

Dr Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer for Wales
<By email>

1st June 2020

Dear Dr Atherton,

The Impact of Coronavirus on Unpaid Carers

The Wales Carers Alliance exists to uphold unpaid carers rights and champion the voice of all carers across Wales. The Alliance comprises national voluntary organisations which have declared policies on carer support and work together at national level to support carers in Wales.

We have been meeting to discuss the impact of coronavirus. Together, we have been sharing the concerns carers are raising with us, how we are responding as national organisations and what our joint response as an Alliance should be.

I was asked to write to you to note the following points:

- It would be helpful if a clearer distinction could be made between paid carer workers and unpaid carers in all key messaging, as there is a lot of confusion when guidance is issued and communicated. Carers have also expressed concern that their voice is unintentionally being missed due to the lack of clarification.
- We would like to see guidance to carers on how best to transition out of lockdown whilst caring for an extremely vulnerable or vulnerable individual – carers and families are genuinely frightened about the next stage especially where the person they care for has a terminal and rapidly progressing disease e.g. MND. Or when they are supporting a family member with high complex needs, which makes them vulnerable in the wider community, such as children with disabilities.
- The lack of PPE is still an issue for unpaid carers, as is testing. Whilst we appreciate the essentials such as handwashing and social distancing as a mechanism to reduce risk, PPE is still being inconsistently used by care workers and is largely unavailable for unpaid carers. We call for consistent access to PPE and testing to be available for unpaid carers across Wales. Without this, some of the most vulnerable in society may be put at unnecessary risk, alongside those that are caring for them.
- There is confusion about who is extremely vulnerable and the lack of acknowledgement that those with certain conditions have a rapidly changing disease – lack of guidance on how individuals can request inclusion e.g. through their GPs with their GPs approval. That said, people have reported that their GPs are unclear about this too. An updated written

statement around the new shielding letter that is due to be sent, and the next phase of recovery, would be beneficial for all unpaid carers

- Many unpaid carers are taking on additional responsibilities and are holding fragile situations together. They are unclear whether they can access clinical interventions and are often immobilised from doing so because they are frightened of exposing their families to Covid. We ask that the pressures on unpaid carers be part of all planning discussions around opening up clinical services again, and appropriate clear information be shared with us as an Alliance so we can support Carers to access community services safely and with increased confidence.

We would be happy to discuss any of the above points in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Claire Morgan
Chair

On behalf of the Alliance members:

Age Cymru
All Wales Forum of Parent Carers
Alzheimer's Society
Care and Repair Cymru
Carers Trust Wales
Carers Wales
Children in Wales
Hafal

Learning Disability Wales
Macmillan Cancer Support
Marie Curie
MND Association
MS Society Cymru
Parkinson's UK Cymru
SNAP Cymru
Stroke Association