

The Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

Tuesday 12 December 2023, 10-11am

On-line meeting

Meeting Note

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

Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

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://www.careandrepair.org.uk/older-people-in-wales-poverty-in-winter-2023-24.pdf)

Ceri Cryer - the next meeting of the Group will include a presentation by the office of the Older People's Commissioner about the Commissioner's work on preventing the abuse of older people and the abuse support services directory.

Mike Hedges MS – we also 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.

Date of next meeting

There will be an online meeting on Tuesday 30 April 12:15-13:15pm.