



Our ref: MB GT 3392 13

William Graham AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

24 July 2013

Dear William,

The First Minister has asked me to respond to a question you raised at First Minister's Questions on 9 July, when you asked if the Welsh Government will consider the compulsory registration of carers.

As you may be aware, I recently launched our refreshed Carers Strategy for Wales. The Strategy was developed in partnership with a stakeholder group and was also subject to a full public consultation in order to ensure that it accurately reflected the needs and priorities of carers. Whilst there was agreement that early identification of carers was key to ensuring that they received the information, advice and support they needed in carrying out their caring role effectively, the establishment of a compulsory register for carers was not an issue that was raised during this process. There was, however, an awareness of the vital role of primary health care, especially GPs, in identifying carers and referring them on to appropriate information and support. Both of these considerations are reflected in the Strategy.

All GP practices in Wales should already have a protocol for the identification of carers, and a register of carers for referral to social services and to other sources of local support such as a carers centre. Indeed, the Quality Outcomes Framework for GPs includes an indicator which requires each practice to have such a protocol and register in place. Local health boards are required to assess the delivery of the framework, and implementation of their Carers Information and Consultation Strategies (introduced under the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010) should assist in determining the effectiveness of such arrangements. Promoting the effective use of these registers by GPs is particularly important given that most carers' first point of contact with any statutory agency is within a primary care setting. The refreshed Carers Strategy for Wales contains a commitment to promoting recognised toolkits that promote improved standards for carer support within GP practices.

More generally, the local strategies should help local health boards, local authorities and other local partners to develop joint approaches to identifying, referring and signposting carers appropriately.

You also mentioned, in your question to the First Minister, the survey published by Carers UK during national Carers Week, which suggested high levels of stress among carers. This is also an issue we have sought to address in the refreshed Carers Strategy, which contains

commitments to promoting carers' health and general well-being, including emotional support to cope with the stress of taking on a caring role. Carers needs are also highlighted in 'Together for Mental Health', our mental health strategy published in October 2012.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gwenda". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a vertical line that extends downwards from the end of the signature.

**Gwenda Thomas AC / AM**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Deputy Minister for Social Services