

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor / Priorities for the Committee
CWLC(5) PFC09: Ymateb gan Sarah Rochira, Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru / Evidence from Sarah Rochira, Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation¹. The Committee's remit is broad and all issues affect older people across Wales, however I would highlight these particular issues for your consideration:

Older people's access to arts and cultural sites/events in Wales

Whilst some older people can access arts and cultural sites/events in Wales, others cannot due to a number of reasons, including poverty and limited incomes (recent research by the Bevan Foundation suggests that poverty amongst older people is on the increase²), a lack of awareness of the opportunities available (particularly in some of Wales' most deprived communities), accessibility (a lack of public transport provision and acknowledgement of the need to be age and dementia friendly venues) and the costs of participation. What can be done to encourage an increasing number of older people to access these opportunities across Wales? Accessing such opportunities is good for the individual, good for the sites/events and it also contributes towards the Welsh Government's aim to be a dementia friendly nation and fulfil its commitments in its Strategy for Older People Phase Three i.e. participation in cultural activities³. Ensuring that older people can access arts and cultural sites/events complements the Ageing Well in Wales programme, particularly the aim to establish age friendly and dementia supportive communities across Wales⁴. An Inquiry would also be an opportunity to learn from good practice elsewhere e.g. dementia friendly National Museums Liverpool and Sporting Memories in Scotland^{5 6}.

The perception/portrayal of older people in the media

As highlighted in my 'Say No to Ageism' campaign⁷, older people are often portrayed in the media as being frail and vulnerable, as being worthless and a drain on resources. Daily negative and derogatory language around older people means that society forms a strong and misguided view of older people, one that is often fuelled by the media. Through volunteering, caring, working

¹ <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=217>

² <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/commentary/wales-poor-still-us/>

³ <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/home>

⁵ <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learning/projects/house-of-memories/>

⁶ <http://www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com/d1079/scotland>

⁷ <http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageism/say-no-to-ageism-overview.aspx>

and other ways, older people make a £1bn contribution to the Welsh economy every year, however this significant contribution is often overlooked or ignored, meaning that the negative portrayals of older people continue.

It is time to challenge the myths, stereotypes and misconceptions around older people, and instead celebrate their diversity and their significant contribution to the economy and communities across Wales. Do we have an ageist media in Wales? Are the negative and inflammatory headlines in newspapers and elsewhere helping to fuel this pernicious narrative of older people as a burden on society? Are these headlines influencing the way that our wider civil society perceives older people, and does it affect the way public services address the needs of older people i.e. only through the prism of health and social care and as one large homogenous group that are dependent on services? Is ageism seen as less serious in the media compared with racism and sexism? Changing attitudes and celebrating the diversity of older people and their contribution complements the Ageing Well in Wales programme and my outcomes-focused and asset-based approach to older people in Wales, as well as the national wellbeing goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

I hope that these issues provide the Committee with useful information. I look forward to working with you and others on these issues over the coming months and years. Should you require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact me.