



Delyth Jewell MS

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23 October 2020

Dear Delyth

Thank you for raising important issues regarding the effect that ongoing restrictions are having on unpaid carers, particularly those who would usually rely on day care centre facilities as respite, at the Senedd on 13 October 2020.

You asked about the circumstances under which day care centre facilities could reopen. The decision on resuming activities rests with local authorities. In making their decision local authorities need to ensure the activity can operate in a Covid-safe way with the necessary social distancing and other protections in place, and that those using the activity and their families feel comfortable and happy to return to the modified service.

The Senedd endorsed our conclusion to introduce a “fire break”, which is necessary in order to tackle the current rising Covid infection rate, and which came into effect on Friday 23 October. Nevertheless we continue to plan for recovery, working with health boards, local authorities and many others, to ensure those who need services can access them, whilst protecting people’s health. Following the end of the “fire break” period, it may still be some time before services are fully reopened and so it will be important for local authority teams to communicate with carers and others what support they can provide in the meantime.

You asked what guidance and support could be made available to councils to help them provide individual day facilities or individual support for as long as those centres are not able to open. During these very difficult times, I do expect local authorities to continue to meet people’s care and support needs and I’m pleased that other ways of maintaining contact and providing activities have been used such as phone calls, zoom sessions and on-line activities, when particular activities have had to close. I hope these have gone some way to filling the gap.

Local authorities and communities have been creative and developed numerous alternative approaches to ensure families can continue to access care and support. I have asked my officials to capture and to share these across Wales to help inform and maintain provision over the winter period and beyond. I have also asked that they invite stakeholders to identify barriers to maintaining provision in a Covid-safe way, and how the Welsh Government can support them to mitigate those barriers.

In July, we published guidance on the reopening and safe use of multi-purpose community centres. The guidance is for those managing community centres, village halls, church halls

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

and other community centres, on safely re-opening multi-purpose buildings. It will be relevant to local authorities responsible for providing for the physical, social, cultural or intellectual development or welfare of the community. The guidance can be found at the following link: <https://gov.wales/safe-use-multi-purpose-community-centres-covid-19>. In light of the announced “fire break” we are reviewing all relevant coronavirus guidance to ensure it is both clear and up to date. This action throughout Wales will have an impact of a wide range of services and businesses, though we certainly hope that this will be for the minimum possible time period.

We recognise the importance of helping people with their mental health and wellbeing at such a difficult time. We announced additional funding of £50,000 to Carers Wales to increase psychological support for unpaid carers. This funding is providing more carers with professional and peer support to help them manage their mental health. I have included a link to the scheme here: <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/me-time>

A new leaflet has also been launched by Welsh Government, working with NHS Wales and several third sector organisations. This identifies a number of different mental health and support services that your constituent may wish to know about, and potentially access. Please see the attachment at **Doc 1**.

On 20 October, I announced a new fund of over £1m to help Wales’ unpaid carers cope with the financial pressures of Covid-19. The fund will be available until 31 March 2021 and I hope it will go some way towards helping those carers experiencing emotional distress caused by financial difficulties.

Support for those in need of care and their unpaid carers is also available from a number of organisations, including the following:

- Mencap Cymru’s has a Learning Disability Helpline on 0808 808 1111 which is open from Monday to Friday or they can be contacted by email: https://www.mencap.org.uk/contact/contact_mencap_wise
- Age Cymru offer advice on a range of issues. They can be contacted on their advice line using the following number 08000 223 444 or on their website <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/>
- Carers Wales telephone helpline is available on 0808 808 7777 from Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm or they can be contacted by email: advice@carersuk.org

On a final point I am pleased to say that we have now launched our public consultation document for developing our new National Plan for Carers. The consultation period is for three months, with the deadline for responses of 20 January 2021. We welcome feedback from a wide variety of voices and experiences, from carers themselves, professionals working in health and social care, organisations across the public, private and third sectors, as well as the wider public. This will inform our plans going forward and the shape of our current national carers’ policy priorities. It has been published at <https://gov.wales/carers-national-plan-wales>

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services