

PSB 12

Dulliau gweithredu lleol ar gyfer lleihau tlodi: Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol a byrddau gwasanaethau cyhoeddus

Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-Being of Future Generations Act and public service boards

Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Response from: Older People's Commissioner for Wales



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to the

National Assembly for Wales 'Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-being of Future Generations Act and Public Service Boards' consultation

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About the Commissioner

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people across Wales, standing up and speaking out on their behalf. She works to ensure that those who are vulnerable and at risk are kept safe and ensures that all older people have a voice that is heard, that they have choice and control, that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against and that they receive the support and services they need. The Commissioner's work is driven by what older people say matters most to them and their voices are at the heart of all that she does. The Commissioner works to make Wales a good place to grow older - not just for some but for everyone.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales:

- Promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales.
- Challenges discrimination against older people in Wales.
- Encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales.
- Reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

National Assembly for Wales ‘Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-being of Future Generations Act and Public Service Boards’ consultation

1. As the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales I welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation¹. It builds on my responses to the ‘Poverty in Wales: Communities First – lessons learnt’ consultation (May 2017)², and the ‘Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Strand 4’ consultation (January 2015)³. It also complements my ‘Preparing Local Wellbeing Plans: Guidance for Public Services Boards’ published in October 2016⁴.
2. I have been a supporter of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act from the outset. With its focus on long-term, sustainable and preventative outcomes for people of all ages, the Act complements my Framework for Action 2013-17 and particularly my first priority, ‘Embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services’⁵. The establishment of statutory Public Services Boards (PSBs) is an important part of the Act and bringing together key partners from a range of sectors is crucial in maintaining the health, independence and wellbeing of older people. An ageing population introduces certain challenges but also a range of opportunities as well, and the Act can help drive forward the asset-based approach i.e. investing in older people and enabling and empowering them to remain as carers, volunteers and employees in our communities.
3. Between December 2014 and July 2016 my office and I visited all Local/Public Services Boards across Wales. These meetings were crucial in discussing the wellbeing and prevention agendas for older people, to promote the asset-based approach and to convey the message that all PSB partners can help improve the lives of

¹ <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=281>

² <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s63289/CF%2008%20Older%20Peoples%20Commissioner%20for%20Wales.pdf>

³ <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s36187/PIW%2008%20S4%20Older%20Peoples%20Commissioner%20for%20Wales.pdf>

⁴ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/16-10-05/Preparing_Local_Wellbeing_Plans_Guidance_for_Public_Services_Boards.aspx

⁵ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/13-05-23/Framework_for_Action.aspx

older people. My Guidance to PSBs includes six key issues that all Boards should consider and address. One of these is “A specific reduction in the number of older people living in poverty in the Local Authority...Indicators could include: increased retention of or return to employment by people aged 50+; increased uptake of financial entitlements amongst older people; a reduction in the number of older people affected by fuel poverty”.

4. Misconceptions remain that older people have not been affected by austerity in recent years. The reality is very different however. More than 112,000 older people live in poverty in Wales, and poverty amongst older people has increased slightly in recent years⁶ ⁷. Research in 2014 suggested that nearly 50,000 older people in Wales live in severe poverty on £183-50 per week or less⁸. Furthermore, an estimated 140,000 older households in Wales are living in fuel poverty⁹. New research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that there are 300,000 more older people living in poverty in the UK than in 2012/13¹⁰. Within the older age group there are inequalities and significant variations: research suggests that people aged 75+ are £59 per week worse off than ‘younger’ older people¹¹. As highlighted in my Communities First Inquiry response, poverty amongst older people is not confined to Communities First areas. Poverty affects older people in all parts of Wales, in deprived areas, urban, rural and coastal areas, and also in more affluent areas where 'hidden' poverty exists i.e. older people who are asset rich but cash poor.
5. The causes of poverty amongst older people are wide ranging, sometimes complex and often multi-factorial. Factors can include geography, health, housing and the availability of information and advice services. How older people improve their situation often depends on where they live and the range of support services on

⁶ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/latest-news/age-cymru-calls-for-fulfilled-lives-and-a-decent-income-for-older-people/>

⁷ <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/news/2016/07/wales-poverty-progress-disappointing-says-bevan-foundation/>

⁸ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/latest-news/archive/50000-welsh-pensioners-live-in-severe-poverty/>

⁹ <http://www.nea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Manifesto-Fuel-Poverty-Statistics.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/uk-poverty-2017-country-reaches-turning-point>

¹¹ <https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/economy/interview/independent-age/74971/poverty-and-silent-generation-new-research-destroys>

offer. Many older people find themselves in difficult situations and unable to lift themselves from the effects of poverty due to low and stagnant incomes (three quarters of the poorest older people do not have a private pension for example¹²), rising costs of daily living and energy bills, historically low interest rates on savings and a lack of digital skills. It is estimated that over a third of older people are digitally excluded in Wales, particularly the 'oldest old'¹³. As a result, older people lose out on savings of up to £560 by not managing bills and purchasing items online¹⁴.

6. This form of discrimination impacts on people's lives and ability to avoid poverty. The result is a poorer quality of life with some having to make daily 'eat or heat' choices. Such scenarios are unacceptable in Wales and should be a priority for PSBs and other key partners on the older people's agenda. The capacity of PSBs to adapt to and address local poverty factors is therefore crucial.

PSB Assessments of Local Wellbeing

7. The assessments of local wellbeing, published by the PSBs in May 2017, have been very useful in examining a wide range of issues that impact on the wellbeing of people of all ages. The assessments provide a detailed analysis of the current situation and an indication of the challenges and opportunities for the PSBs ahead of the publication of the Local Wellbeing Plans in May 2018. My overview, published in August 2017, provides some advice and recommendations on how to build on the assessments from the perspective of older people¹⁵. It was encouraging, for example, to see the uptake of financial entitlements addressed in the Newport and Swansea assessments^{16 17}, digital technologies and exclusion and the issue of persistent poverty amongst single older people in

¹² <http://www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk/SM4/Mutable/Uploads/medialibrary/6860-Age-Alliance-Report-B.pdf>

¹³ <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/comm/160316-digital-inclusion-strategic-framework-en.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.housing.org.uk/policy/investing-in-communities/federation-support-for-community-investment/digital-inclusion/>

¹⁵ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/OPCW_Overview_PSB_Assessments_of_Local_Wellbeing_ENG.sflb.ashx

¹⁶ <http://onewportlsb.newport.gov.uk/documents/One-Newport/Community-Well-being-Profile-Final-2017.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/psbassessment>

the Conwy-Denbighshire assessment¹⁸, and fuel poverty in all assessments except one.

8. Over half of the assessments address the issue of an ageing workforce and employment opportunities for people aged 50+, although only a few e.g. Bridgend, Carmarthenshire address lifelong learning^{19 20}. More work is needed however to consider the needs, aspirations and circumstances of older people beyond health and social care. As highlighted in the Future Generations Commissioner's 'Well-being in Wales' report²¹, child poverty is addressed in all the assessments, however very few address the causes of poverty amongst older people. Looking ahead to the publication of the Local Wellbeing Plans in 2018, PSBs must build on these positive references and consider their roles in lifting older people out of poverty.

Learning and Employment Opportunities for Older People

9. A wide range of solutions are needed to tackle poverty amongst older people. Ensuring that older people remain in and return to the workplace is one solution that all PSBs should consider. The state pension age is no longer relevant to an increasing number of older people, and many older people now want or need to work for longer to supplement their incomes and strengthen their financial resilience in later life. Whilst the need to work for longer is evident, a number of older people face significant barriers in remaining or returning to employment, including age discrimination.
10. Myths and stereotypes regarding older workers, such as poor attendance records, questions regarding their loyalty and their ability to adapt and embrace new skillsets are still prevalent. Employers of all sizes across Wales are reluctant to employ older workers. These issues were highlighted in the National Assembly's 2015 Inquiry on Employment Opportunities for People 50+²², and

¹⁸ <http://conwyanddenbighshirelsb.org.uk/en/home/english-wellbeing-assessment/>

¹⁹ <http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/424480/wba-final-english.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.thecarmarthenshirewewant.wales/media/8178/psb-wellbeing-assessment.pdf>

²¹ https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FGCW_Well-being_in_Wales-Planning_today_for_a_better_tomorrow_2017_edit.pdf

²² <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10305/cr-ld10305-e.pdf>

learning and employment opportunities for older people is a priority theme in Ageing Well in Wales (further details below).

11. Employing older people benefits everyone: it improves the financial capability and resilience of individuals and therefore reduces the likelihood of poverty, it boosts the workforce and helps strengthen local and national economies. Older people possess a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience that is currently under-appreciated and under-utilised in Wales. Whilst there are around 62,000 young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). There are nearly 200,000 people between 50 and state pension age who are in the same situation, yet are unable to access the same level of support and advice^{23 24}. Furthermore, whilst an estimated 7 million young people will leave education in the next decade, there will be around 13.5 million vacant jobs²⁵. Research suggests that helping older people back into employment does not mean that younger people are ‘crowded out’ of the labour market, and including older people in the market could boost the UK GDP by £88 billion²⁶. It is therefore crucial that employers in Wales do consider the benefits of employing older people and promote age-diverse and multi-generational workplaces.
12. This is a key challenge for governments at all levels but also for PSBs. Every PSB should assess the range of help and support services on offer for older jobseekers in their areas, and what help is on offer for older employees who may need support to update or refresh skillsets e.g. digital skills in order to remain in employment. PSB partners should look at their own arrangements for supporting older workers, and education partners should examine adult/lifelong learning opportunities locally, an essential component in improving the employability prospects of older people.

²³ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Economic-Inactivity/economicinactivityratesexcludingstudents-by-welshlocalarea-year>

²⁴ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Unemployment/ILO-Unemployment/ilounemploymentrates-by-welshlocalareas-year>

²⁵ <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3726>

²⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611460/independent-review-of-the-state-pension-age-smoothing-the-transition.pdf

13. Wales cannot afford to lose the wealth of skills and experience that older workers possess, and whilst there are some Welsh Government initiatives to build on e.g. the 'No Best Before Date' awareness raising campaign to incentivise employers to employ older people²⁷, the all-age apprenticeships²⁸ and the forthcoming all-age Employability Plan: PSB partners must consider local solutions and initiatives to ensure that older employees are able to remain in the workplace, and older jobseekers are provided with every opportunity to find work in sectors that match their skillsets and ambitions. Much more needs to be done to both encourage employers of all sizes to recognise the benefits of employing older people, and to support older jobseekers to improve their employment prospects through adequate and relevant learning, skills and training schemes.

Public Transport and Community Services

14. Transport cuts across the older people's agenda and PSBs should consider their role in tackling poverty amongst people of all ages. Enabling and empowering older people to continue as carers, employees and volunteers in communities requires a high quality and integrated public transport network. If Wales is to make the most of its older workers, then the provision of public transport, particularly public buses, and community transport is essential. For older people living in deprived areas and without access to private transport, connecting them with employment opportunities is crucial, and the same applies to older people who live in sparsely populated areas where rural poverty and poor connectivity exists. Whilst the free bus pass for people aged 60+ has made a huge difference in people's lives, I have often said that a free bus pass is worth little without a bus.
15. As my 2014 report on community services highlights²⁹, the closure or reduced provision of public buses, toilets, libraries, day/community centres and lifelong learning has had a devastating

²⁷ <http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2017/170517-no-best-before-date-for-welsh-workers/?lang=en>

²⁸ <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/apprenticeships/?lang=en>

²⁹ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/14-02-25/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.aspx

impact on older people's lives across Wales. Removing these 'lifeline' services affects older people's physical and mental health, reduces their quality of life and makes them more susceptible to a range of health issues and poverty. PSBs need to consider creative and innovative solutions that are low cost but high impact, delivering these essential services in new and different ways and therefore reducing the likelihood of loneliness, social isolation and poverty amongst older people.

Improving the uptake of financial entitlements

16. For some older people living in poverty, remaining in or returning to employment is not an option. Another key solution to lift people out of poverty is improving the uptake of financial entitlements. A number of older people are not claiming their entitlements for a number of reasons: The perceived shame or stigma attached to claiming, the complexity of applying and the burdensome paperwork involved, as well as a lack of awareness that these entitlements are available.
17. The Age Cymru 2014 report on poverty amongst older people suggests that around a third of eligible older people do not claim. Entitlements such as Attendance/Carers Allowance and Pension Credit are crucial sources of money for older people who are entitled to them. Yet Wales is returning £186 million worth of Pension Credit alone to the Treasury every year³⁰. This is an additional £50/60 in people's weekly income that means individuals would be better able to respond to rising energy bills, buy better quality food, access activities and other opportunities in the community, and generally lead to an improved quality of life with positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Research suggests that full take-up of entitlements could reduce poverty among older people by a third³¹.
18. I have previously called for an entitlements awareness raising campaign to help ensure that older people in Wales are claiming their entitlements. Research by Age UK suggests that

³⁰ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/life-on-a-low-income-1/>

³¹ <http://www.bevanfoundation.org/publications/poverty-and-social-exclusion-in-wales-2/>

increasing pensioner income is still the most effective route out of poverty³². A useful model to follow is the 'Make the Call' campaign in Northern Ireland, which has resulted in older people increasing their weekly incomes by £60 and more³³. A similar campaign in Wales would be useful, using digital and non-digital means and getting messages across to older people in the places that matter to them e.g. public transport, village halls, day centres, gardening centres, hairdressers and sports clubs and via trust intermediaries e.g. friends, family, carers and GPs.

19. Rolling out the Caerphilly 'Simon Says' campaign might be an useful approach, and could be used not only to raise awareness of entitlements but also other issues e.g. schemes and services that help tackle fuel poverty³⁴. Income maximisation schemes benefit everyone: research in England suggests that for every £1 invested in such schemes, between £4-8 is generated for the local economy³⁵.
20. Improving the uptake of financial entitlements amongst people of all ages should be a key issue for PSBs to address. As with employment opportunities for older people, ensuring that older people are claiming their entitlements, benefits everyone and would help move older people from the vicious cycle of poverty to a virtuous cycle. Financial entitlements are a matter for all PSB partners, not just information and advice services. Emergency services, for example, who enter people's homes can signpost people to information and advice services via the 'Make Every Contact Count' approach³⁶. With the phasing out of Communities First, PSBs in these areas must consider alternative provision and how best to improve older people's financial situations. I have previously highlighted how Communities First is a 'mechanism' to improve older people's financial inclusion³⁷.

³² <http://www.futureyears.org.uk/uploads/files/Age%20UK%20on%20poverty%20in%20old%20age.pdf>

³³ <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/news-over-60s-urged-to-check-benefit-entitlements-2>

³⁴ <http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/News/News-Bulletin/October-2016/Simon-Says-check-what-you-re-entitled-to>

³⁵ http://usir.salford.ac.uk/19311/3/Final_technical_report.pdf

³⁶ [http://www.mawwfire.gov.uk/english/newsroom/news/Pages/Making-Every-Contact-Count-\(MECC\)-Presentation.aspx](http://www.mawwfire.gov.uk/english/newsroom/news/Pages/Making-Every-Contact-Count-(MECC)-Presentation.aspx)

³⁷ <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11238/cr-ld11238-e.pdf>

21. On a related note, ensuring that older people are aware of the dangers of scams, and know how to seek help for scams prevention, is crucial. Scams, preferably referred to as financial crimes, can have devastating impact on people's lives, and older people lose on average £1,200 of their savings on scams. PSBs should consider linkages with the Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP)³⁸, take a coordinated approach to scams prevention and help improve people's resilience and awareness of these financial crimes.

Ageing Well in Wales and National Indicators

22. These are two areas where PSBs can make a difference and can develop actions that help reduce the numbers of older people living in poverty in Wales. This approach complements not only the Welsh Government Strategy for Older People 2013-23 but also Ageing Well in Wales. Ageing Well is the national partnership programme to improve the health and wellbeing of people aged 50+³⁹. Ageing Well works at all levels to help make Wales a good place to grow older for everyone. Every Local Authority has an Ageing Well plan⁴⁰, and by embedding these into their work and addressing the priority themes e.g. age-friendly and dementia supportive communities, learning and employment opportunities and tackling loneliness and isolation, PSBs will improve the quality of life of older people and help tackle the root causes of poverty amongst older people.

23. In the context of the Future Generations Act, all seven national wellbeing goals are relevant to older people and some of the national indicators will be crucial in gauging how PSBs are helping to reduce poverty amongst people of all ages e.g. Percentage of people living in households in income poverty relative to the UK median: measured for children, working age and

³⁸ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-networks-1/wales-against-scams-partnership-wasp/>

³⁹ <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/home>

⁴⁰ <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/localplans>

those of pension age; Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation⁴¹.

Conclusion

24. Looking ahead, my expectation is that the forthcoming Local Wellbeing Plans produced by the PSBs will have positive outcomes for older people at their core. I expect all PSB partners to work together to maintain the health, independence and wellbeing of older people; to embrace the opportunities that come with an ageing population; and, to provide solutions that help strengthen the emotional, physical and financial resilience of older people. This should be clarified in clear commitment and future and current actions to alleviate the causes of poverty for older people.
25. While the causes of poverty amongst older people are often multi-factorial, PSBs could make a real change to the quality of life of older people living in poverty through committing and taking action to maximise incomes and protect older people from financial crimes through:
- maximising the claiming of entitlements through the promotion of information and advice services;
 - raising awareness of schemes that help improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty;
 - raising awareness about the dangers of scams and the need to improve financial resilience in later life; and
 - addressing transport issues with key partners and operators to reduce costs for individuals and keep people active and mobile.
26. I will continue to work with the Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Government, local government and PSBs across Wales to promote the wellbeing and prevention agendas for older people, to encourage all PSB partners to support and buy

⁴¹ <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/national-indicators/?lang=en>

into the asset-based approach, and to help ensure that fewer older people experience the devastating and far-reaching effects of poverty in Wales.