

South Wales West Regional Committee

Minutes (SWaWR (2)-01-07)

Date: Friday 2 March 2007

Time: 9:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: North Cornelly Community Centre, North Cornelly, Bridgend

Assembly Members in Attendance

Assembly Member	Constituency
Janet Davies	South Wales West
Brian Gibbons	Aberavon
Janice Gregory(Chair)	Ogmore
Carwyn Jones	Bridgend
Dai Lloyd	South Wales West

In Attendance

Name	Representing (if applicable)
Neil Williams	Regional Officer, Care and Repair Cymru
Tony Garthwaite	Executive Director, Bridgend County Borough Council
Christine Court	SHOUT
Sue Richards	Director, Age Concern Swansea
Charlotte Walker	Assistant Director, Age Concern Swansea
Barbara Locke	National Development Manager, (CSV-RSVP) Cymru

Committee Service in Attendance

Name	Job title
Jane Westlake	Committee Clerk
Sara Mansour	Deputy Committee Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Assembly Member	Constituency
Andrew Davies	Swansea West
Edwina Hart	Gower
Val Lloyd	Swansea East
Gwenda Thomas	Neath

Item 1: Welcome and introduction.

1.1 The Chair welcomed Committee Members and members of the public.

1.2 In the course of the meeting Dr Brian Gibbons declared that he is member of the British Medical Association. There were no other declarations.

Item 2: Maintaining the Health, Well being and Independence of Older People

2.1 The presenters' speaking notes are annexed to the minutes.

2.2 The Committee received presentations from:

Neil Williams, Regional Officer, Care and Repair Cymru;
 Tony Garthwaite, Executive Director, Community, Bridgend County Borough Council; and
 Christine Court, SHOUT

Discussion and questions

2.3 Dai Lloyd AM submitted that the "Never Too Old" report states that 17.7% of the population of Bridgend have a limiting long term illness, which is higher than the Welsh average and far higher than the UK average. He asked what is being done to ensure that people are able to claim benefits and access Care and Repair. He also asked about meeting the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease, given that one in four people over the age of 80 have the disease.

2.4 Tony Garthwaite said that Bridgend County Council employs welfare benefit advisors and the number of people accessing welfare benefits has risen dramatically. Accessing the benefit system is a critical part of freeing people to enjoy independent life. With regards to Alzheimer's he said that there is confusion as to whether this fits into the Elderly Mentally Infirm or Older Person's services, but there are volunteers who target Alzheimer's sufferers and provide care of a high standard in accordance with the carer's strategy.

2.5 Janet Davies AM referred to the difficulty in commuting by public transport from the Ogmore and Garw valleys, particularly to the Port Talbot hospital. There are no good connections. Travelling from Neath to Morrison Hospital is also a problem.

2.6 In response to a question from Brian Williams, a member of the public, Neil Williams advised that Care and Repair supports older clients who live in their own homes and are over the age of 60 and younger disabled clients through Disabled Facilities Grant. Each county provides a different service. In areas where there is comprehensive in-house local authority provision, the role of the Care and Repair Agency would be to introduce people to the Grant process. In other areas there could be more comprehensive support through the Disabled Facilities Grants process undertaken by Care and Repair.

2.7 In response to a question from Hugh Nicholas, a member of the public, regarding equality of opportunity, Carwyn Jones AM said that the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities are offering job opportunities for older people. He reminded the meeting that it is now illegal for employers to discriminate against employees on the basis of age.

2.8 The Committee then received presentations from:

Barbara Locke, National Development Manager, Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme; and Sue Richards, Director and Charlotte Walker, Assistant Director, Age Concern Swansea.

Discussion and questions

2.9 Hilary Griffiths from Neath Port Talbot Older Person's Council asked why the age specification for services from the Commissioner for Older People is 60. Brian Gibbons AM explained that the rationale is that if it were 50 or 55, it would have broadened the remit of the Commissioner too widely. This would have the effect of the Commissioner taking up issues of younger people that were not necessarily age-related. The other age threshold that was considered was 65. It had been concluded that 60 is the most suitable age specification and is in line with schemes such as free swimming and the free transport scheme.

2.10 Ann Collins from Age Concern Neath Port Talbot asked about the Assembly's plans on the unresolved issue of core funding for county Age Concern. Brian Gibbons AM, advised that the Welsh Assembly Government supported voluntary organisations at national level. At county level this should be the responsibility of the local authority or local health board, who can ensure that the organisation is responding to local needs and strategic policy. It would be contrary to local democracy if the Assembly Government were seen to be the main funding source of local

organisations.

2.11 A member of the public, Mr Granville, was concerned about older people who are forced to sell their home to meet the cost of going into care.

Brian Gibbons AM, advised that there is no legal requirement on a person to sell their home. If an individual does not wish to sell their property, they can discuss this with their local authority the possibility of the council taking a charge on the property. The local authority would then fund the care of that person in a care home and eventually recover the cost from the person's estate. He advised that between 45 and 55 per cent of people are eligible to receive free care. People who have up to £17,500 in assets are entitled to free care. If an individual has between £17,500 and £22,000 they can receive a contribution the costs on a sliding scale. It would cost between £70 and £90 million to bring in a free personal care service, and this would be at the expense of other services.

2.12 A member of the public expressed concern about means testing. Brian Gibbons AM, replied that wherever possible a universal service should be provided, and cited the examples of free bus passes and swimming for all older people and free school breakfasts for young children. Every school is entitled to apply for this. However, where resources are limited it is right that they be targeted on those who have the greatest need for them, particularly if that service is costly. If the only way of delivering the service to those people who have the greatest need is through means testing then it is better than providing a poorer service to everyone.

2.13 Cliff Croft from Neath Port Talbot Access Group was concerned about public toilets and why not all local authorities provide them. Carwyn Jones AM, said that discussions had taken place about the possibility of legislating to make it duty for local authorities to provide toilets. The Assembly would have the necessary powers after the elections in May.

2.14 Councillor BL Rose asked why when people pass away their pension disability books have to be returned within one week of their death. There should be a longer period where offspring should be able to benefit. The Chair advised that pensions were not a matter that is devolved to the Assembly, but said that she is a member of an all-party group in the Assembly looking at bereavement and would draw the matter to the group's attention.

2.15 Mr Phillip W Jenkins, a member of the public, was concerned about the out-of-hours primary care health service provided for older people in Bridgend by Prime Care. He suggested that the BMA should be asked to provide the service again through general practitioners (GPs). The Chair said that that Prime Care is working in many parts of the area. Brian Gibbons AM told the meeting that in the past GPs had worked 50 to 70 hours a week in order to provide out-of-hours cover. They could not be required to work such long hours and any expectation that they should could adversely affect recruitment. The majority of GPs now are women and many have family responsibilities.

2.16 Councillor Richard Granville was concerned about the difficulty of accessing these services and how an individual is supposed to travel if they do not own a car.

2.17 Brian Gibbons AM, said that the Wales Spatial Plan required that major development would not

be approved unless the proposals address the links with transport and other services. He acknowledged that there was an historic problem with the location of some older hospitals. There is new criteria which will enable more people to use transport provided by the ambulance service where there is no suitable alternative. People on low incomes are able to apply for assistance in paying for the travel costs of getting to hospital. This could be done in advance or retrospectively.

2.18 William Howard Lewis from Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG) asked about council tax poverty. Brian Gibbons AM said that 40 to 50 per cent of people who would be entitled fail to claim council tax benefit. The tax benefit form is long and complicated, but people should persevere and submit claims.

2.19 Dai Lloyd AM, suggested that council tax should be abolished and be replaced with local income tax that fairly reflects people's ability to pay. Property is a very poor proxy. Simply because someone has a large home does not mean that they have a high income. A study has shown that 20 per cent of the richest people pay 1.6 per cent of their income on council tax compared with 20 per cent of the poorest who pay 4.6 per cent.

Action: The minutes of the meeting will be sent to John Griffiths AM, Deputy Minister with responsibility for older people.

Item 3: The Committee's Report for the Period May 2005 to March 2007.

3.1 The Committee agreed the report as drafted.

Item 4: Minutes

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October were agreed.

Item 5: Any Other Business

5.1 The Chair announced that this was the last meeting of the Committee in the second Assembly. After the elections in May the provisions of the Government of Wales Act 2006 come into force. The Standing Orders for the third Assembly provide that a regional Committee may be established if the majority of members in the region so wish, and the proposal receives the approval of the full Assembly.

5.2 The Chair expressed the Committee's appreciation to North Cornelly Community Centre staff.

Committee Service March 2007

Annex

1. Bridgend County Borough Council

1.1 Inconceivable not to do presentation in partnership. Christine Court's agreement to represent SHOUT an indication of how we address the issues.

1.2 Aim is to convince Committee members that:-

- Health, Wellbeing and Independence not the domain of any one agency;
- Can only be properly achieved via partnership.

1.3 Health & Wellbeing – NHS treatment episodic, therefore we can't rely on NHS for our health. It is about so much more, not least LG services.

1.4 Independence – not living alone. Being at home but if, for example, hospital bed discharge arrangements aren't managed properly, being at home can increase vulnerability. Has to be coupled with choice, dignity.

1.5 "Never too old" - 2002 Mature, pioneering strategy. It complements National Strategy (but was before it). It brings it to life a brand that people recognise. It's much more than Social Care Strategy. Older people know best.

1.6 What do older people want?

- Wanted quality of life
- To be socially included
- Have information about services and access
- To be involved in planning
- Target at greatest need
- Support for carers and families
- Flexible services based on partnership
- Increased choice
- More locally accessible services
- Focus on prevention and rehabilitation

1.7 Some Features of Outcomes

- A charter for older people
- Commitment, standard, measured
- Independent advocacy service
- Age Concern
- Help with employment and retirement
- Prime Cymru
- Independent living initiatives
- Stair lifts – 4 weeks now having been 3 – 9 months delay
- Virtual elimination of OT assessment waiting times

- Delay transfers low
- SHOUT

1.8 Social Care – Timely To Talk 10 Year Strategy

- Direction of travel / joint review outcomes
- Raise eligibility thresholds
- Move away from low level packages of care
- Outsource significant proportions of services such as home care
- Increase expenditure to tackle demographic time bomb
- Rising DTOC levels
- Bridgend – bucking the trend!!
- Eligibility still low (1 of 2 LA's in Wales)
- Significant numbers of low packages of home care
- 95% in house home care (2nd highest in Wales)
- Reduced expenditure – was high now 19th in league table
- Sustainable low levels of DTOC

1.9 Warning

- Pressures now building – budget
- Remember – budget block grant / competing pressures between LG services.
- Additional funding is welcomed.
- Also – stop saying resource neutral – Vulnerable Adults work a good example of it not being cost neutral
- Re-ablement still only in 50% of the County Borough

2. SHOUT

2.1 Good partnerships are very important. Organisations work in collaboration with each other to achieve the highest possible standards. SHOUT is for people over 50 years of age. Older people through SHOUT have a collective voice and the organisation is involved in number of things such as transport, regeneration, leisure, health and wellbeing.

2.2 SHOUT are due to produce their first news letter in a few days. It is hoped that this will enable more people to get involved and out their views across. Other organisations will be able to submit what services they have available.

2.3 Transport is a major concern for older people. Bus passes are only available to people over 60 year of age. This is good but it could be improved. People over 50 years of age make over 45% of the Borough.

2.4 SHOUT need further funding and they wish to widen people's involvement. Statutory voluntary sectors support SHOUT but they need more support to continue their strong development and be involved in local and national consultation and scrutiny.

3. Care & Repair Cymru

Mission

3.1 To provide comprehensive advice, support and practical services that allow older and vulnerable, who live in their own homes or live in privately rented accommodation, to remain independently in their homes, in comfort, warmth, safety and security.

3.2 Welsh Assembly Government Core Service

- Difference is a service that talks and listens to older people.
- Care & Repair is a home visiting service.
- Assessment made of the property in terms of the home environment.
- Solutions and choices are offered based on the person not the property, i.e. what's right for the home and not just the house.
- Advice on energy efficiency, improvements to heating and fuel poverty.
- Welfare Benefit checks and support in Welfare Benefit claims as income generation.
- Home Safety and Healthy Home assessments.
- Local Authority Housing Grant solutions.
- Private works and Technical advice.
- Approved contractors list.
- Charitable and Hardship funding.
- A hand – holding service, including eligibility checks and form filling.
- Site supervision and quality of works.

3.3 Local Partnerships

- Statutory – Housing, Social Services and Health.
- Voluntary sector – Age Concern, Alzheimer's, Carers, CVS, etc.

3.4 Welsh Assembly Government Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP)

- Small adaptation, maximum £350.
- Within 15 working days.
- For eligible client group.
- To secure early release from hospital back to the home.
- Or, to prevent hospital admissions.
- Through partnership referral.
- Offer of a full Care & Repair service.

3.5 Local Solutions

- Handyperson services for small adaptations and small repairs.
- Assistive technology and Dementia projects (primarily Bridgend) .

- Fast-track minor adaptations grants. (Swansea's CSS Grant and Minor Adaptations Grant; Neath Port Talbot's Fast- Track RRAP; Bridgend's Stair lift and Bathing Grant schemes)
- Fire Safety assessment and adaptation.
- Home Security assessment and adaptation.
- Safety at Home Schemes (primarily Bridgend) .
- Emergency Pressures initiatives (primarily Bridgend) .
- Minor maintenance, gardening and decorating (primarily Neath Port Talbot) .

3.6 Future Plans

- Telecare
- Home maintenance insurance
- Annual Home Assessment
- Scheduling service.

4. Community Service Volunteers – Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (CSV-RSVP) Cymru

4.1 Only 2 things to remember about us

- Everything we do involves volunteers
- Everything we do involves older people

4.2 Three Messages

i. As today is about maintaining the health, well-being and independence of older people the first message is:-

- volunteering Is good for older people
- Research & anecdotal evidence exists to support this.
- Local examples from schools and knitting re well-being.
- Local volunteers with mental health issues supported back to work through volunteering;
- Bereaved describe volunteering as 'a lifeline' life-changing;
- Our Impact assessment – give stats

and

- older people are good for volunteering.

Some statistics about the people we help

- Reading project: 6,000 children helped over 3 years & Cars 4 Carers helps 300 carers with 25-30 drivers and over 1,000 journeys per year
- Older volunteers stick with the job
- They have life skills and experience

- They are great mentors because they've seen life's problems come and go
- They know how to chill!
- Feeling useful & valued is a great support to maintaining independence

ii. Following that theme of maintaining independence and keeping older people engaged in communities the second message is:-

- older people are not a thing of the past!
- They are growing in numbers in Wales
- Living longer
- Staying active longer
- They care about the state of the world (Greening the Grey)
- They care about their own communities
- They care about more than pensions and the local health service
- Give examples of volunteers who run projects, get involved in local issues and do international volunteering
- Vale of Glamorgan run by volunteers with 128 active volunteers
- Swansea with 148 members run by four volunteers
- Many RSVP members sit on Older Persons Fora – One Swansea volunteer supports a school in Ghana and was made a Tribal Chief in recognition of his work!

iii. And because – in spite of recent legislation and the Age Discrimination Act - in spite of the Older Persons Strategy in Wales – age discrimination is still the most common form of discrimination in this country the third message is

- older people are up for a challenge.
- RSVP sets out to break the mould of older volunteering
- Our volunteers are our 'think-tank' our management team and our policy-shapers
- They are also involved in the kind of volunteering which most people would not imagine they would be involved in or successful at
- Give examples – Parc Prison – RSVP volunteers work in the Juvenile Remand Unit; work with the single & homeless in Pembrokeshire; work with people with learning disabilities in Ty Penybont.
- Older volunteers are life-skilled, they are 'chilled', they are tenacious and they refute stereotypes because they know what it is to be labelled. (eg assumed dementia, deafness, often treated as children because they are old.)

4.3. To summarise – older people who already volunteer are a great force in Wales for maintaining their own health, well-being and independence and as volunteers they make a great contribution to the health, well-being of others from all generations. Older volunteers are up for the challenge to do more in Wales. RSVP do not set out to be providers of health and social services but our volunteers are ready, willing and able to become cost-effective supporters and enhancers of any local service where their talents can be used.

4.4 Let me leave you with some statistics about our work in Wales:-

- 2,700 volunteers in Wales
 - 8.2 staff
 - Ratio of 329 volunteers to every member of staff
 - Last year NAFW & LA funding totalled £150, 000
- ie 55p per volunteer per year
- This year our NAFW & LA funding has been cut to £85, 000 – ie 31p per volunteer

4.5 Probably just as well that older volunteers are up for a challenge but if you are an older person who can support us with your time – become a volunteer and if you represent a local authority which doesn't already benefit from our volunteers to enhance local services please consider strengthening your partnership with older people through RSVP Cymru.

(CSV-RSVP) Cymru Impact Assessment In Wales 2006

- 2, 640 Volunteers
- 174 core questionnaires returned
- 59 in depth questionnaires returned
- 6 focus groups held by RSVP development staff
- 83 Schools Project volunteers
- Schools Volunteers
- Although 50+ - 52% are in 65 – 74 age bracket 9% are 75+
- 12% are disabled
- 99% give a day or more every week
- 48% said they had increased confidence & self esteem - 13% greatly
- 59% said they had increased skills – 12% greatly
- 29% identified actual health/ well-being gains – 11% improved greatly
- 60% access to new contacts
- 49% improved relationships with others
- 51% improved participation in social activities – 10% greatly
- 20% improved understanding of other people's cultures.
- All 83 would recommend volunteering to others.

5. Age Concern Swansea

5.1 Tuesday morning 10.30am and Mrs Jones is £120.00 per week better off, she has had assistance to fill in the forms to go on the housing list of two local housing providers, she has been referred to the handy person scheme to help her access a hand rail to help her until she moves. Mrs Jones is one of 8500 Older People helped to maintain themselves in their home by Age Concern Swansea each year.

5.2 Every day we use the commonly spoken words of health, well-being and independence when we are talking about older people's needs. These vital words are what actually enable older people to stay in their home the place where we all want to be. Older people have to be enabled to be empowered this means a need to address peoples rights as well as needs.

5.3 The Welsh Assembly Government role is to set the frame work and ensure the under pinning policies and enforcement are in place, an example of this is that the Older Persons Commissioner needs to have teeth and not be a tokenistic older person representative, Care and Repair must continue to get funded to provide disability adaptations, core funding to enable the voluntary sector to effectively deliver it's services. Age Concern Swansea is very pleased at the success of the Older Persons' Strategy in our county which is strategically and operationally meeting the real needs of our residents. It is a demonstration of true partnership working which is both proactive and amounts to real outcomes, an excellent model really delivering what is needed.

5.4 So what do the words maintaining health, well-being and independence actually mean to older people? To live safely in their own home, access to information, good income, a social life to enjoy, good housing, access to health accessibility of getting to appointments, and good nutrition.

5.5 Seamless services that are reactive to their ever changing needs and delivered recognising the link to the "Making the Connections and the Beecham Review" where the citizen is at the centre of the services particularly advice and information and promoting independence. Resulting in making the documents worth while and with positive and real life enhancing outcomes.

5.6 Maintenance is the most important word as nothing works without regular support and input, similar to a car with a breakdown insurance that is there when you need it.

5.7 Support that if not in place often results in expensive health and social care intervention and often a need for the person to leave their home. It therefore makes sense to make the best possible use of every contact with an older person and work holistically to meet their needs to live comfortably and safely.

5.8 Age Concern Swansea is a local independent charity who have for the last 17 years worked to deliver living at home support enabling and addressing well know issues that affect the over-50's in Swansea. We are aware that to assist older people to the best standard we can not work in isolation and therefore we work with more than 35 partners to help to fill the gap of needs for older people.

5.9 We now have 712 over - 50's per month asking us for help. There has been a dramatic year on year increase with a notable change from April 06 - to Dec 06 with an average increase of 250 calls for assistance each month. This has had a huge impact on the Charity as everyone now sees us as main service delivers and not as extra assistance.

5.10 We currently run 9 services which aim to include and enable older people to stay physically and emotionally well in their own homes for as long as possible.

5.11 A hospital discharge scheme which supports people for 6 weeks post admission to hospital,

helping with shopping basic cleaning and essential tasks to allow them to be discharged from hospital. We have a multi Disciplinary team which includes 2 senior nurses, a social worker, benefits officer, volunteers and visiting staff and daily we demonstrate the benefits of working in partnership knitting together staff from the NHS, social services, and the voluntary sector. Providing a unique service preventing delayed discharge and minimising the time older people have to remain in hospital.

5.12 Supporting People Project supporting 200 Older People to remain on their own homes with weekly home visits providing essential intervention and on going support. The project has been running for 3 years and works with paid staff and 70 volunteers all encouraging integration in the community, accessibility for up to date accurate information and advocacy, a direct link to other services and partners and also timely intervention when situations change as situations can quickly deteriorate leading to loss of independence or ill health. Reading and understanding your mail a task that we all take for granted but essential in managing and maintaining you, for many we are the eyes and ears of the outside world. The Supporting People Project is an essential model of a service which addresses the health social care and well being agenda and has made life changing differences to individuals who would otherwise have gone into a care home or lived in poverty due to poor income. It is vital that Supporting People services are continued to be supported by the Welsh Assembly Government as they meet all the agendas linked to health, well being and independence and as 36.6% of the population of Swansea is currently over-50, the increase for need for assistance will continue to raise due to our ageing population.

5.13 Well being and independence is strongly affected by the amount of money a person has to live. Last year Age Concern Swansea gained over 1.2 million in extra income for older people and this year we estimate it will be nearer 2 and half million. Money that enables people to pay for services to help them live comfortably, independently with enough money to pay their bills and even have some spare to enjoy social activities.

5.14 Accessible advice, information and advocacy is paramount to our activities for the older residents of Swansea so in order to assist individuals and professionals alike we have recently developed a directory of services listing more than 300 agencies who can assist older people, the directory is available to download off the Age Concern Swansea website and also available in hard copies as we are very aware that not everybody has access to a computer. In planning the directory it was essential that we built in systems for regular updates as Information must be accurate for the time it's needed.

5.16 We know that the services we deliver are in response to local issues and needs as we record and evaluate all the contacts we make with older people which last year was 8500.

5.17 So what can the Welsh Assembly Government do next for older people? All the issues have been researched endlessly evidenced are now stored in vast quantities.

5.18 Actions speak louder than words so please

- No more documents or strategies - call a one year amnesty and a commitment from politicians to make changes happen;

- Implementation of existing knowledge e.g. National Services Framework;
- Resources to enable voluntary sector to have the capacity to play the new expanded role of the 3rd sector.

5.19 These issues are not going to go away so let's make a positive change on how we help Older people remain independent, whilst addressing their Health and Well being.