



National Strategy for Unpaid Carers

Consultation response summary

April 2026

Age Cymru is the leading national charity working to improve the lives of 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.

Increasing identification

We believe the strategy is more likely to improve the lives of more unpaid carers if a section on identification is dedicated to older carers. One measure under outcome two is the increase in contacts by unpaid carers recorded by local authorities. The draft strategy recognises that older people are less likely to identify themselves as carers, so monitoring must include a breakdown of identification by age to ensure that actions can be taken to focus resourcing on areas where identification is still low.

We are pleased to see recognition in the strategy that digital exclusion can be a barrier. We would like the final strategy to commit to all awareness raising plans including off-line communications in all places that older unpaid carers are likely to be in contact with.

Access to services

We welcome the recognition that what services are there are far below the levels needed at the right time and in the right place for carers. The Health and Social Care Committee's April 2026 'At Breaking Point' report highlights the lack of sustainability of carer services. It highlights the increased fragility of third sector services. As such we would expect to see this section to acknowledge the need for a long-term commitment to support for community groups and contracted third sector services.

Respite care (termed 'replacement care' in the strategy)

We welcome the actions included in this area. The commitment to the National Short Breaks Scheme until 2029 is particularly welcomed, as this is a scheme that has demonstrated positive outcomes for carers.

The draft consultation details that one measure of success will be the number of carers accessing respite care. In our annual surveys, consistent feedback from older carers is that the support offered by social care often does not improve the wellbeing

of the carer or the cared-for person. In our reports on delays in access to social care for older people, we heard from local authorities how their plans to improve support for carers were not progressed and so carers support was not getting better.

We suggest that the measure should go further and measure whether the respite care provided meets the needs of the carer and the cared for and produces improved wellbeing.

Older carer's challenges

Our analysis of results from our 2025 survey showed that older carers experience a higher rate of challenges over other older people across many areas of their lives.

Finances

We believe this priority should consider going further than 'provide unpaid carers with information to maximise income and promote benefit take up,' as our recent engagement demonstrates many instances where maximising incomes still leaves older carers just above the threshold for support despite being in poverty. To address these issues, we would wish to see a commitment to working with the UK Government to address threshold issues.

The strategy acknowledges some of the additional financial costs for carers. It does not acknowledge the fact that, for carers with their own health issues and mobility needs, paying for 'edge of care services' like cleaning, shopping, and 'handyman' type services comes at a considerable cost. Without that recognition in the strategy, care planning and financial planning ignores these areas and risks increased levels of poverty for older carers.

Mental health and wellbeing

Given the positive effects of peer support groups in providing earlier help and advice to carers, we also expect to see a commitment to support via health boards and local authorities to include peer groups as part of care planning routes and ensure that those groups are supported to continue where they already exist, or develop in areas where they do not. This will improve consistency in the carer 'offer' across Wales and support national commitments to earlier intervention and prevention.

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