

Age Alliance Wales Networking Event Report

March 2015



Background

Age Alliance Wales (AAW) is an alliance of 19 national voluntary organisations committed to working together to develop the legislative, policy and resource frameworks that will improve the lives of older people. Collectively AAW member organisations possess extensive service development and service delivery knowledge and provide direct support to older people across Wales. Members act at a strategic as well as an operational level and many are membership based.

In March 2015, AAW held a networking event which brought together delegates from AAW organisations, local authorities, CVCs and the wider third sector. Although representatives from the health sector were invited to attend, the response was disappointing. At the event, delegates were asked to discuss the following question:

How can you ensure that national organisations working with older people and Age Alliance Wales (AAW) are involved in local service planning discussions so that older people in your area benefit from national and local third sector expertise?

This paper provides an overview of key points and proposed actions stemming from discussions.

The challenge

Due to the diverse nature of the third sector which encompasses national organisations operating across Wales and smaller organisations operating at a local level, developing effective mechanisms for sharing information poses a significant challenge. The lack of shared knowledge can lead to duplication of services and make it difficult to develop support services for older people that are both cost effective responsive to individual need.

It is evident therefore that communication between national and local voluntary organisations needs to improve. Delegates proposed that AAW, in collaboration with CVCs, should develop a framework for engagement and improved communication to promote partnership working and reduce duplication of services. It was also suggested that it would be helpful to map regional and local third sector structures. This would also help to identify any gaps in service provision or channels of communication.

In order to achieve greater continuity and efficiency of service across the third sector, a working group should be formed and tasked with identifying how third sector organisations can work together at a strategic and operational level. The group would need to identify good practice and set outcomes which ensure that services prioritise individual need.

Third sector representation on Local Service Boards (LSBs) and new Regional Leadership Groups was also raised as an area of concern. Many LSBs invite someone from their local CVC branch to represent the third sector at meetings – delegates noted that this has also started to happen with the new regional groups. However, as many national voluntary

organisations are not members of CVCs, information sharing between organisations is limited. This also means that expertise and experience which is held by national organisations is not then available to regional and local services and also that the opportunity for strategic discussion and innovation is lost. Delegates agreed that third sector representatives on local and regional service boards need to improve at communicating information and opportunities to collaborate to the wider third sector.

It was also proposed that a system should be put in place to facilitate better information sharing between statutory services and the wider third sector. This could be achieved by the formation of an alert service which draws in organisations to fill a gap in service provision or to address a specific need. Although developing an effective system to promote information sharing between sectors is needed, involving the third sector in strategic discussions at an early stage should not be overlooked. Joint planning of services can allow innovative models of care to emerge and can help organisations to make best use of limited resources.

It was felt that health and social services need to move away from being overly protective of their own services. Some areas have a health and social care facilitator which is funded by the local health board or local authority. This post could provide a useful point of contact for both national and local voluntary organisations and could also act as tool to expand awareness of third sector services. In addition, delegates from the local third sector and local authorities felt it would be helpful to have more information about Age Alliance Wales and its long term goals.

It is clear that mechanisms for shared decision making and building capacity within the third sector need to be improved. However any discussions between local and national third sector organisation must prioritise what is needed to improve lives for older people. AAW is well positioned to broker a strategic conversation about improving services for older people and to ensure that, when building partnerships between sectors, improving lives for older people is the principle on which all decisions are based.

Funding the third sector

Following cuts to the statutory sector, the integration of health and social services with the third sector has become a necessity rather than a policy initiative. Delegates identified areas where the third sector is delivering services that had previously been delivered by the statutory sector, but without the security of long term funding. It is vital that local authorities, NHS and the Welsh Government view the third sector as capable of delivering services equal to those delivered by statutory services. Short term funding arrangements risk leaving older people vulnerable and isolated when services end.

Proposed actions

1. NHS Wales and local authorities need to adopt a more robust approach to planning services for older people to allow national and local third sector organisations strategic input. Joint planning of services can allow innovative models of care to emerge and can help organisations to make best use of limited resources.
2. Statutory sector to ensure that national third sector organisations are represented on regional partnership boards, alongside the local voluntary sector.

3. AAW to work in partnership with CVCs to develop a framework for engagement and effective communication to promote partnership working and reduce duplication of services within the third sector.
4. AAW to ask WCVA to form a working group to be tasked with identifying how third sector organisations can work together at a strategic and operational level. We would propose that the group identify good practice and set outcomes which ensure that services prioritise individual need.
5. AAW to liaise more closely with Health and Social Care Facilitators

The following 19 organisations are members of Age Alliance Wales;

Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, Age Connects Wales, Age Cymru, Alzheimers Society Wales, Arthritis Care, British Red Cross in Wales, Care & Repair Cymru, Carers Wales, Contact the Elderly, Carers Trust, Cruse Cymru, Volunteering Matters Wales, Deafblind Cymru, Disability Wales, NIACE Cymru, Prime Cymru, Royal Voluntary Service, RNIB Cymru and The Stroke Association.

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