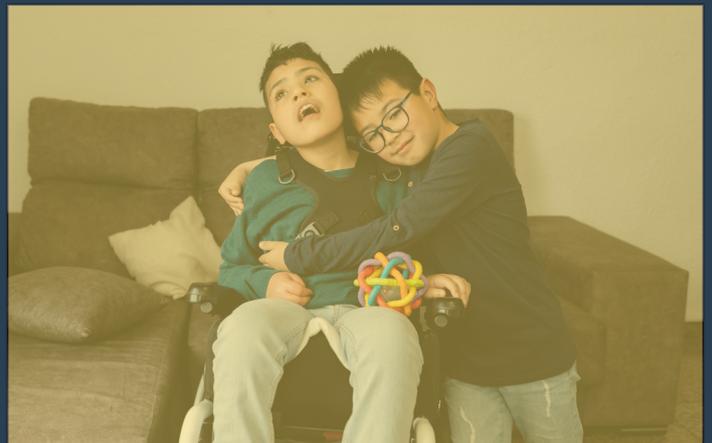




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# Are we caring for our carers? Revisited



**A follow-up report on the progress made in the  
administration of carers' needs assessments in  
Welsh local authorities since PSOW's "Own Initiative"  
investigation in 2024**

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Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae

Pencoed

CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Email: [communications@ombudsman.wales](mailto:communications@ombudsman.wales)

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## Foreword

The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 (“the PSOW Act 2019”) empowers me to undertake “Own Initiative” investigations where evidence suggests that there may be systemic service failure or maladministration. This means that I can investigate a matter beyond its impact on an individual and without having to wait for a complaint to my office.

In October 2024, I issued my first such wide scale own initiative investigation report as Ombudsman, [Are we caring for our carers?](#). I chose to investigate this subject because although the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (“the SSWB Act”) strengthened the rights of carers, evidence suggested that carers were not aware of their rights or the support available to them. The investigation considered 4 local authorities: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Ceredigion County Council, Flintshire County Council and Neath Port Talbot Council (“the Investigated Authorities”). The investigation identified examples of good practice across the 4 Investigated Authorities. However, I noted areas for improvement related to how the Investigated Authorities were identifying and meeting the needs of unpaid carers.

Based on our findings I made a number of recommendations, which the 4 Investigated Authorities agreed to implement. I also invited the remaining 18 non-investigated authorities in Wales to consider the findings and recommendations, and to identify any learning points to take forward that would improve their own service provision.

One year on, it is appropriate to publish a follow-up report, to share the progress I have noted in the delivery of carers' needs assessments and in ensuring that carers are informed of their rights and the support available to them. Since the publication of the investigation report, my office has monitored how the Investigated Authorities' have been complying with the recommendations. I also gathered information about the impact of the investigation across other local authorities in Wales.

There is no doubt that the role of unpaid carers is crucial in supporting social care in Wales. While all 4 Investigated Authorities took positive action, all local authorities in Wales need to continue to focus on ensuring carers are informed of their rights and can access the appropriate information, advice or support to enable them to continue in their caring role, if they so wish.

I want to thank the 4 Investigated Authorities for complying with most of our recommendations. However, it is disappointing that only Neath Port Talbot Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council have fully implemented all of the recommendations at present. Because of this, I am issuing this report as a Special Report under s28 of the PSOW Act 2019. I have made further recommendations to Ceredigion County Council and Flintshire County Council and urge these authorities to continue to make the necessary changes to comply with these recommendations.

I also commend the non-investigated authorities who have noted and taken action following the publication of the report and provided my office with information and data to demonstrate their work in this

area. Their action is in keeping with the spirit of the PSOW Act 2019 and in line with the Senedd Finance Committee's recent recommendations following its Post-Legislative Review of the PSOW Act 2019<sup>1</sup>. The examples of positive action that they shared with my office demonstrate the significant wider impact and learning from the investigation, beyond the 4 Investigated Authorities.

**Michelle Morris**

18 February 2026

Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus | Public Services

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<sup>1</sup> [Senedd's Post-legislative review of the PSOW Act 2019](#)

## Introduction

1. The purpose of the Are we caring for our carers? report was to share the findings of my office's second "Own Initiative" investigation. The investigation looked at four local authorities: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Ceredigion County Council, Flintshire County Council and Neath Port Talbot Council ("the Investigated Authorities"). The investigation considered:
    - a) Whether the local authorities investigated were meeting their statutory duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ("the SSWB Act") and its Code of Practice and the Care and Support (Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2015.
    - b) Whether those entitled to a carer's needs assessment were made aware of, and understood their right to, request a carer's needs assessment.
    - c) Where carers' needs assessments were commissioned, whether those assessment services were being delivered appropriately and whether local authorities appropriately monitored contracting arrangements.
    - d) Whether carers' needs assessments, including those completed by commissioned service providers, were undertaken in accordance with the SSWB Act.
  2. I found evidence of good practice across all 4 of the Investigated Authorities in relation to their administration of carers' needs
-

assessments. For example, from the evidence gathered, once carers have been identified and offered an assessment, the Investigated Authorities and their commissioned service providers undertook proportionate assessments, with a range of creative and flexible solutions being offered.

3. However, I identified several areas for improvement required to ensure that the Investigated Authorities are meeting their statutory duties under the SSWB Act and its Code of Practice and the Care and Support Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2015. The evidence showed that only a small proportion of the carer population in each Investigated Authority had their needs assessed and there was a need to improve the identification of carers to support them in their caring role, to avoid them reaching crisis point before seeking assistance from the local authority. The early identification of carers is not only a role for local authorities; health services also have a role to play and there is a need for joint working between health services and local authorities.

4. The investigation identified there was not enough clear information about the process of carers' needs assessment. Also, some carers were not being fully informed of their rights. I also recommended improvements in the recording of carers' needs assessments.

5. In addition, the investigation also identified opportunities to improve recording of equality data which could assist local authorities to identify groups of carers that are not currently being reached and to ensure they are not disadvantaged. It also identified opportunities

to better monitor the quality and consistency of carers' needs assessments.

## Analysis

6. Following the publication of the investigation report in October 2024, a benefits realisation plan was drafted. The plan outlined various anticipated benefits of the investigation and ways in which outcomes could be demonstrated, if each benefit was realised. Below is a summary of the current position relating to the areas in which it was anticipated that the findings and recommendations of the investigation report could impact:

- **Improved information**

7. The investigation recommended each Investigated Authority produced a factsheet that included:

- details of the carers' needs assessment process
- the role of commissioned service providers (where applicable)
- what carers may expect from the assessment and
- real-life examples of how carers had been supported.

8. All of the Investigated Authorities have since either developed a factsheet or improved their existing factsheet. These are available in Welsh, other languages and in an 'Easy Read' (picture-based format), as required. This should ensure that carers are provided with information to help them understand the assessment process, what to expect from it and to help them make

an informed decision about whether a carer's needs assessment would be of benefit to them.

- **Improved carers' needs assessments**

9. The investigation identified areas of improvement in the carers' needs assessment forms for both adult and young carers' assessments. The carer's needs assessment should not be a process of purely asking questions from a form. However, having the necessary questions within the assessment form will help guide the practitioner and prompt them to ensure they gather the necessary information to identify needs and any support available to meet those needs.

10. Caerphilly County Borough Council has appropriately updated its adult carers' needs assessment form. However, its young carers' assessment form is still being updated. Caerphilly County Borough Council said that this document was being consulted on, on a regional basis, and was due to be piloted in early November 2025. The Council said that, in the interim, it had advised its staff of the recommendations of the investigation to ensure that they record the necessary information while the form is under review. I appreciate that it can take time to agree changes on a wider, regional basis. I am also pleased that this regional decision making is taking into consideration the findings of the investigation. However, I was concerned this recommendation had not been met and was pleased to receive a further update in relation to this in response to a draft version of this report (see paragraph 49).

11. Ceredigion County Council is in the process of changing its case management system and, therefore, has not currently met this recommendation for its adult carers' needs assessments. It said that it was incorporating the recommendations in the development of the carers' process in the new system. However, it was unable to evidence this, at present, and the implementation of the new system has been delayed to early 2026. The Council was, however, able to provide a copy of its new young carers' assessment form that had been implemented by its commissioned service provider. This incorporated most of the investigation recommendations, with additional questions still to be added, such as whether the carer was able and willing to provide care. Whilst the recommendation has not been implemented in full, I accept it is appropriate for the Council to incorporate this change into its new case management system. Therefore, my further recommendation in this report provides the Council with a further opportunity to implement this change.

12. Flintshire County Council and Neath Port Talbot Council have appropriately amended both their adult and young carers' assessment forms.

13. The new young carers' assessment forms in Ceredigion County Council and Neath Port Talbot Council will also improve the recording of young carers' assessments, which was found to be absent during the investigation.

- **Improved post assessment information and review**

14. The investigation identified that improvements could be made to the information provided to carers after their needs assessment, to help carers understand and navigate their way through the assessment processes. This included providing carers with a cover letter, to go with a copy of their assessment, which outlined the outcomes and provided information, such as how to request a review or re-assessment. I am disappointed that not all of the Investigated Authorities have fully implemented this recommendation. All 4 bodies have developed a cover letter. However, only Caerphilly County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot Council's letters include all of the recommended information. Important information is missing from the letters developed by Ceredigion County Council and Flintshire County Council. For example, neither include a summary of the outcome of the assessment, and Ceredigion County Council's letter does not explain the arrangements for a review, or if a re-assessment is required in the future. I have, therefore, made further recommendations to these local authorities to fully implement this recommendation, to benefit unpaid carers.

15. The investigation also made a recommendation for the Investigated Authorities to review and implement a method for revisiting the use of Direct Payments for carers, to ensure they meet the carer's needs (except for Neath Port Talbot Council). Direct Payments are monies paid by the local authority to a person who has been assessed as needing support, so they can pay for their own support services as an alternative to the local authority providing them.

16. Caerphilly County Borough Council reviewed its policy for Direct Payments, which it considered was appropriate. This already included detail on supporting individuals to plan for when their usual Direct Payment arrangements break down and the Council's responsibility to provide or arrange services when a carer was unable to secure services through their own arrangements. It also detailed exploring innovative and creative options, working together to consider all possible solutions to remedy any weaknesses identified, and ensuring individuals are aware that they can request an unplanned review if their circumstances warrant this. The Council's Direct Payment Team has undertaken team visits and induction sessions to support practitioners in understanding the Direct Payments process and there is mandatory e-learning. It has also updated its Direct Payments guides, which include what happens if someone decides a Direct Payment is not appropriate for them.

17. As a result of the investigation and its recommendations, Ceredigion County Council acknowledged that there were outstanding reviews for service users with a care and support plan, which included carers receiving Direct Payments. To address this, it has implemented a project, utilising 6 newly qualified Social Workers, to focus on undertaking the reviews, to determine if the individual's needs, including carers, are appropriately being met and their outcomes achieved. The project commenced in September 2025.

18. Flintshire County Council's Direct Payments Team developed a new review form to capture review information more effectively. It also said it offered a range of respite options, including person centred and bespoke options.

- **Training**

19. The investigation recommended that the Investigated Authorities provide training to members of its staff. This included Information, Advice and Assistance (“IAA”)/Social Work staff (with the exception of IAA staff in Ceredigion County Council), and awareness training to wider council staff.

20. I was pleased to see evidence of a range of actions taken by the Investigated Authorities to provide training to, and to raise awareness with, their staff members. Below are some examples from each of the Investigated Authorities:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council invited its staff to attend “Care Aware” training, provided by Carers Wales and Carers Trust, which included good practice, practical tips and relevant duties for working with and supporting unpaid carers, and a webinar about recognising and assessing carers. It has also been developing a new learning programme, which commenced in October 2025 as a webinar and online refresher, which includes information on what a carer is, carers rights, what a carer’s assessment is, the support available to carers and how to refer for a carer’s assessment. It also reviewed information available to staff on carers and raised awareness with staff during events such as Carers Rights Day and Carers Week.
- Ceredigion County Council now provides monthly training sessions on carers’ rights and support of unpaid carers. It also has access to its own “Care Aware” e-learning module, which

includes understanding and promoting the rights of unpaid carers and identifying carers. It also obtained funding for a project to capture experiences of unpaid carers on film and used these when developing training on carers' needs assessments during 2025. This training commenced in September 2025 and includes how to complete a carer's assessment, key assessment principles and what skills, qualities and responsibilities are essential in the assessor role in meeting the carer and cared for person's needs.

- Neath Port Talbot Council said it offered a range of training and said all relevant staff had been trained. It provided copies of training slides, as an example, which detailed what an unpaid carer is, the benefits of identifying an unpaid carer, challenges experienced by carers, support available and ways to help carers. It also provided evidence of training delivered in September 2025, in relation to assessing the needs of carers, barriers to identifying carers, carers' rights to assessment, collaborative communication, understanding outcomes and reviewing progress. The Council also evidenced sharing an e-learning module with wider staff on recognising and supporting carers and it is currently under consideration whether this would be mandatory for staff across the Council.
- Flintshire County Council provided training to relevant staff. Training slides included detail of what a carer is, the SSWB Act, the role of statutory services in supporting carers, and details of its commissioned service provider and how to refer to it. It provided training slides specifically on assessing carers' needs,

including the process, outcomes and solutions. Quarterly training on Direct Payments is also delivered, and it has promoted Carers Wales' e-learning and resources. In addition, the Council promoted the opening of a new centre for its commissioned service provider, Carers Rights Day and Carers Week, including information on events held and resources available. It has developed a "Toolbox Talk" briefing, to support members of the Council who do not have access to computers as part of their role, to increase knowledge on carers' rights and the support available. The Council also said that its commissioned service provider had a programme of training and provided evidence of training provided in schools in relation to young carers.

- **Improved monitoring**

21. The investigation identified areas of improvement in how the Investigated Authorities audited completed carers' needs assessments to provide quality assurance (except for Flintshire County Council).

22. Caerphilly County Borough Council said it considered it had a robust authorisation process in place for carers' needs assessments and an audit process was also embedded within each department, the focus of which would change, dependent on a specific theme or need identified. It was able to share a carer's assessment quality audit plan, which included random sampling of carers' assessments on a 6 monthly basis, to evaluate the quality and consistency of carers' assessments.

23. Ceredigion County Council confirmed it had employed a new Quality Assurance officer and had a schedule of audits in place. It provided a copy of its Quality Assurance framework and confirmed audits are undertaken on a quarterly basis, taking a sample from all open referrals during the quarter, which includes consideration of carers' needs. It also provided a copy of an audit template for young carers' assessments, undertaken by its commissioned service provider for young carers, and a sample of 4 young carers' assessments are considered each quarter.

24. Neath Port Talbot Council has reinstated an audit programme that was paused in 2022. This is a programme of bi-annual audits and it was able to evidence an audit specifically of carers' needs assessments undertaken in September 2025.

25. The investigation also found that the Investigated Authorities could improve the recording of equality information relating to carers. This is important to enable the authorities to identify trends and specific groups of individuals who may face barriers or be unaware of their rights. Local authorities have a duty to ensure any such group is not disadvantaged. The Welsh Government has also requested changes in census data reporting requirements which includes equality data for carers.

26. Caerphilly County Borough Council said it was focusing on ensuring its new IT system, due to be implemented in 2026, was set up to be able to effectively report equality data in line with the Welsh Government requirements. Its updated carers' needs assessment form

also now includes the collection of equality data such as ethnicity, gender, language choice and disability.

27. Ceredigion County Council is also in the process of implementing a new case management IT system. It said the recording of equality data was considered in the development of the new system and was able to provide screen shots from its new system demonstrating it capturing the appropriate equality data to be reported on.

28. For Flintshire County Council, this recommendation only required it to provide details of equality data for carers who had their needs assessed, which had been requested during the investigation, but not provided. It was able to provide the required information for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, to demonstrate it already had the appropriate processes in place and, therefore, did not require a further action plan.

29. Neath Port Talbot Council has implemented a new case management IT system. Implementation of the system had included consideration of the investigation recommendations, including in relation to recording equality data. The system allows for recording of information such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation. It was currently working on a system report that would capture all this data.

- **Collaborative working**

30. The responsibility of identifying and supporting unpaid carers does not only lie with local authorities. The investigation recognised the importance of collaborative working and recommended that the Investigated Authorities had plans in place to work with health services. All of the Investigated Authorities acknowledged the importance of partnership working with health services and evidenced ongoing processes in place:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council said that the Regional Partnership Board had an existing strategic and operational plan that had been established since the implementation of the SSWB Act. The regional area plan for 2023 – 2028 includes a range of actions to deliver integrated working, promote good practice and support ways to identify and offer support to unpaid carers. The Council also attends a multi-agency Carers' Operational Group, also attended by the local Health Board. Discussions have included a hospital discharge pilot project and hospital hubs. The Council also provided further evidence of the in-reach hospital pilot scheme which commenced in January 2025 for 10 weeks, to raise awareness of carers' rights, ensure timely access to information and prompt carers' assessments. This resulted in 24 carers accepting assessments, along with providing practical support and preventing unsafe discharges. Unfortunately, the funding for this project has ended. However, an application for further funding has been made.

- Ceredigion County Council said that it considered it had well embedded collaborative working with health services but reviewed this, in light of the investigation findings. The Council discussed the findings at the regional West Wales Carers Development Group. It developed a poster, raising awareness of carers' rights and who to contact, which was shared across all health sites regionally. The West Wales Carers Development Group annual report, for 2024/2025, also detailed carers' strategy priorities including early identification and self-identification of carers, along with support and services available. It provided detail of the increase in new adult carers referred to information services, an increase in visits to the regional carers' website, an increase in carers supported by carers' discharge support services and an increase in young carers supported by carers' information services. It also detailed actions, such as referrals by GP practices to local carer support services, information stands in hospitals and carers' hospital discharge support services.
- Flintshire County Council worked jointly with colleagues from its local Health Board in recommissioning its unpaid carers' services. It has a Carers' Strategy Group, which includes taking a partnership-based approach, and has worked to increase attendance, including representatives from health services such as hospitals, GP surgeries and pharmacies. The Council provided evidence of a hospital discharge facilitator, provided by its commissioned service provider. The Council also attends the North Wales Carers' Operational Group which coordinates a regional strategy and plans for carers in North Wales.

- Neath Port Talbot Council provided evidence of a pilot project with pharmacies, with a roll out to GP practices and a further plan to engage with optometrists, as the next stage. It also provided details of a Regional Partnership Workstream, which considered improvements in information, advice, assistance and awareness, involving the regional local authorities and the local Health Board. It referred to a focus on hospital settings and included development of posters and information sheets.

## **The non-investigated authorities and other bodies**

31. I shared our investigation report with all of the 18 other non-investigated authorities, to share the good practice identified and for them to reflect on their own service provision, following the recommendations that were made to the Investigated Authorities.

32. I also requested data from all 18 of the non-investigated local authorities in Wales, including the number of adult and young carer assessments undertaken for the years 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. A breakdown of the data is detailed in the Appendix.

33. The investigation had found that between 10% and 12% of the population (over 5 years old) in the Investigated Authorities identified as a carer, in the 2021 census. Of these individuals, only 2.8% had their needs assessed and only 1.5% of the of the carer population had an assessment that led to a support plan.

34. The data gathered from the non-investigated authorities demonstrates a very similar picture. The percentage of carers who had their needs assessed in 2023/2024, on average, across the 18 non-investigated authorities was 2.73%, and only 1.32% of the carer population had an assessment that led to a support plan. The graph below shows the percentage of carers' assessments completed in 2023/2024 by each of the non-investigated authorities.

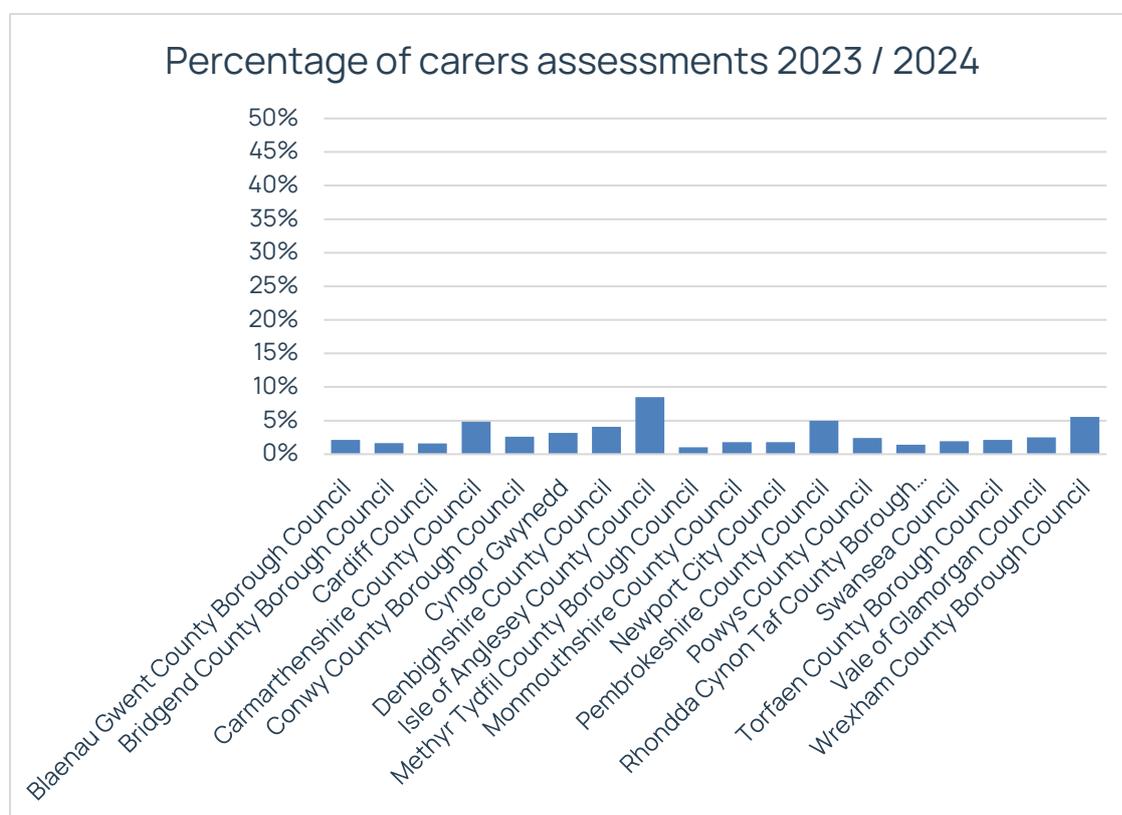


Figure 1. Percentage of carers assessments in 2023 -2024

35. I acknowledge that the number of assessments undertaken does not reflect all the carers who will have accessed information and advice and been offered and declined an assessment. Nor may it include those who have had their assessment combined with that of the cared for person. I note, for example, that **Monmouthshire**

**County Council** wanted to highlight that carers' needs assessments are only a component part of the support available. It said that informal discussions, such as at carers' events, can lead to instant responses and signposting, which can be equally as effective in supporting unpaid carers. **Cyngor Gwynedd and Powys County Council** also highlighted the support provided by their commissioned providers for unpaid carers. This includes promoting early intervention and can eliminate the need for statutory services. However, it is still likely that there are carers in the non-investigated authorities who are unaware of their rights and the support available to them.

36. I was pleased that some of the non-investigated authorities chose to share with my office action plans or comments in respect of how they had taken on board my recommendations. For example, **Swansea Council** said that it had implemented a working group to take forward the learning points to improve local service provision. It also said it had an active role in the Regional Carers' Partnership Board which would review the findings to support All Wales discussions for improvements of carers' needs assessments across Wales. **Torfaen County Borough Council** highlighted work it was already doing to support carers but also said it was implementing a group to pull together an action plan to address each aspect and was considering its current literature and work practices to identify where it could make improvements. It said it would also look at other examples of best practice to learn from. Subsequently, it also launched an Information, Advice and Assistance Team and said uptake of carers' needs assessments doubled in the year 2024/2025.

37. **Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council** had considered the recommendations and provided details of how it felt it was already meeting most of them. It said it did not have a factsheet to share with adult carers, but it would look to develop one. **Cardiff Council** detailed work it was already doing in respect of unpaid carers and actions to take forward in respect of the recommendations. This included that it would look at amending its assessment form to be compliant with the recommendations made, along with rolling out awareness training to staff that was in development. It was also going to work with regional health colleagues to develop mental health resources to support unpaid carers and it would continue to work with community pharmacy leads to expand communication networks and improve signposting opportunities for unpaid carers.

38. **Denbighshire County Council** recognised that reaching out to carers who did not necessarily consider themselves a carer or faced barriers in accessing services they needed was a priority. These included hard to reach communities, communities where English was not the first language, rural communities, parents of children who were neurodivergent or had a learning disability and carers of people with substance misuse. It said that it had Carers' Peer Forums to help audit progress made, identify areas for future development and to promote carers' rights.

39. The **Vale of Glamorgan Council** identified actions to meet the recommendations it considered it was not already meeting. This included completing an information factsheet, which was already in development, along with creating an Easy Read version, and creating a

template for providing feedback following assessment, to ensure it is provided in a consistent manner. A policy review of Direct Payments was also being completed, and an annual “deep dive” audit of carers’ needs assessments would be implemented, along with the current monthly audit already in place. It also confirmed it was raising awareness of support available to unpaid carers with 3 GP clusters.

40. Some of the non-investigated authorities were able to provide equality data, whereas others were not. In light of the requirements made by Welsh Government, this should help ensure that all the local authorities record equality data which can be used to help identify groups of carers that are not currently being reached.

41. In response to the investigation report, I was pleased to receive comments from **Social Care Wales**. It said that it had worked with national charities on the development of resources to support carers’ assessments and would look to use the investigation findings as it works in collaboration with partners.

42. The **Older People’s Commissioner for Wales** referred to my findings in its recent report on the experiences of growing older in Wales<sup>2</sup>. The report reflected that a significant proportion of Wales’ unpaid carers are older people. It referred to barriers that unpaid carers face when seeking assessments to identify the support, services and resources they need to maintain their wellbeing while providing care, noting that, for older people, such delays often have serious

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<sup>2</sup> [Older People’s Commissioner for Wales Report - Growing Older in Wales: A snapshot of older people’s experiences](#)

consequences for their health and quality of life. It stated that, moving forward, support for unpaid carers needs to be improved significantly.

43. I was also pleased to see that the investigation report was referred to during a Senedd debate<sup>3</sup> about a proposed Bill on support for unpaid carers, in February 2025. The Welsh Government's Minister for Children and Social Care said that the SSWB Act imposes duties on local authorities and health boards to promote the wellbeing of carers and assess carers for support. There has been ongoing work under the Ministerial Advisory Group for Unpaid Carers since the publication of the ADSS Cymru rapid review on carers rights in 2023<sup>4</sup>. All local authorities were asked to complete self-assessments of their services to carers, completed in 2024, and meetings with unpaid carers were held to understand their view of best practice. Meetings with Heads of Children and Adult Services have taken place. The resulting action plan is due to be completed in March 2026. In addition, the Minister has approved additional funding of £47,000 to provide project management support and development of resources and materials. The Minister has also written to the leaders of all the Councils to emphasise the importance of this work and to ensure all local authorities are delivering on their statutory duties towards unpaid carers.

44. The investigation report listed the actions that the Welsh Government was already undertaking in relation to unpaid carers. The Minister for Children and Social Care published a statement in June 2025

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<sup>3</sup> [Senedd Debate on 5 February 2025](#)

<sup>4</sup> [ADSS Cymru rapid review on carers rights 2023](#)

which confirmed the Welsh Government recognised and valued the huge contribution made by unpaid carers through the care they provide to their family and friends. The Welsh Government has approved an Unpaid Carers' Delivery Plan for 2025 – 2026<sup>5</sup>, developed to implement the Strategy for Unpaid Carers, 2021. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has also approved the development of a new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers, which will be out for public consultation in January 2026.

45. In February 2025, the Minister for Children and Social Care confirmed that the Welsh Government was providing funding of £5.25 million via the Short Breaks Scheme and Carers' Support Fund, to help unpaid carers take breaks from their caring responsibilities and receive financial support for essential items. It was acknowledged that almost half of the unpaid carers accessing the schemes in the past 3 years were not previously known to services and so the schemes showed the significant added value as a gateway to other forms of support. In addition, in November 2025, the Minister announced further funding for 3 years until the end of March 2029, of £15.75 million.

46. More recently, I was also pleased to see reference to the investigation report during a Senedd debate on a national care service for Wales<sup>6</sup> on 5 November 2025. The challenges faced by unpaid carers were highlighted, including financial hardship, lack of support and inconsistent delivery of respite and needs assessments.

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<sup>5</sup> [Welsh Government Strategy for unpaid carers: delivery plan 2025 to 2026](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Senedd Debate on 5 November 2025](#)

47. The findings of the Carers Wales State of Caring 2025 survey<sup>7</sup>, were also released at the beginning of November 2025. It showed that many unpaid carers continue to experience negative consequences to undertaking their caring roles, including in relation to their physical and mental health, careers and finances. As part of its recommendations, it calls on the Welsh Government to commit to an introduction of an Action and Implementation Plan for unpaid carers that should, amongst other things, utilise and address the findings of my investigation. It makes a number of other recommendations, including to ensure consistent minimum levels of support across local authorities in Wales, plan for a large-scale awareness campaign to improve carers' awareness of their rights, improve funding, adequately resource local authorities, provide appropriate training for staff in statutory services, and work to remove barriers to unpaid carers accessing support.

48. It is, therefore, clear that supporting unpaid carers is an area of focus across Wales and I am pleased to see ongoing development of the services and support offered.

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<sup>7</sup> [Carers Wales State of Caring survey](#)

## Comments on the draft report

49. In response to the draft report, Caerphilly County Borough Council said that it continued to want to implement the changes to its young carers' assessment form on a Gwent wide basis. However, at present, there was no guaranteed implementation date.

Therefore, in the interim it had updated and implemented its own young carers' assessment form in line with the recommendations of the investigation. In respect to the aspect of the recommendation which required it to explicitly ask if the carer was willing and able to continue in their caring role, it said that it had adapted the language for young carers. It said this question would be covered by the practitioner during the conversation with the young person when asking about the young carer's feelings about caring, choice in caring, and what they could and could not do. I appreciate the Council wants to ensure the language used is appropriate. However, it is essential that the Practitioner undertaking the assessment understands the purpose of the questions about feelings and choices and the need to establish if the young carer is willing and able to perform their caring role.

50. Ceredigion County Council said that it remained committed to meeting the outstanding recommendations. It said that new forms would be integrated into the new system and, although the timescales may not correlate to those stipulated in the report, it remained a priority to make the improvements identified by my investigation.

51. Flintshire County Council said that, at the current time, adding a summary of the assessment to the cover letter would be a manual process. It considered this would create unnecessary duplication, given the full assessment accompanies the letter. It said it considered its resources would be better directed to completing more assessments and providing more support to carers. However, it said that it would look to include the summary in the future, when its new system is implemented, that will provide enhanced opportunities to automate processes and improve efficiency. It said that the implementation of the new system was currently planned for November 2026.

52. Neath Port Talbot Council did not provide any comments in response to the draft report.

## Conclusions

53. There is no doubt that unpaid carers continue to play a fundamental role in supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our society and are crucial to supporting Social Care in Wales.

54. I welcome and commend the fact that the Investigated Authorities have complied with the majority of the recommendations made in the investigation report. Action taken will have improved the identification of carers, and how carers are informed of, and understand, their rights and the support available to them. The actions taken will also have helped to ensure that staff have the appropriate training to undertake their roles, whether that is in

directly assessing carers or signposting them to the appropriate team or service. Improvements in the monitoring and auditing of carers' needs assessments will also help ensure learning points are identified, along with best practice.

55. All of the Investigated Authorities agreed to implement, within 6 months, the recommendations following the investigation report. It took significantly longer than 6 months to work with them to obtain sufficient information that they had implemented the recommendations. I appreciate that implementing some of the recommendations has been impacted by events, such as delays in implementing new case management IT systems or consultations on a regional basis, and that this work is ongoing. However, it was disappointing that both Flintshire County Council and Ceredigion County Council chose not to fully implement the recommendation in relation to the cover letter to go with the assessment form. The intention of the recommendation was to ensure that, having had their needs assessed, carers were clear on the outcome(s) of their assessment and were clear on review arrangements and how a review or re-assessment could be requested. I urge these bodies to fully implement the outstanding recommendations and have made further recommendations to these bodies, as detailed in paragraph 59. I also remain concerned that Ceredigion County Council does not have a carers' needs assessment form that is compliant with my recommendation, as this is fundamental to the carers assessment process. In light of these findings, I have also made a further recommendation that this report should be shared with the Audit and Risk committee for each of these authorities, who should oversee compliance with these recommendations.

56. Following its Post-Legislative Review of the PSOW Act 2019, the Senedd's Finance Committee recommended that my office, as a matter of principle, shares own initiative investigation reports with authorities other than those subject to any investigation, and encourages them to implement any recommendations.<sup>8</sup> This has been our practice since the own initiative power of investigation came into effect – we will continue to do so, in line with the Senedd Committee's recommendation, to ensure that there is sector wide learning and improvement from any own initiative investigations we undertake.

57. Given the percentage of carers' assessments undertaken across the other 18 non-investigated authorities, I was pleased to receive, and welcomed, comments from 8 of these authorities, detailing how they had considered the investigation's findings and identified potential service improvements to the administration of carers' needs assessments. I hope all of the non-investigated authorities have taken the opportunity to take forward any relevant learning points to improve their services and, if they have not done so, I urge them to take action.

58. I am concluding the follow-up work into the administration of carers' needs assessments through the publication of this report. It has been positive to see the ongoing work that has been evidenced by the Investigated Authorities and some of the non-investigated authorities. I encourage all 22 local authorities and the Welsh Government to continue to strive to improve and share best practice

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<sup>8</sup> [Senedd's post-legislative review of the PSOW Act 2019](#)

in relation to identifying and supporting unpaid carers in the often difficult roles they play in supporting their loved ones.

## Further recommendations

59. I recommend that the Investigated Authorities, where indicated, implement the following recommendations:

	Applicable to:	Recommendation:
a)	Ceredigion County Council	<p>Amend the carers' needs assessment forms to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Include whether the cared for person has been involved/consulted and, if not, why not.</li> <li>ii. Explicitly address and record the question of the extent to which the carer is able and willing to provide care.</li> <li>iii. Explicitly address and record the questions of whether the carer works, wishes to work and whether they are participating, or wish to participate, in education, training or leisure activities, unless these considerations are not relevant, in which case the reason for this should be recorded.</li> <li>iv. Include whether the carer has been offered a copy of their assessment and the response recorded.</li> <li>v. Include whether the carers are satisfied with the assessment</li> </ul>

		process and the outcomes identified to meet their needs and whether they are satisfied that the identified outcomes, at that point, will fully meet their needs, allowing their views, and any disagreement, or areas of unmet need, to be recorded.
b)	Ceredigion County Council  Flintshire County Council	Ensure they have a template letter when sharing the completed assessment with the carer, which includes an outline of the assessment and an explanation of what the review arrangements are (or are not) and how carers can make contact to request a review or a re-assessment.
c)	Ceredigion County Council  Flintshire County Council	The final report should be shared with, and compliance with these recommendations should be overseen by, the Audit and Risk committee of the authority. The Audit and Risk committee should provide an update to this office at 6 months and 1 year, from the date of this report.

60. I am pleased to note that, in commenting on the draft of this report, Ceredigion County Council and Flintshire County Council have agreed to implement the recommendations.

Michelle Morris

18 February 2026

Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus | Public Services

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## Appendix 1

### Data from the non-investigated authorities

61. Population data has been taken from the Office of National Statistics 2021 census, which estimated the population for each area<sup>9</sup> and the percentage of carers (over 5 years old)<sup>10</sup>.

Table 1 – Population data from the Census 2021

Local Authority	Population estimate	Percentage of carers (over 5) in population	Estimated number of carers in population
Blaenau Gwent	66,900	11.3%	7,560
Bridgend	145,500	11.0%	16,005
Cardiff	362,400	9.4%	34,066
Carmarthenshire	187,900	11.1%	20,857
Conwy	114,800	10.2%	11,710
Denbighshire	95,800	11.0%	10,538
Gwynedd	117,400	8.9%	10,449
Isle of Anglesey	68,900	9.9%	6,821
Merthyr Tydfil	58,800	11.3%	6,644
Monmouthshire	93,000	9.7%	9,021
Newport	159,600	10.3%	16,439
Pembrokeshire	123,400	10.7%	13,204
Powys	133,200	10.0%	13,320
Rhondda Cynon Taf	237,700	11.2%	26,622
Swansea	238,500	11.1%	26,474
Torfaen	92,300	11.4%	10,522
Vale of Glamorgan	131,800	10.2%	13,444
Wrexham	135,100	10.0%	13,510

<sup>9</sup> [Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

62. The non-investigated authorities provided data relating to the number of carers' needs assessments completed for both adult carers and young carers in 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, including the number of assessments which led to a support plan. This data is shown in Tables 2 – 19.

**Table 2 – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	302	130	85
Number of adult support plans	75	35	18
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	24.83%	26.92%	21.18%
Number of young carer assessments	*	143	74
Number of young carer support plans	*	11	66
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan		7.69%	89.19%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments		273	159
Total number as a percentage of the carer population		3.61%	2.10%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans		46	84
Total number as a percentage of the carer population		0.61%	1.11%

\* Young carers' data was not available for 2021/2022

**Table 3 – Bridgend County Borough Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	140	203	169
Number of adult support plans	25	16	21
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	17.86%	7.88%	12.43%
Number of young carer assessments	68	111	94
Number of young carer support plans	1	0	0
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	1.47%	0%	0%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	208	314	263
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.30%	1.96%	1.64%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	26	16	21
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.16%	0.10%	0.13%

**Table 4 – Cardiff Council**

	<b>2021/ 2022</b>	<b>2022/ 2023</b>	<b>2023/ 2024</b>
Number of adult assessments	559	609	473
Number of adult support plans	1	0	1
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	0.18%	0%	0.21%
Number of young carer assessments	55	94	74
Number of young carer support plans	2	7	5
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	3.64%	7.45%	6.76%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	614	703	547
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.80%	2.06%	1.61%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	3	7	6
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.01%	0.02%	0.02%

**Table 5 – Carmarthenshire County Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	913	552	935
Number of adult support plans	523	127	129
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	57.28%	23.01%	13.80%
Number of young carer assessments	56	40	72
Number of young carer support plans	30	21	27
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	53.57%	52.50%	37.50%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	969	592	1007
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	4.65%	2.84%	4.83%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	553	148	156
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	2.65%	0.71%	0.75%

**Table 6 – Conwy County Borough Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	291	323	264
Number of adult support plans	177	162	141
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	60.82%	50.15%	53.41%
Number of young carer assessments	*	*	38**
Number of young carer support plans	*	*	35
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan			92.11%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments			302
Total number as a percentage of the carer population			2.58%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans			176
Total number as a percentage of the carer population			1.50%

\* Young carers' data for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 was not available.

\*\* In addition, there were 44 reviews for existing carers in this period.

Table 7 – Cyngor Gwynedd

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	224	210	263
Number of adult support plans	152	158	197
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	67.86%	75.24%	74.90%
Number of young carer assessments	50	45	69
Number of young carer support plans	38	34	34
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	76.00%	75.56%	49.28%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	274	255	332
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	2.62%	2.44%	3.18%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	190	192	231
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.82%	1.84%	2.21%

**Table 8 – Denbighshire County Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	390	401	370
Number of adult support plans	294	307	339
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	75.38%	76.56%	91.62%
Number of young carer assessments	114	103	60
Number of young carer support plans	114	101	45
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	100.00%	98.06%	75.00%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	504	504	430
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	4.78%	4.78%	4.08%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	408	408	384
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	3.87%	3.87%	3.64%

**Table 9 – Isle of Anglesey County Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	442	499	497
Number of adult support plans	372	367	342
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	84.16%	73.55%	68.81%
Number of young carer assessments	43	57	82
Number of young carer support plans	22	28	50
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	51.16%	49.12%	60.98%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	485	556	579
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	7.11%	8.15%	8.49%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	394	395	392
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	5.78%	5.79%	5.75%

**Table 10 – Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023 /2024
Number of adult assessments	35	28	31
Number of adult support plans	6	6	7
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	17.14%	21.43%	22.58%
Number of young carer assessments	29	36	36
Number of young carer support plans	29	36	36
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	100%	100%	100%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	64	64	67
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.96%	0.96%	1.01%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	35	42	43
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.53%	0.63%	0.65%

**Table 11 – Monmouthshire County Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	196	192	147
Number of adult support plans	48	58	34
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	24.49%	30.21%	23.13%
Number of young carer assessments	40	29	16
Number of young carer support plans*	18	10	12
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	45.00%	34.48%	75.00%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	236	221	163
Total number as a percentage of the carer* population	2.62%	2.45%	1.81%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	66	68	46
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.73%	0.75%	0.51%

\* Monmouthshire County Council highlighted these figures represent the number of carers / young carers assessments undertaken during the year, where the outcome was that needs could be met with a carers support plan or care and support plan.

**Table 12 – Newport City Council**

	<b>2021/ 2022</b>	<b>2022/ 2023</b>	<b>2023/ 2024</b>
Number of adult assessments	221	253	227
Number of adult support plans	28	71	50
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	12.67%	28.06%	22.03%
Number of young carer assessments	82	77	66
Number of young carer support plans	82	77	66
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	100%	100%	100%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	303	330	293
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.84%	2.01%	1.78%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	110	148	116
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.67%	0.90%	0.71%

**Table 13 – Pembrokeshire County Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	165	375	546
Number of adult support plans	128	316	451
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	77.58%	84.27%	82.60%
Number of young carer assessments	30	131	110
Number of young carer support plans	30	131	110
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	100%	100%	100%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	195	506	656
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.48%	3.83%	4.97%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	158	447	561
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.20%	3.39%	4.25%

**Table 14 – Powys County Council**

	<b>2021/ 2022</b>	<b>2022/ 2023</b>	<b>2023/ 2024</b>
Number of adult assessments	293	318	311
Number of adult support plans	120	114	98
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	40.96%	35.85%	31.51%
Number of young carer assessments	16	22	12
Number of young carer support plans	15	6	4
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	93.75%	27.27%	33.33%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	309	340	323
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	2.32%	2.55%	2.42%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	135	120	102
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.01%	0.90%	0.77%

Table 15 – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	481	301	246
Number of adult support plans	109	63	77
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	22.66%	20.93%	31.30%
Number of young carer assessments	87	121	124
Number of young carer support plans	74	77	83
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	85.06%	63.64%	66.94%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	568	422	370
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	2.13%	1.59%	1.39%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	183	140	160
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.69%	0.53%	0.60%

**Table 16 – Swansea Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments*	348	608	482
Number of adult support plans	225	341	290
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	64.66%	56.09%	60.17%
Number of young carer assessments	23	27	31
Number of young carer support plans	0	0	0
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	0%	0%	0%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	371	635	513
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.40%	2.40%	1.94%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	225	341	290
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.85%	1.29%	1.10%

\*Swansea Council said it also uses a third sector organisation to undertake proportionate assessments.

**Table 17 – Torfaen County Borough Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	128	130	150
Number of adult support plans*	20	12	25
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	15.63%	9.23%	16.67%
Number of young carer assessments	116	102	71
Number of young carer support plans	97	55	45
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	83.62%	53.92%	63.38%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	244	232	221
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	2.32%	2.20%	2.10%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	117	67	70
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.11%	0.64%	0.67%

\* Torfaen County Borough Council noted this figure does not include those carers whose services were recorded in a support plan for the cared for person.

**Table 18 – Vale of Glamorgan Council**

	<b>2021/ 2022</b>	<b>2022/ 2023</b>	<b>2023/ 2024</b>
Number of adult assessments	215	173	280
Number of adult support plans	23	40	125
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	10.70%	23.12%	44.64%
Number of young carer assessments	9	0	54
Number of young carer support plans	1	0	33
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	11.11%	N/A	61.11%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	224	173	334
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	1.67%	1.29%	2.48%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	24	40	158
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	0.18%	0.30%	1.18%

**Table 19 – Wrexham County Borough Council**

	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	2023/ 2024
Number of adult assessments	612	537	698
Number of adult support plans	445	474	493
Percentage of adult assessments that led to a support plan	72.71%	88.27%	70.63%
Number of young carer assessments	123	110	51
Number of young carer support plans	122	107	40
Percentage of young carer assessments that led to a support plan	99.19%	97.27%	78.43%
Total number of adult and young carer assessments	735	647	749
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	5.44%	4.79%	5.54%
Total number of adult and young carer support plans	567	581	533
Total number as a percentage of the carer population	4.20%	4.30%	3.95%



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**CF35 5LJ**

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