

Cross-Party Group Annual Report

09.07.2024

Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

1. Group membership and office holders

Members

Chair: Mike Hedges MS

Janet Finch-Saunders MS

Dr Altaf Hussain MS

Joel James MS

Delyth Jewell MS

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS

Sioned Williams MS

External members

- Steve Milsom - Cymru Older Persons Alliance (COPA)
- Huw Bendall - Cymru Older Persons Alliance (COPA)
- Dereck Roberts – National Pensioners Convention Wales
- Gareth Parsons – Wales Seniors Forum
- Aileen Haskell – Wales Seniors Forum
- Barry Stephens - Active Wales
- Carys Henry - Age Cymru Trustee
- Charles Carter – Age Cymru Trustee
- Dr Bernadette Fuge - President Age Cymru
- Professor John Williams - Chair Age Cymru
- Michael Phillips - Age Cymru
- Christopher Williams - Age Alliance Wales
- Rachel Bowen - Older People's Commissioner for Wales
- Andrea Cooper – Older People's Commissioner for Wales
- Faye Patton - Care & Repair Cymru
- Hannah Peeler - Care & Repair Cymru
- Andrea Nicholas-Jones – Action for Elders
- Nick Kelly – Hourglass
- George Parish-Wallace – Alzheimer's Society Cymru
- Ross Saunders – Alzheimer's Society Cymru
- Naomi White - British Red Cross
- Melanie Minty - Care Forum Wales
- Mathew Norman - Diabetes UK (Wales)
- Paul Chappell – RNID
- Polly Winn - RNID
- Steve Amos - RVS
- Stephanie Griffith - Social Care Wales
- Neeta Baicher - BASW
- Lorraine Morgan – Jackie's Revolution
- Jackie-Marshall-Cyrus – Jackie's Revolution

- Jeremy Sharpe - Linking Lives UK
- Dr Maria Cheshire-Allen - Swansea University
- Professor Dame June Clark - Swansea University

Secretariat

Ceri Cryer - Age Cymru

2. Previous Group Meetings since the last AGM

Minutes of meetings were prepared by Ceri Cryer and Michael Phillips, Age Cymru.

Meeting 1

Meeting date: 26 June 2023 – online meeting

Attendees

Mike Hedges MS (Chair)	Dewi John, office of Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Social Services	Jackie Marshall-Cyrus, Jackie's Revolution
Ryland Doyle, office of Mike Hedges MS	Rhian Morgan, Age Cymru
Philip Mulraney, Welsh Government	Michael Phillips, Age Cymru
Ceri Cryer, Age Cymru	Andrew Pithouse
Heather Ferguson, Age Cymru	Becky Ricketts, Care & Repair Cymru
Dr Bernadette Fuge, President Age Cymru	Helen Twidle, Age Cymru
Nick Kelly, Hourglass	Christopher Williams, Age Alliance Wales

Apologies

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS	Gareth Parsons, Wales Seniors Forum
Llyr Gruffydd MS	Dereck Roberts, National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales
Carys Henry, Age Cymru Trustee	Danny Tatlow, Hourglass
Louise Hughes, Age Cymru	Prof. John Williams, Chair Age Cymru
Lorraine Morgan, Jackie's Revolution	

Mike Hedges MS, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes for the meeting held on 23 May 2023 were approved.

Mike Hedges MS, Chair, is awaiting a response from the Minister for Health and Social Services to his letter regarding issues around hospital discharge.

Poverty, abuse, and the cost-of-living crisis – Nick Kelly, Parliamentary and Policy Officer, Hourglass. Presentation was circulated.

Hourglass supports older victims of abuse and neglect. We've found an increase in the number of cases of abuse and neglect, but there hasn't been an increase in awareness and discussion of abuse.

Older people are victims of the same types of abuse as victims of other ages. This includes financial/economic, physical, sexual or psychological abuse. Many others suffer abuse due to neglect. At least one in five of adults aged 65 have been affected by some form of abuse.

The cost of living crisis is having an effect on older people as inflation takes its toll, while others are taking money from older people to survive. 18% of pensioners in the UK population are living in poverty, and for longer periods, especially single men and women.

Poverty can be seen as a form of structured violence. Violence especially affects women in poverty. 21% of women suffering abuse are forced to take leave from work.

Victim-survivors who leave their abusive partner may be a risk of homelessness, with 32% of homeless women indicated that they suffered from previous domestic violence.

In 2022 the Hourglass Helpline received 1,844 cases where economic abuse was seen, and these cases amounted to over £19million stolen or defrauded from older victims.

The challenges are that there is low reporting and a lack of data and research. The age of victims of crime isn't always recorded. We need accurate data collection. Hourglass is developing a Safer Ageing Index looking at the data that do exist in the UK, and we aim to update it every year to see where more resources are needed.

80% of abuse happens in the person's home, including financial abuse, which is often perpetrated by a family member - the person's son or daughter, partner, and other family members, and is unlikely to be reported.

Questions and discussion

Mike Hedges MS – grandchildren still expect money from grandparents who can no longer afford it.

Becky Ricketts – what data are you using for the Safer Ageing Index, is it Wales-based?

Nick Kelly – data from Wales will be available shortly, and we often use crime surveys and health data.

Jackie Marshall-Cyrus – we've heard about financial abuse but what about sexual abuse within people's homes, in the community and in institutional settings?

Nick Kelly – we do deal with incidents of sexual abuse and have some live cases at present. We are calling for more independent specialist sexual abuse advisors.

Jackie Marshall-Cyrus – Do you signpost?

Nick Kelly – we have specialist support to provide to people but we sometimes signpost when appropriate.

Age Cymru 2023 survey – 'What matters to you? Current experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales' - Heather Ferguson, Head of Policy and Projects at Age Cymru. Presentation was circulated.

This is our fourth national survey since the pandemic, which was delivered in partnership with the four national older people's organisations - Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA), Active Wales and National Pensioners Forum and Wales Senior Forum. Nearly 1200 older people took part in the survey, aged 50 to 100. We gathered responses from all local authorities across Wales.

The survey focused on a number of key areas including: communication, unpaid carers, access to health and social care, physical and mental wellbeing, employment, accessing communities, cost of living. These are our preliminary findings as we're still analysing the survey.

20% of respondents accessed or tried to access social care for themselves or someone else in the last 12 months. Many reported a negative experience of accessing support, and frustrations due to long waits for care packages, unavailable services, struggles with inadequate support packages, and exhaustive time spent chasing up social workers and the local authority for help. Those in need of social care were more likely to say they were experiencing poor or very poor mental health. Three quarters provided unpaid care for at least one person.

There was an increase of 55% in the amount of people who found caring a challenge in the last 12 months, in comparison to last year. In addition 37% of people said that they were providing unpaid care.

GP access is an ongoing issue for many older people and the struggle to get appointments. We also heard from people who have been waiting a long time to get the surgery they needed.

Dentistry is an increasingly mentioned issue with many people struggling to get an appointment. We heard that some people used to be with an NHS dentist which have now changed to be private, and many are sitting on waiting lists.

Many people told us that their challenge for the coming year was their health, whether this was staying fit and healthy, regaining fitness after an operation,

or waiting for appointments. 11% of people told us that they tried to access healthcare but haven't been able to get the support they need.

In terms of challenges - for the past three years not seeing family and friends is the most widely reported issue, however this has dropped since our last survey by 37%. Poor physical health has increased by 4%. Caring has increased by 10% from 18% to 28%. Bereavement and grief have also increased by more than 10% from 15% to 26%. Loneliness and isolation has dropped from 30% to 20%, likely to be connected to the increase in people who are now able to see family and friends, but 20% is still a lot of people.

A theme that has been strongly reflected in this year's survey is issues with transport particularly public transport. 18% of people reflected that transport was a challenge. Many told us of the difficulties of unreliable bus services, some had local services which didn't run at the weekend or stopped early during the week, severely limiting their ability to get out into their communities. Poor transport was cited by a number of people as something that would prevent them from accessing the activities they enjoy. People also told us how it was becoming more difficult to access hospital appointments via public transport, and that taxis are becoming unaffordable, leaving many to rely on family and friends if they have them nearby.

Cost of living - 22% of people told us that they were not confident that they would have enough money to live on this coming year. Many people told us about their worries about the rise food and fuel costs and how they would be meet this on a fixed income. Many are on the cusp of falling into financial difficulties in the coming year. Only 5% of respondents currently receive pension credit, with 79% who have never applied, only 12% told us that they had applied but had not been eligible. We included information about pension credit in the survey.

11% of respondents to our survey told us that they had been discriminated in the workplace due to their age, and 70% of respondents don't think that older people are well represented in society.

Respondents told us that changes in society and infrastructure made them feel invisible such as closures of banks and Post Offices. People told us that they don't find it easy to access information about services and support, for many this was because of the over reliance of online information, and the lack of alternatives for those not online. People told us of their worries about online fraud and scams.

Of those people who told us that they don't or can't get out and about the most cited reason was poor physical health at 67%, followed by lack of confidence at 37%, finances, and lack of own transport at 35%, closely followed by poor mental health and lack of facilities like toilets and public seating at 29%. Lack of public transport was cited as an issue by 25% of people. 74% of people told us that their main method of transport is their own car, with second is public transport at 12% and then relying on friends and family.

We will complete the in-depth analysis of the survey and using this information as evidence in our influencing work, and we'll share a copy of the final report with the group.

Questions and discussion

Mike Hedges – has free bus travel had an effect?

Heather – free bus travel supports people to get out and about. Bus services are being withdrawn and are not being replaced.

Becky Ricketts – in the survey 25% reported that their homes need repair. Do you have any other information on this from previous surveys? Also is the WASP (Wales Against Scams Partnership) partnership still running.

Heather - a new category that we added to our survey this year as a potential challenge was 'House in need of repair'. 25% of people told us that this has been a challenge, with many people telling us that due to the cost of living crisis they can't afford to make the necessary repairs, and we will be keeping this in future surveys. WASP will be revived, so please get involved.

Dewi John – do you have any data on public toilets?

Heather – we're still analysing the report so we will look into this. Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey also covered this area.

Jackie Marshall – what proportion of responses were received from black and minoritised ethnic communities?

Heather - we're still analysing the survey and will be including these data in our final report.

Mike Hedges – older people that have retired find it harder to afford things the things they could when they were working.

Welsh Government's National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People – Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS

The Deputy Minister began by setting out very brief outline of the journey to date in respect of Welsh Government's National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People.

A Consultation Summary Report was published in April 2023.

Since then, key stakeholders have made further representations and officials are discussing with them how to progress this important piece of work. Our aim is to publish a revised National Action Plan before the end of August.

The overarching objectives of the Plan are:

1. Older people are protected from becoming at risk of abuse or neglect.
2. Older people are supported to live independently and with dignity and are able to access relevant support from safeguarding services where they are at risk of abuse or neglect.
3. Older people experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence are able to access relevant support from Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) services when required.

The Deputy Minister explained that we have worked across Welsh Government to ensure the Action Plan references and aligns with the Violence Against Women, domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy 2022-2026, and the work of the Older People’s Needs workstream.

We intend to set out more explicitly the role that the VAWDASV strategy can play in achieving the objectives of the Action Plan.

This is really important because we know that, collectively, we are able to achieve better outcomes by working in partnership through a coherent and collaborative approach nationally but also regionally and locally. We are confident that many of the goals and aspirations we share can be best addressed via that workstream.

The Action Plan is a cross government piece of work with a focus, not only on addressing abuse and neglect of older people, but on creating the conditions in which abuse and neglect of older people is less likely to take place.

There are some additional small adjustments we are making but I am hopeful the Plan will be published during August, and we would like to come back to the Cross-Party Group to discuss when the Action Plan is published. We are working closely with the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales. We are also planning to produce an Annex setting out target dates and responsibility for each action. More research data are needed about the abuse of older people.

Questions and discussion

Nick Kelly – with reference to research data we will be publishing our Safer Ageing Index. Services are not always designed for older people and more specialist support services are needed.

Deputy Minister – refuge centres are not always suitable for older women.

Mike Hedges thanked the Deputy Minister for the presentation with an invitation to come back to a meeting in the Autumn.

Meeting 2

Meeting date: 12 December 2023 – online meeting

Attendees

Mike Hedges MS (Chair)	Hannah Peeler, Care & Repair Cymru
Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Social Services	Michael Phillips, Age Cymru
Ryland Doyle, office of Mike Hedges MS	Becky Ricketts, Care & Repair Cymru
Philip Mulraney, Welsh Government	Dereck Roberts, National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales
Owen Thomas, office of John Griffiths MS	Christopher Williams, Age Alliance Wales
Ceri Cryer, Age Cymru	Sam Young, Age Cymru

Apologies

Llyr Gruffydd MS	Andrea Cooper, office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Delyth Jewell MS	Lorraine Morgan, Jackie's Revolution
Huw Bendall	Polly Winn, RNID

Mike Hedges MS, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes for the meeting held on 26 June 2023 were approved.

When received, a response from the Minister for Health and Social Services to the Chair's letter regarding issues around hospital discharge will be circulated.

National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People – Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS

The National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older people is something we've prepared and consulted on and it's due to be published soon. It's the first of its kind in the UK that has been informed and developed by addressing the experiences and challenges of older women and men in Wales.

We have made significant steps but there's still lots to do. We have undertaken work with the Older People's Commissioner and other key groups on consultation.

The Plan has highlighted that we need better data, evidence and research on those who have suffered abuse. For example, we need to train our workforce that abuse is not just an issue for younger women. We need to ensure that older people have access to services and information, and we need to ensure that services are joined up.

We need to develop and take forward a Communication Plan to raise awareness and provide support to those older people who need it.

The overarching objectives of the Plan are:

- Older people are protected from becoming at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Older people are supported to live independently and with dignity and are able to access relevant support from safeguarding services where they are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Older people experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence are able to access relevant support from Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) services when required.

Importantly, we have worked across Welsh Government to ensure the Action Plan references and aligns with the Violence Against Women, Domestic

Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2022-2026, and the work of the Older People's Needs workstream. This is really important because we know that, collectively, we are able to achieve better outcomes by working in partnership through a coherent and collaborative approach nationally but also regionally and locally. We are confident that many of the goals and aspirations identified by you and fellow partners can be best addressed via that workstream. The Action Plan is a cross government piece of work with a focus, not only on addressing abuse and neglect of older people, but on creating the conditions in which abuse and neglect of older people is less likely to take place.

We want older people to live free from abuse and we'll do all we can to protect older people from abuse at all times. We have a long way to go with lots of work to do with priority areas for action. The Plan is now finished and will be published as soon as possible.

Questions and Discussion

Mike Hedges MS – Is there evidence of financial abuse by relatives, including children and grandchildren?

Deputy Minister – we are aware of this type of abuse and there have been some high-profile examples. Key enablers can help older people. The Welsh Government has funded the HOPE project to facilitate advocacy and help older people to uphold their rights. Safeguarding and Advocacy are important to prevent abuse.

Becky Ricketts - Ofgem's threshold for pre-paid meters is set at 75. How do we engage with Ofgem to persuade them to lower the threshold.

Deputy Minister – the threshold should be younger. The Minister for Social Justice works with Ofgem. We will report back on this.

Phil Mulraney – I'm not aware of any Ofgem work with the Welsh Government.

Dereck Roberts - We need to look at the Equality Act; age needs to be taken into account in other protected characteristics, not just as a stand-alone protected characteristic. Lack of bus services is the biggest form of abuse – people can't leave their homes.

Deputy Minister – The take up of the older person's bus pass has dropped significantly.

Deputy Minister - We need more data. Sexual and domestic abuse are high amongst older people according to Stats Wales figures. We need to raise awareness of the different types of abuse.

Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP) - Sam Young, Policy and Campaigns Officer, Age Cymru

The Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP) is a multi-agency network of organisations committed to building resilience against scams in Wales.

The partnership was started by my predecessor in around 2015, and organised events, campaigns and a summit. It trailed off during the Covid pandemic but as scams increased during the pandemic and have continued to increase in the current Cost of Living crisis, especially online scams, and so Age Cymru decided to set up the partnership again, which was revived in September 2023. There are currently 25 partners involved and we are open to more. We share priorities, ideas and ongoing campaigns, with monthly meetings and bulletins.

We cover four broad areas:

- Build public and organisational resilience to scams through information sharing
- Rethink victimhood – remove the stigma around being a victim of a scam and encourage people to take preventative action
- Influence decision-makers at local and national level to take action against fraud
- Develop a united front of diverse organisations working together to combat scams in Wales.

We're currently working on our January 2024 news campaign. This is a collaborative project to produce news items on warm homes' bad business practice and inappropriate installations (eg spray foam insulation). Our current partners are Age Cymru, Care & Repair, Tarian, Get Safe Online and the Older People's Commissioner, with input from Nest and Trading Standards.

There will be more campaigns and events to come in 2024. If you would like to get involved with the WASP partnership you can sign up to receive our monthly bulletin that is compiled by partnership members with details of scam alerts, campaigns, events and training, and news stories. The bulletin is shared through a wide variety of networks including through our 25 partners, Age Alliance Wales and the police. To join our monthly partner meetings contact details are: wasp@agecymru.org.uk

Questions and Discussion

Dereck Roberts – NPC has an ongoing campaign on scams with some members in Wales becoming scam marshals and report scams.

Sam Young – we could include a feature on this in our newsletter. Scam marshals and friends against scams are a good idea.

Mike Hedges MS – Red flags to watch out for are firms using just PO numbers or just one telephone number; also people knocking on doors pressurizing people to sign up and pay upfront for work as they say they are only in the area for a limited time.

Sam Young – There should also be caution around traders who makes a lot of effort to contact you.

Becky Ricketts Care & Repair can check out a trader's credentials.

Sam Young – Trading Standards also has online resources.

Any other business

Dereck Roberts – home adaptations are important and can help to keep older people out of the NHS.

Hannah Peeler - Care & Repair Cymru has just published a report 'Older people in Wales: poverty in winter 2023-24' [OLDER-PEOPLE-IN-WALES-POVERTY-IN-WINTER-2023-24.pdf \(careandrepair.org.uk\)](https://careandrepair.org.uk/OLDER-PEOPLE-IN-WALES-POVERTY-IN-WINTER-2023-24.pdf)

Mike Hedges MS – we need to ask the Deputy Minister for Social Services to come back to update the Group when the National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People is published.

Meeting 3

Meeting date: 30 April 2024 – online meeting

Attendees

Mike Hedges MS (Chair)	Gareth Parsons, Wales Seniors Forum; National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales
Mark Isherwood MS	Hannah Peeler, Care & Repair Cymru
Ryland Doyle, office of Mike Hedges MS	Jeremy Sharpe, Linking Lives UK
Andrea Cooper, Older People's Commissioner for Wales	Professor John Williams, Chair Age Cymru
Ceri Cryer, Age Cymru (Secretariat)	Polly Winn, RNID
Dr Bernadette Fuge, President Age Cymru	Sam Young, Age Cymru
Jackie Marshall-Cyrus, Jackie's Revolution	

Apologies

Melanie Minty, Care Forum Wales	Dereck Roberts, National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales
George Parish-Wallace, Alzheimer's Society	Ross Saunders, Alzheimer's Society
Michael Phillips, Age Cymru	Helen Twidle, Age Cymru

Mike Hedges MS, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes for the meeting held on 12 December 2023 were approved.

We invited the Minister for Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS, to give an update to the Cross-Party Group on Welsh Government's National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People, which was launched on 29 February 2024. The Minister was unable to attend today's meeting, and wished to convey apologies to the Chair and members, and subject to our invitation the Minister intends to attend a future meeting of the Cross-Party Group to update on the Plan when it is further advanced. The Minister very kindly provided a written update on the Plan.

Ceri Cryer read out the Minister's written update (Highlight report), which was circulated to members with the Minutes of the meeting.

Mike Hedges, MS - we can invite the Minister along to a future meeting.

Update on the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' work on preventing the abuse of older people, and the abuse support services directory – presentation by Andrea Cooper, Safeguarding Lead, Older People's Commissioner for Wales
(Presentation was circulated to members with the Minutes)

Stopping the abuse of old people in Wales is a key priority for the Commissioner. Older people experience all the same kinds of abuse as those in younger age groups and that they may actually be at increased risk of abuse because of the particular circumstances. This could be loneliness and isolation, for example, or it could be illnesses like dementia. These figures, although not insignificant, are probably lower than they ought to be, because we know that many older people don't report abuse for all sorts of reasons.

Stopping the abuse of older people has been a long standing priority of this and previous Commissioners. During the pandemic there were real concerns that the levels of abuse faced by older people would rise, which was the case, and the Commissioner set up the Stopping Abuse Action Group. There are over 35 organisations in the group, and I'll talk about some of the key areas of work.

Public awareness of the abuse of older people is very low. We produced the Get help Stay safe leaflet which describes the different types of abuse. Copies of these leaflets are available either digitally or hard copies from Andrea.Cooper@olderpeople.wales.

We've undertaken research, mapping services available to older people experiencing abuse across Wales. There are lots of reasons why older people aren't accessing services - if those services are only advertising themselves online, then it can be difficult for some older people to know about them. Particular groups of older people including LGBTQ+, those in rural communities and Black, Asian, minority ethnic groups are even less likely to access services for a variety of reasons. We produced an online directory of services and support which can be accessed through the Commissioner's website.

Our most recent piece of research was on the domestic abuse of older men. It can be difficult for these men to reach out for support because many feel very ashamed and embarrassed. They need practical and emotional help, but it's not always available. We made recommendations to both Welsh Government and across other organisations to improve the support available.

We work with the Welsh Government around their VAWDASV work on the Older People's Needs substream to look specifically at the issues facing older people experiencing abuse. We're looking at how we can increase older people's access to criminal justice because many older people don't have that parity of access. We worked closely with the Welsh Government in the development of the National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People, and we'll closely monitor the actions arising from the Plan.

When the Commissioner sets out work priorities we speak to older people, and many older people were worried about scams and fraud. Financial fraud and scams is one of the most prevalent forms of abuse. The Commissioner set up a round table in conjunction with Dyfed Powys Police to look at scams and fraud, and looked at contributory factors, such as closures of banks, COVID, and cost of living. We're working with older people to review existing scams resources.

Ageism is a contributory factor in abuse. When there's a lot of disrespect, people can feel more legitimised in abusing an older person or neglecting them or not providing them with adequate care, for example. Ageism can affect the way that professionals respond to the abuse of older people. There's a tendency for responses to abuse to be welfare-ised. If it's thought that it's about carer's stress, daycare or respite care may be offered, and we don't necessarily offer older people the full range of VAWDASV services, and access to criminal justice is very limited. We had a roundtable event with different organisations and academics and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We're looking to develop a document to encourage frontline practitioners to think about ageism.

Questions and discussion

Mike Hedges MS - one thing you didn't mention and that's probably due to time is family financial abuse where you have the children, grandchildren, using the parent, grandparent as an additional source of money.

Andrea Cooper - the focus of our work is on scams which are perpetrated largely by an unknown person whether that's via the telephone or a rogue trader. But we're very aware that financial abuse sometimes occurs within families as well, and that's something that Welsh Government did a campaign on. It's a very difficult issue to deal with because many older people don't want to report it because that might mean a loss of relationships.

John Williams – regarding access to the criminal justice system, the number of prosecutions we see for cases of elder abuse is abysmally low. That's not to say every case should be prosecuted, but it's certainly more than the number we've got at the moment. The other aspect of justice is civil justice and particularly in the

context of domestic abuse and older people and a feeling that maybe older people are diverted away from or not informed of some of the civil remedies that may be available in domestic abuse cases, such as occupation orders, non-molestation orders. Is that something your groups have picked up?

Andrea Cooper – this is something that we've just started looking at as part of the VAWDASV substream work. We've had an initial meeting to talk about these issues and to look at how we can influence the work of criminal justice boards and how we can increase special measures. I will take those points along to our next meeting.

Mark Isherwood MS - at the beginning of the pandemic I was contacted by Hourglass Cymru, the charity that focuses on these matters, probably the only charity that's exclusively does so, concerned that in the initial pandemic response there appeared to be no recognition of the explosion and demand for their support which occurred in lockdown, and the consideration of that has not been hardwired into, in this context, Welsh Government systems, but presumably UK Government and others also, which was alarming despite all the rhetoric about the need to ensure that we prioritise support for those most vulnerable in such circumstances. Has that improved in your view? Or what action do we still need to encourage to hardwire consideration of such issues into the system when particular crises arise?

Andrea Cooper - it's an important point and we don't yet know the extent of the pandemic in terms of the increases in abuse. The Action Plan will be important in considering this type of issue and going forward because when there are crises of whatever type, older people are more isolated. With changes in the way services are provided, that risk increases, which is something that needs to be taken into consideration now and going forward.

Jackie Marshall-Cyrus - I would be interested in understanding if the research/findings on financial and other forms of abuse included people living in institutional care?

Andrea Cooper - the recent work on abuse has focused on abuse in personal relationships (i.e. domestic abuse). There has been previous work undertaken on abuse in institutions by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

Preserving what matters – integrating mental health in care home transitions - presentation by Sam Young, Policy and Projects Officer, Age Cymru. (presentation was sent to members).

During the pandemic it became increasingly recognised that people living in care homes were experiencing the heaviest restrictions to their daily lives. At the same time, there was a lot more discussion in the public sphere around mental health, including the mental health of older people, something that had often been overlooked in the past.

After COVID, Age Cymru received funding from the Welsh Government to undertake a project into the well-being of care home residents. We produced a report 'Supporting good mental health of older adults in care homes' (March 2023), and a

key finding was that the transition into a care home was a critical moment in determining the mental health of a new resident during their time in care.

This transition is so important is because it represents a disruption. It's a new space, new people, new routines, with the removal of old jobs, hobbies, responsibilities, an entire way of life. This disruption creates a danger of losing the things that give an individual meaning in life, which can have a very serious effect on their mental health in the long term.

Most care homes do have a formal transitional process, which tend to focus on clinical needs rather than non-clinical things that play quite a key role in people's lives and consequently in their mental health. This project looks into this transitional moment and how it could be explored further as a way of improving mental health and care homes, and looking at how people could retain these meaningful aspects of life as they move into care home life and minimise the sense of disruption.

We spoke to care home staff, well-being officers, activities coordinators, nursing staff, managers and members of regulatory bodies, Care Inspectorate Wales, Social Care Wales, as well as some academic researchers, to gain an idea of what things give people a sense of meaning in life. This resource is primarily aimed at care home staff, managers and volunteers <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/our-work/care-homes/good-mental-health-in-care-homes/> (English and Welsh available; hard copies also available). There are eight key themes.

Open questions - these are broad and non-clinical questions that give the new resident a chance to reflect on the things that are important to them.

Language - losing our ability to communicate in our chosen language can greatly impact on our mental health, so it's important to establish the linguistic needs for residents early. Many care home residents in Wales speak Welsh as their first language but are unable to use it, usually through the lack of available staff. Those living with dementia may lose the ability to speak in English as a second language. We looked at ways that care homes could address this by having the active offer of speaking Welsh, or having Welsh integrated into their care, eg Welsh language activities, S4C, Radio Cymru, newspapers and magazines.

Anchoring the new home in the old - looking at how care homes can help residents to feel in control of their new living space and to design it around the things that matter to them. This might be bringing in furniture and decorations from their previous home, which is something that a lot of care homes do already, and also giving residents more autonomy over the space they live in.

Maintaining relationships - family, friendships and community are important to our daily lives. Relationships are key to our identity and to our mental health. We explored ways that care homes could map out the important relationships outside and inside a care home. When we were launching this resource Woody's Lodge gave a presentation on their work in care homes and with veterans.

New responsibilities - carrying out responsibilities gives us meaning in life, motivates us and gives us a sense of importance. It's a key facet of mental health. It could be work, gardening, shopping etc. The move to a care home disrupts this because responsibilities are largely taken away and the person is disempowered. We spoke to care homes about considering how somebody could maintain responsibilities – are there certain things that residents can continue to do, eg could residents be helped to do cooking in a care home setting?

Consulting with residents - some people love a busy social schedule, others don't. Neurodiversity came up during the research in that some autistic people, for example, find socialising really exhausting. People have very individual approaches to socialising and consulting with residents was based on the point that most people value their autonomy. We heard ideas of forums, discussion groups, including residents in the management of the home, and voting on activities.

Acknowledging end of life - people arrive at care homes with their own views on how death can be made personally meaningful to them, how they can die in a way that matters to them and to their family. It's important to have these conversations early on in a safe, relaxed environment to break down the taboo around discussing this.

Evaluation of the resource - there are quite a few areas that need more research, including:

- The role of language in care – other languages aside from English and Welsh
- Experiences of people both from ethnic minorities and of LGBTQ+ backgrounds in care homes
- Neurodiversity is an emerging field in mental health; care home staff we spoke to wanted to see more research and more information to be publicly available about this.

Aims for this resource - it isn't meant to be a prescriptive guide; the aim is to start conversations around meaningful living. It's a step towards a more person-centred care system that acknowledges the mental health of individuals.

Questions and discussion

Andrea Cooper - transitions are processes that occur over time, and it's important that those conversations happen at the time of the move. People are sometimes admitted to care homes in crisis and there is not always opportunity, but it's important to continue those conversations because people's needs change, and to support their well-being. You talked about the importance of maintaining relationships and the challenges when people have to move out of their geographical areas because of a lack of care homes. It's a key point - particularly if transport links aren't good, a lot of people can find it really difficult to maintain those relationships.

Sam Young - the point about meeting before and continuing to track over time came up a few times. A lot of people come straight from hospital in an emergency situation, and there isn't always time for these discussions in terms of tracking the mental health of the individual once they get there. A lot of care homes will have a

tracking system in place for wellbeing in general, and not necessarily mental health. A good example we saw was from the veterans' network with the idea of care homes asking the question if somebody's a veteran so that it's on record when they arrive, so they can then pair people up together and create more of a community within the care home, even if they've been moved to a different part of Wales.

Mark Isherwood MS - in terms of the gaps in research you referred to, what if any further work will you be doing on those areas? If you do pursue the language issue, please could you engage with the Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues which I chair, in the context of BSL. In the context of neurodiversity, of course neurodiverse conditions are lifelong neurodevelopmental conditions, not in themselves mental health conditions, to engage with the Cross-Party loyalties and group both of which incorporate most of the lead organisations and communities within those demographics.

Sam Young - I'm not sure what the next few steps are because a lot of it is dependent on funding. But the language issue and the neurodiversity issue, both things I'd like to push forward and we'll make a note to engage with the Cross-Party groups, and it would be really useful to hear from those organisations.

John Williams - that's an important piece of work and highlighting a particular problem that's been maybe neglected for far too long. My point relates to language, and we know that in some areas significant numbers of older people are primarily Welsh speakers. It's their preferred language. As you pointed out, the ability to communicate in English may sometimes be reduced as people get older, particularly people living with dementia. It's a concern that when we're assessing, say, somebody's mental capacity, we're doing it very often in a language in which they are not comfortable. The implications of doing that can really intrude very heavily on that person's autonomy, that person's human rights. It also goes with hearing impairments, visual impairments. It is a major problem, and I suspect that there are significant numbers of older people who are quite seriously disadvantaged by not being able to be assessed in the language with which they are comfortable.

Sam Young – there are issues around having somebody else coming along to your assessment who's answering on your behalf because they speak better English, which means certain information might be missed out. Also being unable to explain to a doctor or emergency staff a physical health problem because they were no longer able to communicate in English. We've also noticed that certain mental health conditions aren't acknowledged by family members, which would have been important for care home staff to know about these before the person arrived.

Mike Hedges thanked Andrea and Sam for their presentations.

Any Other Business

Jeremy Sharpe - Linking Lives UK is a national charity working to address loneliness and social isolation, mainly through setting up befriending projects. Most of those are

in partnership with churches across the country, and we work with other charities, statutory bodies, social prescribers and social workers to identify suitable referrals.

We've recently received some funding to specifically develop our work within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We've appointed a national development manager for Scotland, and looking to appoint a national development manager in Wales and Northern Ireland. We've got roughly 50% of funding for a three-year project. What we're doing over the next six months is to look for a consultant who can begin to do some of the research around where are some of the gaps within this field of loneliness and social isolation amongst older people, identifying potential partners. We want to avoid duplication of effort. We want to find out things are already going on within this area and where could our project helpfully slot into that. We're particularly aware of rural areas where it may be that churches are the only organisations within that area, and that could be a helpful way for something like this to develop.

I've got an advert for the consultancy role, the deadline is the 24th May for proposals, and we're aiming for the project to end by the end of August / early September. The webpage <https://linkinglives.uk/addressing-loneliness-in-wales/> has got more information and could we send the advert around with the Minutes.

3. Professional lobbyists, voluntary organisations and charities with whom the Group has met during the preceding year

None other than as attendees of the Group's meetings and those stated as having provided presentations at group meetings.

Annual Financial Statement.

9 July 2024

Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

Mike Hedges MS

Age Cymru

Group's Expenses.	No Group expenses.	£0.00
Costs of all goods.	No goods purchased.	£0.00
Benefits received by the group or individual Members from outside bodies.	No benefits received.	£0.00
Any secretariat or other support.	No financial support received.	£0.00
Services provided to the Group such as hospitality.		
Date	Description and name of provider	Cost
		£0.00
Total cost		£0.00