



SPECIAL GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 7TH MAY 2025

**SUBJECT: OMBUDSMAN'S OWN INITIATIVE INVESTIGATION –
CARERS ASSESSMENTS**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to appraise members of Audit Committee of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Own Initiative Investigation report into unpaid carers assessments and to advise members on the progress of implementation of recommendations outlined in the report.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly CBC was one of four Local Authorities in Wales selected by the Ombudsman to participate in this own initiative investigation. The report identified areas of good practice across the four authorities and outlined recommendations for consideration and progress again across the four local Authorities. The report and learning has been shared with the other eighteen Local Authorities in Wales.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members note the content of the report, and the progress made against the action plan to address the recommendations.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Report has been accepted. The recommendations are a statutory requirement prescribed by ombudsman.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Public Services Ombudsman undertook a nationwide consultation on the principle of undertaking an investigation into the “ease of access for carers to, and the effectiveness of carers’ needs assessments” in 2022, following consideration of the feedback gained from a variety of sources. The Ombudsman selected four local authorities for a focussed and proportionate investigation, relating to carers’ needs assessments only.
- 5.2 In the context of this report a carer is identified as someone who is an unpaid person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or a disabled child.
- 5.3 The Ombudsman’s Own Investigation was introduced as a new power under The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, it is described as a systematic investigation into a chose area of administration, where there are grounds for belief that the investigation may be of public interest. Typically, it is not triggered by any complaint or representation.
- 5.4 This investigation focused solely on the administrative processes of access to, and completion of carers needs assessments within four selected Local Authorities, namely: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Ceredigion County Council, Flintshire County Council and Neath Port Talbot Council.
- 5.5 The rationale presented by the Ombudsman for Caerphilly CBC to be included in the initiative was:
- *Caerphilly County Borough Council is the local authority with the second highest proportion of people who provide care in Wales.*
 - *Caerphilly County Borough Council also has a high proportion of disabled people, and a high proportion of localities classified as most deprived in Wales, making it one of the most deprived areas in Wales. It is appropriate to consider how the demographic influences the provision of carers’ needs assessments in this local authority.*
 - *Evidence gathered during the consultation indicated that carers’ needs assessments tended to be included in the integrated assessment rather than a stand-alone carer’s needs assessment.*
 - *Evidence gathered during the consultation suggested that, in a number of cases, the services provided do not reflect the assessed outcomes/needs.*
 - *Evidence received from carers in response to the consultation indicated a distrust in the local authority and a fear that services would be removed, and that carers’ needs assessments were not being routinely offered to carers.*
 - *Only 2% of adult carers’ needs assessments led to a support plan. However, 87% of Young Carers’ needs assessments led to a support plan. It is appropriate to examine this disparity.*
- 5.6 The considered the following points:
- *Whether the local authorities being investigated are meeting their statutory duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act*

2014 and its Code of Practice, and The Care and Support (Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

- *Whether those entitled to a carer's needs assessment are made aware and understand their right to request a carer's needs assessment.*
- *Where carers' needs assessments are commissioned, whether those assessment services are being delivered appropriately and whether local authorities appropriately monitor the contracting arrangements.*
- *Whether carers' needs assessments, including those completed by commissioned service providers, are undertaken in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*

5.7 The Ombudsman requested specific data for the period of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 from this data they selected a sample of approximately 10% of the assessments completed in that period, which were reviewed by an independent practitioner.

5.8 The Ombudsman sent Online questionnaires to all practitioners involved in carrying out carers assessments. Additionally, they carried out interviews with carers who had had an assessment in the chosen time period and the carers lead for each organisation participating.

5.9 On 31st October 2024 the Ombudsman published their findings with recommendations to be implemented by the four participating Local Authorities and for consideration by all Local Authorities in Wales. (appendix 1)

5.10 Several of the recommendations have been superseded by work being undertaken at a Welsh Government level and are dependent upon the outcome of this national work, however Caerphilly and other Gwent partners are pilot sites for the new data reporting for unpaid carers.

5.11 An action plan has been developed and worked to since the publication of the ombudsman's final report (appendix 2)

5.12 **Conclusion**

5.13 To date the action plan is on schedule for being implemented, several areas of recommendation regarding recording on assessments and data have been superseded by Welsh Government data reporting changes for unpaid carers assessments. However, Caerphilly officers are actively participating in this work to ensure the recommendations are incorporated in this work, therefore the recommendations will be standard for all Welsh local authorities. This does mean completion will be outside the period of the recommendation's implementation locally, but this is out of our control due to it now being adopted as a national initiative.

5.14 Training packages have been identified for different staff groups, including eLearning, online webinars and in person training for assessors, however due to number of staff needing to access this training, whilst initial roll out and trialling of the training approaches has been utilised, roll out for the wider staff

group is planned over the next 12 months and will be an ongoing programme as part of induction for all public facing staff.

- 5.15 Feedback of progress is anticipated to be required to the ombudsman's office in late April 2025

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is assumed that completion of carers assessments will remain a statutory function.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Report is for information only, IIA not necessary.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All responses have been included in the body of the report.

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Appendix 1: Ombudsman Report
Appendix 2: Own Initiative Action Plan