

# The Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

Tuesday 22 October 2024, 12.15 - 13.15pm

## On-line meeting

### Meeting Note

#### Attendees

Mike Hedges MS (Chair)	Katherine Evans, Care & Repair Cymru
Mark Isherwood MS	Dr Bernadette Fuge, President Age Cymru
Ryland Doyle, office of Mike Hedges MS	Matthew Hawkins, Alzheimer's Society Cymru
Valerie Billingham, Older People's Commissioner for Wales	Melanie Minty, Care Forum Wales
Rachel Bowen, Older People's Commissioner for Wales	Helen Twidle, Age Cymru
Ceri Cryer, Age Cymru (Secretariat)	Professor John Williams, Chair Age Cymru

#### Apologies

Andrea Cooper, Older People's Commissioner for Wales	Jackie Marshall-Cyrus, Jackie's Revolution
Bryan Godsell, National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales	Gareth Parsons, Wales Seniors Forum

## 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 9 July 2024 were approved.

### Annual General Meeting

### Nomination of the Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

Mark Isherwood MS nominated Mike Hedges MS as the Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing. Mike Hedges MS had also received email nominations from Rhys ab Owen MS, Natasha Asghar MS, and Laura Jones MS.

### Nomination of the Secretariat for the Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

Age Cymru was nominated to provide the Secretariat for the Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing.

## Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July were approved.

Age Cymru's annual survey was distributed to members following the July meeting.

### Presentation by Helen Twidle, Age Cymru 'Why are we still waiting? Delays in social care in Wales'

This is Age Cymru's third annual report on delays in access to social care due to concerns we are hearing on delays in getting vital care for older people. Last year's report found increasing demand post pandemic which meant recovery and service change had been hampered. There was an additional focus this year on paying for care, and social care arrangements for hospital discharge due to concerns we are hearing through engagement and our services.

We sent in a Freedom of Information request to the 22 local authorities asking for data on how long each older person aged 55+ waited for an assessment and for care to be in place. We received 12 responses on assessment waits and 8 responses on care waits. We met with 13 Social Care staff in 11 local authorities. We included additional questions in our annual survey on access to social care and paying for social care.

The report concluded:

1. The surge in demand for social care following the pandemic in 2021 to 2022 has reduced and waiting times appear to be reducing. However, delays in access to social care are still too long. The proportion of older people that had care in place within 30 days increased slightly (81.3% in 21/22 and 83.6% in 22/23). But nearly one in four older people are still waiting more than 30 days for an assessment, and one in six waiting more than 30 days for care to be in place.
2. Efforts on social care recovery have continued, but the increasing complexity of need and future population projections means greater and quicker change is needed.
3. Communication from social services with older people and their families on the first point of contact and whilst waiting for assessment or for care packages to be implemented, needs improvement.
4. Efforts to improve support for unpaid carers need to happen faster.
5. Data collection systems are still not able to effectively report on the delays in access to social care.
6. Short-term funding arrangements mean edge of care services and lower-level support services continue to be at risk.
7. Poor advice on charging from some local authority social services, and the complexities of the charging arrangements means that some older people may be paying above the amount allowed through fairer charging, putting undue pressure on finances.
8. Poor communication around hospital discharge means older people remain in hospital longer than they need to.

9. Local authorities are increasingly providing in-house support for direct payments that may allow an increase in older people seeing direct payments as a more attractive option.

Findings of the report included asks from social care leads of Welsh Government regarding: long term sustainable funding; parity between health and social care salaries; and a way to stop the 'who pays' discussions between health and social care.

Recommendations of the report were:

1. Welsh Government, ADSS Cymru, Social Care Wales and local authorities need to work together to ensure that reporting mechanisms are able to show where positive outcomes rather than outputs are recorded and reported.
2. Local authorities should assess whether their current processes for providing initial advice and information and ongoing access to advice and information are meeting the needs of older people. This needs to include a focus on how well information is communicated and understood on fairer charging.
3. Local authorities should provide an additional focus on those individuals who are currently experiencing a wait longer than 30 days for a care needs assessment or implementation of a care package.
4. Local authorities should provide proactive support for those waiting longer than 30 days.
5. Regional partnership boards, local authorities and third sector services need to work together to improve the availability of earlier intervention and prevention support for older people.
6. Welsh Government, Regional partnership boards, health boards and local authorities should ensure that third sector funding is provided on a sustainable basis.
7. There needs to be an emphasis on learning between local authorities and good practice sharing. This will reduce the volume of work that local authorities need to undertake and help them avoid pitfalls that other local authorities have faced.
8. Welsh Government, Regional partnership boards and local authorities should ensure that the requirements of the Charter for Unpaid Carers are met.

Learning from other areas could be a better way of improving services faster, making those changes that are needed for the ageing population and those higher needs that we know are coming through.

Because unpaid carers are under such levels of stress and those services are not necessarily developing as fast as they would like to be, there is more that needs to be done to have a focus on carers.

### Questions and Discussion

Mike Hedges - are there any numbers on unpaid older carers, the over 60 caring for parents and caring for spouses and/or other members of the family? I come across quite a number of people in that in those groups who are willingly caring for their relatives because they feel that is their duty and they owe it to their parents. But it does affect their own health and well-being.

Helen Twidle - in our survey about a third of older people that said they were carers, but not everybody identifies themselves as an older carer. Wales has a higher

proportion of unpaid carers than the other UK nations, which varies quite a lot from local authority to local authority. I can send over some information on that. Caring has health impacts on health and well-being – it affects people's mental well-being as well as their physical well-being. Low level support can really make a difference with that in terms of improving people's understanding of their caring role.

John Williams - one concern is about the preventative agenda. The 2014 Act does include a duty to provide preventative services. From a financial point, I think a lower investment at the early stages is actually going to save quite a bit of money later on, and more importantly it's better for the well-being of the individual.

### Any Other Business

The Cross-Party Group received an email from Simon Harris of the CMA Competition Market Authority to alert us about a [press release](#) following an investigation into unregulated providers of will writing, online divorce and pre-paid probate services. They have written to seven providers of unregulated legal services cautioning them against using particularly concerning practices such as aggressive upselling, the refusal of refunds and failing to respond to complaints. They have also issued new tailored [guidance for businesses](#) in the sector following a consultation which received widespread support from consumer bodies, trade associations and the firms offering these services. To complement the business guidance, they have also published consumer guides for people making a will or going through a divorce. The CMA's new guides for consumers outline the options available when choosing a [will writer](#) or a [divorce service provider](#), including the key things people need to keep in mind when buying these services and the potential sources of help if things go wrong after purchase.

### Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in the new year.