



THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN CARERS STRATEGY

2008 – 2011

Contents

1. Statement of Purpose
2. Details about Carers
3. Requirements of Social Services Departments
4. Carers Services Funding
5. Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
6. Strategic Objectives
7. Appendices
 - Appendix A Key Legislation
 - Appendix B Results of Surveys
 - Appendix C Developments Since 1999

The Vale of Glamorgan Carers Strategy 2008

Within the Vale of Glamorgan, partnership between statutory agencies, voluntary sector agencies and carers is essential for the effective implementation of the Carers Strategy. The aim is to make the best use of available resources by working in a co-ordinated way.

1. Statement of Purpose

This Carers Strategy aims to:

- Recognise the contribution that carers make.
- Recognise that carers have needs in their own right.
- Identify carers.
- Involve carers in the planning and development of services.
- Provide information for carers.
- Provide support and practical help for carers.
- Promote understanding of the needs of carers.
- Promote the Carers Strategy to a wider audience.

The Carers Strategy was developed jointly by:

- Carers.
- The Vale of Glamorgan Council staff.
- The Vale Local Health Board staff.
- The Carers Centre, Cardiff and the Vale.
- British Red Cross
- Job Centre Plus
- Barry College
- Action for Children (Formerly NCH)
- Vale Volunteer Bureau
- Vale Centre for Voluntary Services
- Age Concern
- Hafal
- Crossroads in the Vale

2. Details about Carers

2.1 Definition of a carer

- A carer is a person who provides help or assistance to an adult or child who could not manage alone otherwise due to illness, disability or old age.
- A carer is a person who has taken a responsibility for the care of a dependent individual on an unpaid regular basis.
- A carer can be a spouse, parent, relative, friend, neighbour, son or daughter.
- A carer does not necessarily live in the same household as the person for whom they care.

2.2 Statistics

According to the 2001 Census there are around 6 million carers throughout the UK, with 339,651 in Wales. The Census indicates that there are a larger proportion of adult carers in Wales (16%) than England (12%), this is partly explained by the higher disability rate in Wales.

Around 13,849 carers reside in the Vale of Glamorgan and:

- 9,222 carers provide 1-19 hours a week of care
- 1,537 carers provide 20-49 hours a week care
- 3,090 provide 50+ hours a week care

The 2001 census statistics for the UK show that:

- Women are 25% more likely to be carers than men
- 1 in five people aged 50-59 are providing some unpaid care
- There are 174,995 young people under the age of 18 who provide care – 13,029 of these provide care for 50 hours or more.
- 70% of those cared for are 65 years or over.
- 3 million carers also work, with 2 million of these working full time.

Research by Carers UK found that:

- 77% of respondents were worse off financially after becoming carers.
- Carers were over twice as likely to suffer from mental health problems when providing substantial care.
- Carers who provide high levels of care were also twice as likely to be permanently sick or disabled.

The care provided by these informal carers is worth an estimated £57 billion per year, which matches spending in this country on the National Health Service.

3. Requirements of Social Services Departments

In line with legislation, there are requirements and obligations placed on Councils in relation to carers. In the publication from CARERS UK entitled 'Carers and their Rights' May 2005, Luke Clements identifies the rights of carers and the obligations of Social Services Departments.

3.1 Carers' Rights

- A carer has a right to their views being taken into account when Social Services Departments are considering the provision of services for the disabled person they care for.
- A carer has a right to an initial assessment as to whether they are providing regular and substantial care. This takes into account the impact of caring for that individual carer.
NB. Even if a carer refuses this assessment, the law requires that 'their ability to manage' their caring role must be taken into account.
- If they are providing, or intend to provide, regular and substantial care, they have a right to a full assessment of their ability to provide care and to continue in this role, plus an assessment of their need for services under Section 2 of the Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000.

3.2 Social Services Departments' Obligations

- To consider whether a disabled person has any carers, and if so, consult them 'if appropriate'.
- To take all reasonable steps to reach agreement with the disabled person and, where appropriate, any carers of that person.
- To inform carers of their rights, particularly to an assessment.
- To decide whether the carer is providing substantial care on a regular basis (defined in Practice Guidance).
- If the carer is providing regular substantial care, to assess their ability to provide care and to continue to do so, and to assess their need for services under the 2000 Act (please refer to Section below outlining the manner and content of an assessment, particularly the consideration of whether a carer wishes to work, and the extent of risk to sustaining the caring role).
- To establish a Carers Information Strategy, which includes the creation of an A-Z of Carers' Services in relation to employment, training, leisure, lifelong learning opportunities, local and national sources of funding etc.
- To liaise with other public bodies to ensure that signposting information is available, and that local resources are developed to recognise and support carers, maybe with cross-cutting initiatives.
- To identify hidden carers.

3.3 The Carer's Assessment

The assessment is a statutory function of the Local Authority. Its purpose is to provide information for a decision on whether additional support is needed for the disabled person or for the carer.

The manner of the assessment is important, i.e.:

- Being acknowledged and listened to is very important for the carer.
- The carer has a right to an assessment in private and away from the cared for person – if necessary, different people can interview them.
- An advocate or friend can be present for the interview.
- There must be flexibility about the time and place of the assessment to suit the carer.

The content of the assessment:

- The legislative purpose of the assessment is to provide information which decides whether additional support should be provided either to the disabled person or to the carer him/herself.
- The assessment must address the key issue of the carers' ability to provide, and to continue to provide, care for the person they care for. It must identify and grade the extent of risk to sustaining the caring role. If the risk is critical, support must be given either to the carer with services (2000 Act) or to the disabled person with additional services (Community Care or Children Act legislation).
- The assessment must also address the issue of whether the carer works or wishes to work, as it is no longer lawful to assume a carer will give up work. In addition, whether the carer wishes to undertake education, training or leisure activities.
- The assessment should focus on the outcomes needed by the carer to help in their caring role and maintain their health and well being, e.g. well-timed breaks, opportunities to access a new support network.
- The assessor should be able to direct carers to appropriate information about employment, lifelong learning, training and leisure activities, funding sources etc.
NB. The Council needs to provide training for assessors to be able to fulfil this requirement.
- When assessing the need for services, it is unlawful to state that no domestic assistance or low level services can be provided. Cases must be considered on their individual merit for the impact on a carers' ability to provide care.

3.4 Carers' Services

The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 did not define what are carers' services, apart from:

A carers' service can be anything that could "help the carer care for the person they care for". In general, this cannot involve intimate care, but examples include:

(Under 2000 Act)

- Trips (holidays or special events)
- Driving lessons
- Travel assistance
- Training
- Laundry
- Gardening
- Help with housework

(Under Policy Guidance 2000 – 2004)

- Driving lessons
- Moving and handling classes
- A mobile phone
- Taxi to work
- Short holidays

(Under 2004 Practice Guidance)

- Computer
- Repairs/insurance for car where transport is essential to caring role
- Entry phone with audio/visual system if carer has mobility problems.
- Contribution to flight for grandmother to come from another country when rural homecare cannot deliver.

3.5 Responsibilities of Other Public Bodies

- The 2004 Act states that a Local Authority may request another body to assist in planning service provision for carers including Education, Housing and National Health Service. It can also request the provision of a service which must receive due consideration.
- Local Authorities are also advised to review how the National Health Service can be involved in the carers' assessment with National Health Service Commissioning agencies and providers.
- A multi-agency Carers Strategy needs to be established with agreed protocols from partner organisations.
- Working with carers in hospital is the responsibility of discharge co-ordinators. They need to give carers time to consider the options and inform them about support networks and available services.
- The needs of carers should be embedded into other local strategies e.g. welfare to work, joint investment plans, hospital discharge, and lifelong learning strategies.

4. Carers Services Funding 2000 – Current

The National Assembly's document '*Caring about Carers: A Strategy for Carers in Wales*' set out plans for improving the long term health and well-being of carers and those for whom they care. The Carers Special Grant Scheme came from this initiative to stimulate diversity and flexibility of services to carers. The support provided by carers enables vulnerable individuals to remain at home within an environment that is familiar and reassuring to them. Without this level of support, vulnerable individuals would be unable to remain at home and

alternative care provision would be required to ensure their safety and well being. The Grant enabled the Vale of Glamorgan Council to build on the support it already provided to carers through its established services. New services were developed to meet both the identified needs of carers and to improve the element of choice available to existing and potential service users.

Since the grant funding ceased to be ring fenced in March 2006, and the funding went straight into the revenue support grant, services already established remained.

The Funding provides services for the following user groups.

- Young Carers
- Physically Disabled Children
- People with a Learning Disability
- Adults with Mental Ill Health
- Older People with Mental Ill Health
- Older People

In addition to the above, there are several other support services available to all carers. These are provided by various organisations and include the provision of information, advice, advocacy and training to carers. A service was established to offer a handy-person to undertake small household repairs for carers. Many of these services are provided from the voluntary sector, enabling those who do not wish to involve Social Services, to receive an independent service.

New Carers Grant April 2006 – March 2009

This Welsh Assembly Government Grant was started in April 2006 and was to be used predominantly to address the needs of those who cared for someone with a mental health problem. The money could only be used as a direct result of a carers assessment. Evidence from the consultation that had been completed in August 2006 was used to inform decisions on spend.

In the year 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 the services provided through this fund have included:

- An additional short break respite bed for older people with a mental health problem.
- 3 Part time Carers Support Workers
- Additional funding for the Vale Young Carers Project
- A pot of money to fund additional respite for carers of older people with a mental ill health.
- A pot of money to fund emergency respite for all carers.
- Funding to set up a support group for carers of someone with a mental ill health.
- Information leaflet produced about local support groups.

5. The Vale of Glamorgan Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy 2008/11

This Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy (HSC&WB) 2008-2011 *Living Better, Living Longer* gives residents of the Vale of Glamorgan an opportunity to be more involved in the planning of services and assists them in maintaining a preventative perspective to their own health and care. In setting out to improve services, the HSC&W Strategy, devised in partnership with the statutory and independent sectors, gives a high priority to the needs of carers.

The HSC& W Strategy has identified six priority areas on which to focus its attention:

- Children & young people
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental ill health
- People with cancer
- People with chronic conditions
- Older People

Attention is given to the carers` needs of each of these groups.

As the focus changes to provide more care in, or closer to people's homes and to maintain individual independence, carers are increasingly recognised as a cornerstone of health and social care in the community.

With this in mind, carers in the Vale of Glamorgan will receive support and advice to support them in continuing their carer commitment. The need to improve carer identification, including young carers, is recognised. Work to support carers in monitoring their own health and well-being and to provide opportunities for work, life-long learning and leisure will take place throughout the lifetime of the HSC&W Strategy. In particular, a Vale Carers' Forum will be established to provide a voice and a network for carers, recognising the crucial service they provide.

Achievements under the HSC&W Strategy 2005-2008 included implementing a new carers' assessments process under the Unified Assessment, which was ongoing throughout the life of the Strategy, and will continue for the 2008-11 Strategy. Guidelines for staff undertaking the assessments are being approved. Training for staff is being undertaken and an increasing number of assessments are being made.

There has been an improvement in the provision of good quality, up to date information for carers, and a carer's information pack is now available, along with carers' information boards in GP Practices. All services funded under the previous Carers Grant have been maintained by the Council. The Carers Policy for the Vale of Glamorgan Council has been cited as an example of good practice by Carers Wales. The Mental Health Carers Grant has been received and a programme has been developed for its use to provide extra support for carers of people with mental illness.

The HSC&W Strategy 2008-2011 seeks to build on these achievements, and in so doing, make better and appropriate support available to carers. Assistance in this task will be given through the Carers Strategy 2008- 2011.

6. Strategic Objectives

A range of strategic objectives have been developed and are incorporated into an action plan:

These are:

Health and Social Care;
Information;
Support;
Young Carers (under 18);
Carers and Employment.)

These correspond with the strategic objectives of the Welsh Assembly Governments Carers Strategy (Caring about Carers.)

Appendix A

Key Legislation

Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995

The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act came into force in April 1996. This Act provided that:

- Carers who are providing 'regular and substantial care' are entitled to request an assessment of their ability to care ("a carer's assessment"). Local authorities must take the carers ability to care into account when looking at what support to provide the person in need of care.

Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000

The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 came into force in April 2001 in England and Wales. This Act provides:

- A right for a carer to request an assessment of their needs, even when the disabled person refuses an assessment. The carer has to be aged over 16 and has to be providing or intending to provide regular and substantial care for someone aged over 18.
- A right for parents of children with disabilities to request an assessment
- The power for local authorities to provide carers with services which help them to care
- The ability for local authorities to provide direct payments (i.e. cash instead of care) to parent carers, carers for their own services and young disabled people aged 16 or 17
- The ability for local authorities to charge carers for their own services.

Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 (England and Wales)

The Act came into force on 1 April 2005 in England and on 18 April in Wales. The principle aims of the Act are to:

- Ensure that work, life-long learning and leisure are considered when a carer is assessed.
- Give local authorities new powers to enlist the help of housing, health, education and other local authorities in providing support to carers.
- Places a duty on local authorities to inform carers of their right to an assessment.

In relation to Work, Training, Education and Leisure:

- The Act amends both the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 by ensuring that carers' assessments must include consideration of whether carers work, or wish to work, and are undertaking or wish to undertake, education, training or any leisure activity.

The Vale of Glamorgan Carers Strategy takes account of all relevant legislation, especially the Carers (Recognition & Services) Act 1995. However, the strategy extends beyond the minimum requirements of the legislation.

Work and Families Act 2006

The Work and Families legislation came in 2006, and allows carers of adults the same right to request flexible working as carers of children. Employers do not have to agree to the request, but must make a good business case if refused.

Appendix B

Results of Recent Surveys

Summary of Report on Carers' satisfaction with Carers' Special Grant Services (Nov 2003)

In July 2003, 185 survey questionnaires were sent out to all the carers receiving services under the Carers Special Grant Fund from Welsh Assembly Government to monitor satisfaction with services. 79 questionnaires (42%) were returned. From those who responded, the overall levels of satisfaction with services were high. The 2 factors that were rated as 'excellent' or 'very good' were the reliability of the service and the quality of the staff delivering it. There was a slightly lower rating for the frequency and availability of the service; the location; and the facilities offered. Only 2-5% rated these factors as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

The services were appreciated for a range of reasons, but the biggest need identified was in 'having a break with time for oneself'. When carers attended particular events or were offered additional sources of support, they most valued 'the opportunity to meet others with similar problems'; the information and support they received; and the therapies offered. The reasons for not attending events included; work during the day; alternative care; and transport difficulties. A few had their own health problems. Over half the people who completed the questionnaires were not aware of the events or support available.

The following areas were identified for development:

- A combination of day and evening events are required to accommodate the range of needs.
- Carers identified a priority for relaxation/stress prevention and domestic help.
- Almost half the respondents said that they would be willing to make a financial contribution towards any extra service
- Awareness about the services being offered for carers needs to be raised
- Carers at one voluntary organisation's Annual General Meeting suggested more person centred planning; advocacy for parents; day care; transport provision for the Western Vale; planning and support for disabled children moving to adulthood; direct payments and opportunities for families to get together
- Greater provision of these services to carers of people with physical disabilities
- Support and training for providers in relation to their methods of consulting with carers receiving services

Carers in Employment Survey 2004 – Summary of results

In July 2004, the Carers Development Group undertook a survey among Vale of Glamorgan Council employees in order to find out about the number of working carers and their needs. In this way, they could advise the Corporate Management Team on any additional measures that could be taken to assist working carers. 237 questionnaires were returned. Of these, 26/15% of people had caring responsibilities now and in the past (i.e. long-term carers).

The results indicated that a third of the respondents felt that flexi-time helped them balance work and caring and a quarter felt special leave had done the same. 73% of people had told their line manager about their caring responsibilities and felt supported. Half of the respondents were comfortable bringing caring issues to the work place. Most of those who were not comfortable doing so said it was due to privacy/professionalism.

Even with the above measures in place just under half the respondents had used annual leave to fulfil their caring responsibilities. 80% felt that caring had had a negative impact on their professional development. Just over half felt there had also been a negative impact on the quality of their work, including relationships and time taken off. 73% found tiredness and/or stress made it difficult to combine care and work.

23% of people felt homeworking or teleworking would be helpful. 15% expressed an interest in attending a workshop to develop ideas.

Carers Services Consultation August 2006

Older People with Mental Ill Health

Satisfaction

Overall carers satisfaction levels with carers grant services for older people with mental ill health were high with most respondents to the questionnaire giving positive responses.

Staff thought Crossroads was a valuable service that did an excellent job with few resources. Staff did not comment on the quality of British Red Cross, though said it was difficult to access as so few places.

Gaps in service

Issues identified by carers re service development included; more EMI nursing homes and residential homes, later evening personal care service, information on befriending, a later sitting service, more overnight breaks, weekly support groups run at a variety of times, more events accessible to people who live in the rural vale, and some home based computer training for the less mobile.

Issues identified by staff re service development include more respite beds, emergency sitters, flexible pot of money per team and community support workers, and flexi carers.

Crossroads are waiting to see if they were successful in their application for a grant to provide services to carers and dependents at the time of diagnosis, as the memory team feel they are unable to offer as comprehensive a service as they would like.

Other services

Other services accessed by carers included Crossroads services (not funded through the grant), National Health Service continence service, EMI units at Barry hospital.

Service providers were asked what already exists in the Vale of Glamorgan for carers of people with dementia, they gave the following; support services from the Alzheimers society funded by the Local Health Board, Young onset dementia and carers funded by Cardiff and Vale trust (endowment fund); Local Health Board; Lloyds TSB, Lottery and Alzheimers society, and Crossroads support groups such as; the lunch group, men's group and Cameo for bereaved carers.

Crossroads are still able to offer services to those who do not come into social services serious or critical category as they have extra funding secured through grants etc, and support groups and counselling can be offered for free.

Mental Health

Satisfaction

Carers feedback in regards to the Hafal service was average to poor.

Staff commented on the lack of communication between themselves and Hafal in regards to what is available for carers.

Gaps

Issues identified by carers re service development for mental health included; a more consistent service from the Community Mental Health Team, carers activities held at times to suit everyone, an out of hours emergency help group, more information on the cared for persons illness, an out of hours emergency helpline and a counselling service.

Issues identified by staff re service development included more respite care, more community support worker and a flexible pot of money that can be used innovatively within their team. They also would like a service for children and young people of parents with a personality disorder.

Service providers identified the following as needs of adults with a mental ill health; free crèche facilities for children whose parents have a mental ill health, equity of appropriate services at point of need, counselling, one to one support, support groups, advocacy, information on illnesses, respite, more flexibility in role of support worker.

Service providers felt that a service needs to be developed to help adolescents with a mental ill health.

Other services

Others services accessed by Mental Health Carers are Cowbridge Mind and Social services support workers.

Older people

Satisfaction

Carers rated the Age Concern service highly with all feedback good or very good. Social care staff thought Age concern were an excellent service though some teams felt they had difficulty accessing it as there were so few places. They also felt self referral was inappropriate at this time due to changes in community services eligibility levels.

Gaps

Issues identified by carers re service development for carers of older people included; a faster service from the Occupational therapy team and the chance to meet other older carers regularly.

Issues identified by staff re service development include; more respite beds, an extended sitting service, a bereavement service and flexible pot of money for their team.

Other Services

Other services accessed by older people include Carers UK support group

Children with Disabilities Team

Satisfaction

Further consultation is needed with carers re the Ysgol Er'w Delyn and First Opportunity services, as even after two opportunities there was still a poor response.

Barnardos had very good feedback from staff and carers. The Children with Disabilities team themselves had very good feedback from the carers who access their services.

Gaps

Issues identified by carers re service development were; a youth club for young people with learning disabilities, advocacy for parents and more information on transition.

Issues identified by staff re service development included foster carers who could provide a respite service for disabled children, some provision for parents of children with OCD, ADHD.

Other Services

Other services accessed by carers include Ty Hafan, Linking parents with each other, NCH short break schemes.

Service providers were asked what already exists in the Vale of Glamorgan for carers of children with a disability, other than the services provided through the grant, and how they were funded they listed the following; Sunshine Club – Llantwit Major, Snap funded by Cymorth and NCH Short Breaks.

Young Carers

Satisfaction

The Young Carers Project was highly regarded by social care staff and parents of young carers. Some of the staff felt it would be useful to get more feedback from the project re progress of children they had referred.

Gaps

Service providers identified the following as young carers needs, Respite – including day trips, weekends away and replacement care and Peer Support- including befriending/on going support and workshops (to address specific issues that young carers have), bereavement counselling, One to One Advocacy with schools/health and information at the point of diagnosis (of the cared for relative).

Service providers felt the capacity of the Young Carers project should be increased, and a service for 18-25 year old carers developed.

Learning disabilities

Satisfaction

The Parents Federation had positive feedback from staff and carers, though the Consortium service was not as well known.

The Friendly Trust had great feedback from carers and social care staff alike. Social care staff said they thought it was of great benefit and teams who were unable to access it, such as the physical disabilities team, were really keen for them to increase their capacity.

Gaps

Issues identified by carers re service development included holiday respite for carers and training on how to deal with challenging behaviour.

Issues identified by staff re service development included welfare rights worker and a volunteer driver for hospital appointments.

Other services

Other services accessed by carers include the Health Through Warmth scheme and Adult Placement.

Physical Disabilities

Satisfaction

They have no specific services through the carers grant.

Gaps

Issues identified by carers re service development included a respite service, a befriending service, information about hotels that can accept disabled people, more well advertised pamper days.

Issues identified by staff re service development included advocacy, a gardening service, a befriending service, carers support workers and respite care.

Other services

Other services accessed by carers of someone with a physical disability include Age Concern's shopping service, counselling service and welfare benefits.

Hospital Social Work team

Satisfaction

There are no specific services for carers of someone accessing the hospital social work team though they seem to be the main users of Age Concern's sitting service.

Gaps

Issues identified by staff re service development included; a dedicated carers centre in the Vale, a welfare rights worker, an emergency response team, free respite, and a dedicated carers team.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

They do not provide any services through the carers grant.

Generic Carers Services

Satisfaction

Carers Centre had good feedback from carers and had some positive comments from staff. Though staff were concerned at its location.

Care and Repair also had good feedback from carers. Staff were unclear as to the services specific remit for carers and who could access the service.

The Carers Development Project is no longer running.

Gaps

The following were identified as carers needs by service providers, benefit advice, help with forms, advocacy at meetings, legal advice, counselling, respite, provision for those who fall between services i.e. Autism, address problem of Occupation Therapy waiting lists, record unmet need. Service providers wanted to see a counselling service provision that is available at short notice i.e. when needed, instead of having to go on the waiting list and wanted more carers groups across the Vale.

Care and Repair said that currently for gardening services they signpost to Community Business. They have looked into running the service before, but the costs of running it are very high. If it was something that was wanted and the funds were available, they would be willing to run it.

There is not a service available for younger people and their carers and this is a service that is needed. Care and Repair would like to run if the funding was available.

Information from the Draft Carers Strategy (work in progress)

Areas for development from the Carers Strategy include:

- Re-establishing the Carers Forum in the Vale of Glamorgan
- Broadening Carers opportunities for work
- Broadening their opportunities for leisure
- Making sure respite beds are not going unused.
- Recording unmet need

Carers Assessments

After carers assessment training most of the respondents understood there were benefits to undertaking a Carers Assessments, but felt that the biggest barrier to undertaking assessments is the lack of services available as a result of it and the amount of time it takes to undertake the assessment. Many of the respondents said that Carers did not see the point of the assessment and it was difficult to explain it, and many of the respondents felt that most of the information would have been gathered through the Unified Assessment process.

All of the respondents said that even if a carers assessment was refused the carer would still be given information on benefits, sign-posted to carers groups or voluntary organisations.

Appendix C

Carers Strategy 1999 Update and Review

Significant developments since 1999

A Joint Working Group, consisting of the local authority and voluntary sector, have developed a new Carers Assessment form and associated process. The work dovetails the Carers Assessment into the Unified Assessment process, as a Specialist Assessment, and provides health and social care staff with a more user friendly tool for assessing carers' needs in their own right. The use of the process is being promoted via a programme of training for social care staff and public information has been published to encourage take up.

Carers Involvement

A Carers Development Group has been established to promote and facilitate the improvement and development of services and support for Carers. Membership is made up of health and social care staff from statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as Carers and representatives from carer organisations. Amongst its activities, this group was instrumental in progressing the issues of Carers Information, Carers Assessments and Carers Health.

Access to Information

The range and format of information available to Carers has been improved. A Carers Support leaflet, information pack, and web pages on the Council's Internet site have been published. Carer's notice boards have been sited in GP surgeries throughout the Vale in an initiative shared between the Council and the Vale Local Health Board.

Support and Practical Help

The Carers Grant from the National Assembly has been used to develop new services that directly benefit Carers. The range of services available cover:

- Children with Disabilities,
- Young Carers
- Older People
- Learning Difficulties
- Mental Health services for Older People.

Generic support services have also been provided such as Advocacy and a Handyperson service.

Training

The Training needs of Carers have been identified through discussion with the Carers Development Group and opportunities to access the Council's Training Programme for Community Care and Health is available.

Promotion of the needs of carers

Activities that focus on Carers have been held, including events to mark Carers Week and a symposium to raise awareness for Elected Members. The Council has undertaken a workforce survey and a series of workshops to identify carers in its employment and to develop a Carers Policy to support them.

Articles to promote Carers issues and these activities have been placed in the local press and published in staff newsletters.