

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol ar y effaith pandemig COVID-19, a'i reolaeth, ar iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol yng Nghymru

This response was submitted to the Health and Social Care Committee consultation on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its management, on health and social care in Wales

COV 01

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Unigolyn | An individual

Annwyl Rhun and Senedd Health & Social Care Committee,

I've been an unpaid carer for my elderly Mum for 10 years, the last 5 years being full time. My Mum is a palliative patient with multiple medical conditions. The physical and mental health toll on myself as her principal carer is incredibly tough and is a 24 hour hands-on and on-call role. I'm sure you've heard evidence from many carers and organisations to say that unpaid carers are carrying the strain particularly during the pandemic.

Sadly, my Mum had medical complications and it transpired Covid (she is thankfully double vaccinated) and she has been in Ysbyty [REDACTED] for over a week. Of course visiting is off limits, understandably so. At this time, although I want the focus to be on patient, the lines of communication are very poor. I had no proactive communication when she tested positive for Covid and I try to phone every other day for updates from the ward sister. Some days you can try repeatedly to phone the ward and it's engaged or rings out. When you do get through, you sometimes don't call at the best time for the staff. It's difficult to take in verbal updates and you're always conscious that you're taking up precious nursing time. If you can't see your loved one, it's vital to hear regular, clear medical updates.

After many months of the pandemic, why hasn't a family liaison system been set up? I just don't sleep at night with the worry and a regular update would go a long way, bearing in mind I have siblings living remotely that I then have to update. I am just asking for some compassion under these circumstances where I can't see her and i can't talk to her. I am sure there are many in my position. It feels like torture. I actually learned more about my Mum's Covid status from a hospital contact tracer.

My second concern is that the hospital contact tracer told me a community contact tracer would phone me to tell me when I should take a PCR test (as I had close contact with my Mum). I've had no such phone call and the guidance for PCR testing is not crystal clear. I'd say this system is not working. It's been a week since my Mum tested positive and 10 days since we had close contact.

Lastly, out of hours services including district nursing has to now go via 111 NHS direct. As a carer for a palliative patient with much experience, I used to be able to call out of hours directly. Now, despite knowing very well if my Mum needs a GP or a district nurse, I have to sit in a queue to wait for under-resourced 111 to answer. I wonder how many people abandon the calls after an hour - long wait?

I accept that the NHS and social care is under enormous strain and has to prioritise by medical need and on limited budgets but I'm just highlighting that patients and their families are suffering. If the

Welsh Government claim that all is functioning well in the Betsi Cadwaladr region, then I'm afraid they are not seeing the impact on the ground.

As always, I hope this email will help drive change for the future and for carers that find themselves in similar positions. I ask that members of the committee empathise with the unenviable position of unpaid carers and take positive action, please.

With Kind Regards

