

WF 01

Ymchwiliad i gynaliadwyedd y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol
Inquiry into the sustainability of the health and social care workforce

Ymateb gan: Age Cymru

Response from: Age Cymru

Consultation Response

Sustainability of the health and social care workforce

August 2016

Introduction

Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to respond to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's inquiry into the sustainability of the health and social care workforce. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over in Wales has been growing at a faster rate than the proportion of the population aged between 18 and 64 and this is a trend that will continue in coming decades. The number of individuals aged 65 and above in Wales is expected to increase from around 600 000 in 2013 to almost 900 000 in 2037¹. The need for social care increases with age, and the number of those aged 85 or over is growing at an even faster rate than those aged 65 plus. In order to meet the health and social care needs of this population, we need to ensure that the relevant workforce is suitably trained and integrated, with the appropriate skills mix available.

General comments

- We are aware that in some places older people's services in secondary care, for example mental health services, are not always available 24/7 whereas they are available 24/7 for what is known as the working age population. It is imperative that training and recruitment (as well as funding) are able to address such gaps in the current provision. A lack of such a service can, for example, be problematic if a person living with dementia or a cognitive impairment is admitted outside those service hours.
- There will be a greater demand for health and social care from an increasingly frail older population, many of whom may have co-morbidities. It is essential that the workforce is able to treat the person holistically. We are aware of issues that have arisen due to people living with dementia being treated for other conditions by staff who are not trained to deal with symptoms and behaviour that may arise from their dementia.
- As a consequence, we believe that dementia care training is fundamental for all specialisms apart from paediatrics for both the health and social care workforce. For example, growing numbers of people in receipt of domiciliary care are living with dementia and there is an urgent need for domiciliary care workers to understand how best to support them. Around two-thirds of people living with dementia live in the community, and one-third of these live alone in their own homes². It is thus highly probable that domiciliary care workers regularly encounter people who may have difficulty in communicating their needs, may be confused, frustrated or even on occasions aggressive. Knowing how to

¹ LE Wales (April 2014): *Future of Paying for Social Care in Wales. First report to the Welsh Government.*

² Alzheimer's Society (2014): *Dementia 2014: Opportunity for change:* p18

communicate and respond appropriately is therefore essential to the delivery of quality care³. Appropriate support can have a significant impact upon quality of life.

- We would also argue that there is a need for more geriatric specialists in light of the ageing demographic profile of the Welsh population. For example, we know from data collected by the Wales Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (February 2016) that the rate of new cancer cases generally increases with age, as does the rate of cancer deaths. We are therefore concerned that more attention should be given to the provision of geriatric oncology services and ensuring that all patients are treated equally, irrespective of age. This would require further training and recruitment of staff specialising in providing care and treatment to older people within their area, for example oncology.

We hope these comments are useful and would be more than happy to provide further information if required.

³ *Ibid: p28*