

# Cross Party Group on Older People and Ageing

14 October 2015, Conference Room 24, Tŷ Hywel

## Note of Meeting on tackling elder abuse

Attendees	Apologies
Mike Hedges AM - CHAIR	Andi Lyden, Carers Trust
Laura Nott, Age Cymru - SECRETARY	Andrew Bell, SSIA
Cathrin Manning, Red Cross	Gemma Hamblin, Race Equality First
Gareth Powell, BASW Cymru	Manel Tippet, Royal College of Psychiatrists
Helen West, Julie Morgan AM's office	Robyn Miles, GlaxoSmithKline
Iwan Williams, Older People's Commissioners Office	Ruth Crowder, Welsh Reablement Alliance
John Davies, National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales	
Josh Hayman, Older People's Commissioners Officer	
Louise Hughes, Age Cymru	
Lynda Wallis, Vale 50+ Strategy Forum	
Marion Lowther, Contact the Elderly	
Mohammed Asghar AM	
Nancy Cavill, Julie Morgan AM's office	
Phyllis Preece, National Pensioners Convention	
Rachael Nicholson, Action on Elder Abuse	
Rachel Gingell, Care and Repair Cymru	

### Welcome and introductions

Mike Hedges AM welcomed everyone to the meeting and called out the apologies. Mike welcomed Louise Hughes and Rachael Nicholson to the meeting and said that this is a topic that is personal to him and his constituents in Swansea east.

### Matters arising from previous meeting

There were no matters arising from previous minutes.

### Presentation by Louise Hughes, Age Cymru

Louise started her presentation by explaining where Age Cymru sees the challenges ahead with significant changes in legislation. This won't solve everything we have more to do – prevention, empowerment, well-being and choice.

Wales has the highest prevalence of abuse with almost 40,000 older people mistreated or neglected in their own homes in Wales and 21,000 are domestic abuse related. But sadly there are less than 5,000 reported cases.

Adult protection should be seen as child protection with an enhanced duty to cooperate (agencies required to provide assistance) and report incidents.

In terms of advocacy, there should be a right to support which is now in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales Act), but how this will look is unknown.

There must be a regard to the individual's views, wishes and feelings; promoting and respecting the dignity of the individual; have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs; importance of providing appropriate support to enable the individual to participate in decisions that affect him

The importance of safeguarding training was explained, with Louise delivering training herself for Age Cymru. The Older People's Commissioners Office (OPC) also does a lot of safeguarding and trying to change the law, for example, 'access to justice'.

The effects and awareness of elder abuse are unknown unlike the effects and awareness of child abuse. It is a hidden problem which is under reported with a lack of understanding.

More protection is needed for vulnerable older people who are being scammed from fraud and financial exploitation. The OPC and Age Cymru are currently working together with other Welsh organisations to create a 'scams charter and framework' which will set clear guidelines for businesses, etc, for protection against scams.

There needs to be a change in attitudes towards older people, with more dignity and respect. We have legislation and policy yet there are still incidents like Tawel Fan, Operation Jasmine, Winterbourne View ...are the lessons really being learnt and are they being learnt widely not just locally. How much more serious do we need to be to see change.

Prevention is key - legislation states that the local authority must provide or arrange a range of preventative services contributing towards preventing people from suffering abuse or neglect. Louise welcomed the group's views on how this would look.\*

In the next 12 months we could see a detrimental change in advocacy service availability and it will cost a lot of money to retain them. 84% of advocates had supported someone who had been abused.

### **Presentation by Rachael Nicholson, Action on Elder Abuse**

Rachael Nicholson gave the group an introduction to the work of Action on Elder Abuse. Action on Elder Abuse has been working across the UK for over 20 years and our sole purpose as a charity is to prevent the abuse of older people, challenge attitudes and to support victims. We do this by raising awareness about the causes of abuse, we provide training on the different types of abuse, how to recognise it and what to do if you suspect abuse and we have a range of resources for practitioners and individuals. Action on Elder Abuse define 'abuse' as: 'a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.' This abuse can fall into one or more of these broad categories, financial, psychological, physical, sexual abuse and neglect.

The 2007 Prevalence Study on abuse and neglect of older people that we were involved in estimated that more than 39,000 older people in Wales per year are victims of abuse. (6% of older people – 66+) significantly higher than the other nations.

Protection of older people and vulnerable adults as a whole is still not given the same attention or level of seriousness as the protection of children, despite the fact that some older people can be just as vulnerable, just as reliant on their carers and unable to fend for themselves.

Another way of preventing abuse is by providing a deterrent, by ensuring there are repercussions for abusers. We know that too often the Criminal Justice System lets down victims of abuse. Figures researched by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales highlighted that in 2013-2014 only 13% of reported crimes against older people to the Police led to arrests. If they are not reporting because they're worried about bothering people, we need to do something.

For those of you who might not know, Operation Jasmine was the Police investigation into abuse and neglect in several care homes in Gwent, which commenced in 2005. Although the investigation lasted 7 years no criminal proceedings were brought. However, this case raised awareness of abuse giving protection for the 'abusees' and a warning to the 'abusers'.

We received an account from a young person who had started working for a home care agency. She had received theory based training and then went to shadowing carers going into people's homes. She witnessed carers feeding a woman with porridge that was too hot, ignoring the woman trying to tell them that she was hurting. She saw an old man being left in his chair despite calling for the toilet and when he soiled himself he was eventually taken to the toilet to be left there for 30mins and told to think about what he had done. She resigned on day two but admitted that she didn't do anything else as she didn't know how to report, or to whom and it was her word against the two experienced carers she was shadowing. She didn't pursue a career in social care.

Slowly we have changed attitudes towards domestic abuse, now we need to do the same for elder abuse. Action on Elder Abuse and Age Cymru are a gateway to support people who don't know where else to go.

Going forward we would like to see our elected representatives, our Assembly Members raise the profile of elder abuse. While we aim for that there is scope to raise awareness of elder abuse within the new domestic abuse legislation, to ensure that essential training is delivered, so let's do that.

## **Questions**

**Mike Hedges** – society seems to view child abuse more importantly than elder abuse. We need the public to understand, when we talk about elder abuse we dehumanise it by saying 'home' or 'hospital' but if we say 'Mrs Jones'...

**Phyllis Preece** – you didn't mention hospitals. Older people don't have time on their side and worry about family. Regarding training, its common sense, two people within

the National Pensioners Convention went as friends to visit someone in hospital and we saw abuse and told Age Cymru. We should applaud for hard work but older people can sense abuse.

**Louise Hughes** – training is the wrong word – we need to get the message out to the community. We have recently worked with volunteers who have promoted preventative messages to over 5000 older people. We need more initiatives such as this and there are many ways of doing this.

**Mohammed Asghar AM** – very interesting discussion. ‘Engagement’ was not used but people should be. I come from an Asian community who wouldn’t use care homes; we worship older people, our mother, our grandparents... We’ve got to learn from others, for example, the Afro-Caribbean community. We have to do something in the Welsh Government – last week I turned 70 years old, if I fear about not working, I may feel different. We should look at engaging with the community 2 hours a week.

**Rachael Nicholson** – there is an initiative in London to support ‘abusees’ with peer support.

**Louise Hughes** – we have worked with many different communities but we need initiatives to be better financed.

**Nancy Davies** – we need to remove the causes – for example age discrimination and ‘older people cost too much’ and young people who are abused become the ‘abusers’ themselves. We need to deal with the problem and remove the cause.

**Lynda Wallis** – I’m really pleased to hear this topic today. There is still no public awareness; it is all very quiet and no-one wants to think about nanny and granddad. Child abuse is all over the news, but elder abuse isn’t. People will ignore this so more awareness of the bigger problems is needed.

**Louise Hughes** – you’ve described domestic abuse which is not as recognised with older people.

**Cathrin Manning** – more awareness raising in safeguarding – this can bring difficulties as there are differences and an interpretation of trust in the different local authority areas, with some cases being turned away because of this.

**Louise Hughes** – we have seen this and encourage people to challenge it.

**Gareth Powell** – people don’t perceive themselves as being old, but I don’t know how we tackle this. Receiving home care for 80+, generally people think it wouldn’t happen to them. We don’t think about when we need care, but there should be an invested interest as we worry it will happen to us (abuse).

**John Davies** – what affect is austerity having on local authorities, with older people not being able to get out because of the cuts, for example bus routes. We have the largest older people’s population in the UK, but no-one is asking us what we are experiencing.

**Mike Hedges AM** – financial abuse – very few grandparents want to prosecute their grandchildren, how can we stop this continuing? They don't want the money back but want it stopped.

**Louise Hughes** – re advocacy, family will come to us and look at options. They don't always need adult protection, there are other ways.

**Phyllis Preece** – you don't think it's going to happen to you, this is why prevention is key.

### **Recommendations / actions**

- Raise the profile of elder abuse
- Ask the Minister to be clear about what prevention is
- Speak to older peoples forums about how to support/protect older people from abuse

### **Dates of next meeting**

10 February 2016