

**Date:** Friday 30 November 2001  
**Time:** 10.00am to 11.45am  
**Venue:** Y Ganolfan, Llandrillo, Denbighshire

**REPORT BACK FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

1. Following the meeting held on 26 October the Chair wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services summarising the main points that came out of the Committee's discussion about the development of a strategy for older people. A copy of the Chair's letter is at annex 1.
2. The Minister replied on 26 November. A copy of the reply is at annex 2.
3. The Committee is invited to note the correspondence.

**Committee Secretariat**

**November 2001**

**Annex 1**



Jane Hutt AM

Minister for Health and Social Services

National Assembly for Wales

**Pwyllgor Rhanbarth y Gogledd**  
**North Wales Regional Committee**  
Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

13 November 2001

## **North Wales Regional Committee – Strategy for Older People**

At its meeting in Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant on Friday 26 October, the North Wales Regional Committee considered services for older people in North Wales in the context of the development of the Strategy for Older People. About 70 members of the public attended to give their views and several clear messages emerged that I should like to pass on to you.

The development of the strategy was welcomed. It was felt that the strategy should address a wide range of issues affecting older people although much of the discussion centered on health and social care provision. There was a clear view that the strategy should take a long-term view and be properly funded.

There was widespread support for the principle that older people should be helped to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. To achieve this, flexible and responsive support systems should be available. Many speakers spoke of the need for care systems to take account of fundamental concerns, such as the pride many older people take in the cleanliness of their homes or their desire not to be separated from their partners.

On a similar theme, residential care, for those that need it, should be provided close to their own community and in a homely environment. Representatives of the independent residential care sector were concerned that, although the cost of nursing care was met by the public purse, the cost of consumable items was not.

There was strong support for the principle of free personal care and the need to eliminate the artificial distinction between nursing and personal care.

A number of people raised the issue of access to public transport. It was suggested that more could be done to co-ordinate services by the voluntary sector working in co-operation with support local authorities and the health service

Access to benefits was another concern raised by several speakers. There was a need to ensure that older people claim all the benefits to which they were entitled. The complexity of some benefit application forms was a significant problem in this regard.

The minutes of the meeting are attached for information. I am copying this letter to Ann Jones as temporary Chair of the Health and Social Services Committee.

Yours sincerely

**Eleanor Burnham**

Chair, North Wales Regional Committee

**Jane Hutt AM**

Our ref: JH 03688-01

Eleanor Burnham AM  
The National Assembly for Wales  
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26 November 2001

**North Wales Regional Committee – Strategy for Older People**

Thank you for your recent letter enclosing the minutes of the North Wales Regional Committee held on 26 October. I know from discussions with Brian Gibbons that there was an excellent turn out at the Committee and I regret that other commitments prevented me from attending.

A key aspect of the Strategy is that it will be evidenced base, utilising the research available on the lives of older people. We also want the Strategy to be based on the realities of life. We have therefore undertaken extensive consultation on the Strategy to ensure we hear as wide a range of views as

possible, to contribute to this debate and to help shape the Strategy for Older People in Wales. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for the very useful contribution your Committee has played in achieving this aim.

You will know that the development of this Strategy is a very important initiative by the Assembly, as it will provide a structured basis for the Assembly and other public bodies in Wales to develop future policies and plans which better reflect the needs of older people and recognise the changing demography and social circumstances. Through the Strategy we will provide a framework which helps to ensure that in Wales we are proactive in long term planning for an ageing population, and that our policies meet the needs of older people. Of course any financial implications of the Strategy will need to be considered in the context of the Assembly budgeting processes and the next three year spending review.

Older people's desire for choice and independence has been a constant theme throughout the consultation process. The Social Services White Paper "Building for the Future" highlighted that the overarching goal in all stages of the care management process should be to promote independence wherever possible. This is mirrored in the Strategy's terms of reference which state that "older people in Wales should have the right to live independently and with dignity" and also in one of the Strategy's aims that "older people should be able to live at home for as long as practicable". In April the Assembly introduced a number of measures aimed at easing the pressure on people to sell their homes when moving into a care home. I have also announced a scheme that will provide six weeks free home care for vulnerable people that, I believe, emphasises the priority we place on rehabilitation and community based care, rather than hospital and residential care. Details of the scheme are currently being finalised.

The way we are introducing NHS funded registered nursing care in nursing homes in Wales has been broadly welcomed. Following consultation on our proposals we have adopted the standardised funding model which is a fair, reasonable and affordable contribution from the NHS towards care needs and includes the costs of providing continence supplies and specialist equipment. On the question of free personal care, in the plenary debate on the NHS Plan in February, I welcomed Jocelyn Davies' amendment that commits the Assembly "to examine further in both plenary and committee debate the consequences of extending free provision to include personal care in the context of the work on the Assembly's planned Strategy for Older People in Wales". The remit of the Strategy Steering Group has therefore been extended to cover this. It will receive an interim report on this in December and finalise its conclusions by next March. It will be important to consider the issue in the wider context of the priorities for the Strategy.

Transport has also been another issue regularly raised during consultation. Members of the Steering Group and others have been invited to work with their networks to produce proposals in areas where they have an interest and expertise. Professor Stuart Cole is specifically looking at transport issues for older people and will be preparing a paper for future discussion by the Strategy Steering Group.

In addition to considering the wide range of Assembly responsibilities, the Strategy will also look at some non-devolved areas such as benefit take up and pensions. The Strategy Steering Group have

already identified pensioner poverty and low income in Wales as a concern and in particular benefit issues such as the low take up of the Minimum Income Guarantee and the complexity of benefit regimes for older people. Officials from the Department for Work and Pensions have been invited to attend the December meeting of the Group to advise on both specific operational matters and the broad direction of future policy.

I will ensure that the comments of the Committee will be taken into account in formulating the Strategy for Older People.