



Consultation Response
Draft national framework for continuing NHS healthcare
The Welsh Government
August 2019

Introduction

Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to respond to the Welsh Government's consultation on the draft national framework for Continuing Health Care and decision support tool.

Question 1

In addition to revising the Framework we are placing a strong emphasis on its effective implementation.

Are there particular areas you would wish to see addressed in materials developed to support implementation?

When carers are caring for an individual in receipt of Continuing Health Care funding, there can be a lack of clarity as to which public body is responsible for supporting the carer, and consequently a lack of support for the carer.

We would therefore wish to see the materials to support implementation include a prompt to inform the carer of their right to a carer's assessment by the local authority under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and to signpost the carer to the local authority's Information, Advice and Assistance service, to request a carer's assessment if they wish to do so.

Providing care to a family member or friend can create considerable physical and emotional strain for the person providing care. For older carers, this may happen at a stage in their life where their own health has begun to deteriorate. This situation can be aggravated further by insufficient support from health and social care services.

Carer wellbeing is a key factor in hospital admissions, readmission and delays in transfers of care, and in admission to nursing and residential care.¹ Giving carers extra support to manage their caring role more effectively and maintain good health could reduce unwanted residential care admissions.

Many older people do not recognise themselves as carers. In one survey,² 55% of carers had taken over a year to recognise their caring role, and 24% took over five years to identify as a carer.

Many carers do not live with the person they care for, with more than half of those aged 60-69 providing care outside the home³. In some cases they may be friends or neighbours rather than relatives providing support. Carers in this situation are often overlooked and may not be offered a carer's assessment or have access to support services.

If carers are not identified early enough, they may reach a crisis point later which has long term implications for their own health and wellbeing and often leads to the person they care for being admitted to residential care.

The 2010 legal framework for recognising and informing carers has been dismantled. The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 was repealed in April 2016 when the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 came into force. The Carers Measure had placed a legislative duty on local authorities and NHS bodies to work together to support family or unpaid carers, and Health Boards were designated as the lead agencies when developing local carers' strategies.

However, most carers' first point of contact with a statutory agency is still with the NHS – in four out of five cases, within primary care.⁴ Secondary care NHS services also have an important role in identifying and signposting carers in hospital and other secondary care settings.

A vital statutory role therefore has been lost within the NHS in identifying carers and signposting them to sources of support. 68% of carers in Wales said their GP was aware of their caring responsibilities. 34% were offered a free flu jab but 50% said they

¹ The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care, Supporting Carers: The Case for Change, 2011

² Carers UK, Missing out; the identification challenge, 2016.

³ Social Market Foundation, Caring for Carers, 2018

⁴ Carers Wales, State of Caring, 2018

were not offered any further advice, information, support or where to could go for help.⁵ There is also concern that existing carer lead roles within the NHS will not be prioritised once transitional funding comes to an end.⁶

It is therefore essential that the NHS continues to be responsible alongside health authorities for identifying carers and signposting them to sources of help. The CHC Framework provides an opportunity to help identify carers and ensure that they receive the support they need, and we believe that that opportunity should not be wasted.

Question 2

The Framework as it stands is a technical document aimed at specialist professionals who oversee assessment and care provision. We would welcome your thoughts on the potential publication of a simplified Framework aimed at both practitioners and service users. Comments on its appropriateness, including suggested format, content and style are welcome.

We would welcome the publication of a simplified framework which can be used by practitioners, service users and carers.

We believe that it should include information about the carer's right to a carer's assessment by the local authority under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and signpost the carer to the local authority's Information, Advice and Assistance service, to request a carer's assessment if they wish to do so.

The information should make it clear that the purpose of the assessment is to support the carer to have a life of their own alongside caring, and not to assess their ability to care for the person receiving Continuing Health Care.

⁵ Carers Wales, State of Caring, 2018

⁶ Carers Trust Wales, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 in relation to carers, <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s79500/C%2023%20-%20Carers%20Trust%20Wales.pdf>