without the help received from health services and the local authority, who have created plans which have improved her son's quality of life.

83. Carer G said it did not take long to arrange a carer's needs assessment and a date and time were agreed promptly. She said that the assessment itself took about an hour. Carer G said they spoke about both her and her son's needs during the assessment and the outcomes were personalised to their needs.

84. Carer G said that the assessment met her expectations and her identified needs. She said that she was provided with a copy of her completed assessment. Carer G said that the assessment was completed in her language of choice. She said that she was not offered the option of advocacy but that the worker was aware that she was an advocate for her son.

85. Carer G said that it would be nice to have an assessment more often, but she appreciated how busy and overwhelming it can be and she was grateful for the assessments she had already had.