

# The Cross-Party Group on Older People and Ageing

Tuesday 25 March 2025, 12.15-13.15pm

## On-line meeting

### Meeting Note

#### Attendees

Mike Hedges MS (Chair)	Ceri Cryer, Age Cymru
Ryland Doyle, office of Mike Hedges MS	Katherine Evans, Care & Repair Cymru
Kelly Barr, Age Cymru	Louise Hughes, Age Cymru
Thea Brain, Care Forum Wales	Mel Minty, Care Forum Wales
Andrea Cooper, Older People's Commissioner for Wales	Sam Young, Age Cymru

#### Apologies

Rachel Bowen, Older People's Commissioner for Wales	Dereck Roberts, National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Wales
Jackie Marshall-Cyrus, Jackie's Revolution	Ross Saunders, Alzheimer's Society Cymru
Lorraine Morgan, Jackie's Revolution	Karin Schroeder
Gareth Parsons, Wales Seniors Forum	

Mike Hedges MS, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting

#### Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 were approved.

Older people and advocacy – presentation by Louise Hughes, Head of Safeguarding and Advocacy at Age Cymru (presentation circulated).

There are different types of advocacy ranging from early intervention/prevention to high level needs / crisis interventions. At the heart of advocacy is the principle of self-advocacy whenever possible. Independent advocacy is crucial.

Advocacy is based in three key pieces of legislation – the Mental Health Act, the Mental Capacity Act and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, where there are requirements for people to have advocacy where they meet the criteria.

We work to a Code of Practice and a Charter. We're independent of statutory services in our funding and the way we work.

Advocacy is about support, representation, empowerment, choices, rights, having a voice and making decisions. Advocacy is central to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to focus social support around people and their well-being. Advocacy enables people to be active partners, and gives people a voice,

choice and control. People must be involved in expressing their views, wishes, feelings and exploring their options.

The Code of Practice (Advocacy) sets out the requirements for local authorities to: ensure that access to advocacy services and support is available to enable individuals to engage and participate when local authorities are exercising statutory duties in relation to them; and to arrange an independent professional advocate to facilitate the involvement of individuals in certain circumstances.

We have been carrying out a longitudinal study on the availability of advocacy for older people, which we publish every two years. The latest report Advocacy Counts 9 shows that advocacy support is reaching crisis point, for both statutory and non-statutory services. People's issues are becoming more challenging and complex, and there are waiting lists for services as people need more time and more support.

There are 30 paid and 128 volunteer advocates delivering advocacy specifically to older people. There are 171 volunteer advocates working in a variety of advocacy services across Wales. The total number of older people supported across all services over the last 12 months was 7,800, a decrease of over 1,000 from Advocacy Counts 8. There were 815 fewer older people supported by advocacy services funded specifically for older people than in 2022. This is a 13% reduction. Services specifically funded for older people continue to exist in all 22 local authority areas in Wales.

Age Cymru has two all Wales advocacy projects – HOPE (Helping others participate and engage) and Dementia advocacy. Cases can be complex involving mental health challenges, digitalisation issues and access to services, issues in housing, ageist attitudes, accessing health and social care, and safeguarding situations.

### Questions and discussion

Mike Hedges MS – what's both illuminating and sad is that people often don't have anyone to speak for them; I speak with older people whose families are dispersed all around the world, so thank you for what you're doing.

Louise Hughes – we often get emails from family members from around the world who are concerned that they can't be there to help their parents.

Katherine Evans – how do referrals work?

Louise Hughes – there's a whole range of ways that people get in touch, and a huge part of our job is to make sure people know that we're here. We may get referrals from nursing staff or social work staff in hospitals. There are also open referral processes, through emailing our dementia and HOPE projects; also through the community and other services.

Andrea Cooper – how do we make older people and their families aware of advocacy and the right to advocacy? Sometimes the system can work against the role of advocates.

Louise Hughes – we visit dementia hubs, we give presentations, we hold roadshows, we've information on pharmacy bags, we provide both online and offline information, eg leaflets in libraries and GP surgeries.

Supporting the wellbeing of older care home residents - a toolkit – Kelly Barr, Arts and Creativity Programme Manager, Age Cymru (presentation circulated).

Age Cymru has been working with care homes for a number of years, through My Home Life Cymru, cARTrefu our arts in care homes project, and through Welsh Government funded projects like Tell Me More and the care home volunteer project. This year, Welsh Government has supported us to pull together all of the resources that we, and others, have developed, to create a comprehensive toolkit focused on resident wellbeing.

The toolkit is available on the Age Cymru website and bilingual hard copies have been sent out to all care homes in Wales, with a poster and a reference guide. We've also been sending out copies of Tell Me More which have been developed to support care home staff, families, friends and carers to have meaningful conversations with residents about what is important to them.

The toolkit is divided into four sections: Transition: Feeling welcome; Meaningful activities: Making someone feel at home; Purpose, significance and achievement; A good ending: What matters most. In each section there are links and search terms for useful resources, a tool to try and 'Hints and Tips' which are broken down into separate sections for staff, family and friends, and residents.

This toolkit was informed by conversations with 17 residents and 48 professionals across 20 care homes, local authorities and health boards, and draws on a huge wealth of knowledge and experience.

There are Welsh and English URLs that will take you to the hub on the website. The layout has been designed to make it easier to find information, whether you are a care home manager, a family member or carer. There are several sections: resident voice, arts in care homes, volunteering in care homes, research and My Home Life Wales.

I will focus on Resident Wellbeing today. In the Transition section, when a resident moves into a care home, we have developed two specific resources: Preserving What Matters, and Making Relationships Count.

We like to hear from care homes about how they have been using the toolkit and what works for them, and we have provided them with information on how they can contact us.

We have developed a number of films to capture the impact of person-centred care in care homes on residents, and to capture some of the big and small things that care homes do to make residents feel fulfilled. These films also raise public awareness about life in care homes and how it can be a positive experience for residents.

### Questions and Discussion

Mike Hedges MS – it's the ability to do what people want, such as the golf example, and we need to do more of that, rather than finding reasons why things can't be done. Can you share the good practice?

Kelly Barr – Covid has had a big impact regarding risk aversion in care homes. The current project finishes at the end of March, and we're looking to discuss with Welsh Government about how we can share good practice. We have had global evaluation of our arts in care home project.

Andrea Cooper – it's so important to share this work. Care homes are quite feared by a lot of people, and this work enables people to see that care homes can be a positive choice.

#### Any other business

- Karin Schroeder emailed the Group about a bank branch closure in Holywell, Flintshire; the closest branch will be Rhyl or Mold, with bus times an hour away. Concerns were raised about some older people and digitally excluded people being able to access services.

Whilst the closure of banks is not a devolved issue, the Chair will write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning to highlight the widespread issue of access to banking.

- Ceri Cryer mentioned that Age Cymru's annual survey for older people will be launched soon; details will be circulated to members. Age Cymru has presented the results of previous surveys to the Group.