# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Written Statement on Carers** |
| **DATE**  | **04 May 2020** |
| **BY** | **Julie Morgan AM, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Every day, thousands of carers help people stay safe and well in their own homes. This support has become even more crucial during the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the last two months, more people have taken on a caring role – people have moved homes, left their families and, in some cases, given up work to care for and protect relatives or friends. The legion of unpaid carers has helped key services in Wales to cope with the increased pressure caused by coronavirus.

We are committed to supporting carers. Our landmark Social Services and Well-being Act gave carers equal rights to care and support as the people they care for.

I know the emergency Coronavirus Act has caused some anxiety that carers’ legal rights may be compromised and that arrangements to support them and those they care for may be withdrawn.

This emergency legislation is not intended to weaken the rights of carers in Wales. I expect local authorities to maintain the rights provided under the 2014 Act. I know local authorities will do everything they can to maintain care and support during the pandemic.

Local authorities and care providers are under pressure – they are facing the dual challenge of workforce shortages due to sickness and new working patterns as a result of the restrictions. Some decisions may be needed about prioritising care and or support but these will be based on the overarching principles and core values for social care of voice, control and co-production.

If any changes are made they must only be temporary, justifiable due to unavoidable local circumstances and they will be removed at the first available opportunity. If there are any changes to an individual’s care or support, it must return to their pre-modification arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity. We will keep any changes under review.

We have worked with carers’ organisations and other partners across social care to develop statutory guidance for local authorities during this period. It seeks to balance rights with the critical pressures on social care.

I have set out very clear expectations that local authorities must ensure care and support arrangements are sustainable. Decisions made by individuals and their families in response to the pandemic do not provide a basis for determining whether or how to meet needs for the future. The abilities of people to cope during a period of crisis is not an indication of their ability to provide care and support for prolonged periods.

The third sector has been swift and flexible in its response to coronavirus. I am keen that we learn from the new ways of working, which have developed, as and when we emerge from lockdown.

To support this, and to strengthen the third sector infrastructure in Wales, the £24m Third Sector Covid-19 Response Fund was launched on 6 April. We have also asked all 32 recipients of the £8.5m Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant to refocus their projects to support the response to the current pandemic.

Engagement with carers and their representatives continues to inform our policy development and service delivery during the pandemic. We have worked closely with Carers Trust Wales and partners to develop resources, which will support individual carers to develop positive relationships with local pharmacists during this crisis and beyond.

We are working with partners to ensure there is provision in place to support the learning of young carers, whilst understanding the additional pressure placed on young carers, given their responsibilities within the home. We want to ensure they are supported to balance school work and home life, so that their own health and wellbeing does not suffer.

I am convening a task and finish group with carers’ representatives to consider emerging evidence and guidance about coronavirus alongside what carers are telling us they need. This will ensure our current and future actions deliver the maximum benefit. The group will support us to consider the specific needs of a broad range of carers as and when current lockdown restrictions are eased.

Coronavirus is changing the way we live, work and care for our families and friends. More of us are experiencing life as a full time carer or volunteering within our local community. The pandemic has placed a well-deserved spotlight on frontline workers in the health and care system but we must also recognise the role of unpaid carers and support them to live well and continue caring with confidence.