

# Age Alliance Wales

## Wales: A Good Place to Grow Old?

### 2014 Update



In 2012, Age Alliance Wales launched a report entitled: *Wales: A Good Place to Grow Old?* The report acknowledged that while there have undoubtedly been improvements in the quality of life for older people, change is needed:

*For many older people, later life brings enormous satisfaction. With enough money and plentiful leisure time, older people can pursue their hobbies, be it sewing or sky-diving, writing a novel or winning an election....However not all older people are able to have the time of their lives when they reach 65. Too many have such low incomes that they struggle to make ends meet. Too many do not get the health and social care services they need. Too many are treated with a lack of dignity and respect and, at worst, are abused.*

The report challenged the Welsh Government, local authorities, local health boards and other agencies to take action to improve services for older people. The following 6 'key indicators' of change were selected by which AAW pledged to monitor their progress:

1. **An increase in those receiving early intervention services.**
2. **An increase in the proportion of older people participating in community learning.**
3. **An increase in the proportion of older people, especially people in the oldest age groups, who use the internet.**
4. **A reduction in the rate of older people (aged 75 and over) experiencing delayed transfers of care.**
5. **A reduction in the number of older people living in poverty.**
6. **A reduction in elder abuse.**

Two years on from the publication of this report, AAW has revisited these indicators. The findings are outlined below. The traffic light graphics are used to illustrate the level of progress; red indicates urgent action needed; amber shows progress is minimal or slow, green indicates a good improvement.



#### **INDICATOR 1: An increase in those receiving early intervention services**

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13, the rate of people aged over 65 who were supported in the community by local authority provision rose by 1%<sup>i</sup>. The majority of local authorities followed this small upward trend with some exceptions. In Pembrokeshire the figure rose by 55%, however in the Isle of Anglesey and in Denbighshire the figure fell by 6%. The CSSIW annual review of performance for Anglesey Social Services Department on 2012-13 states:

*At the end of the year, the number of adults over 65 years of age supported in the community was considerably less than last year although more people were supported in the community **during** the year. This indicates people not developing long-term dependency on services. There was increased use of reablement and the service reported positive feedback from those who used the service.<sup>ii</sup>*

And in Denbighshire, where the rate also fell, the drop was attributed to:

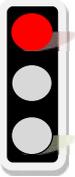
*Fewer people were either supported in the community or through residential care during 2011/12 than in previous years. The council noted that this was because of the service restructuring and the focus on the provision of preventative and reablement services and changes to how the council responds to requests for minor adaptations.<sup>iii</sup>*

StatsWales' definition of community based services covers home care, day care, including traditional support in day centres and community support provided outside the home, meals, equipment and adaptations. Our statistics reveal that despite the Welsh Government's drive to support people to live at home as independently as possible<sup>iv</sup>, in most areas the number of older people being supported in the community shows only a slight improvement. More worryingly, since 2007, the percentage of people age 65+ receiving community based services has fallen by 6%.

The current economic climate means that there is a pressing need to develop new ways of working that deliver outcomes for the individual at a minimum cost. However, many vital community services have already been cut without sufficient consideration for the lives of people affected. Urgent action is needed to ensure that people are not allowed to become increasingly isolated within their communities. Local authorities need to assess the extent to which current cuts to local services are hindering the drive to support more older people to live as independently as possible in the community.

### **AAW is calling on the Welsh Government to:**

1. Fully consider the long term impact of local authority cuts to community services for older people
2. Ensure that older people are able to access local services that support them to age well and maintain their independence
3. Involve older people and the third sector in the design, planning and delivery of services for older people



### **INDICATOR 2: An increase in the proportion of older people participating in community learning**

Over the past two years, the number of people over 65 participating in Welsh Government funded adult community learning (ACL) has fallen by 10%<sup>v</sup>. Since 2007/8, the total number of adults enrolled in ACL has fallen by 29%.

Community learning attracts the highest number of older learners, many of whom are well aware of the benefits learning brings:

*Interviews with older people highlighted how loss of confidence and connections in the local community have a rapid negative impact on their wellbeing. Older people recognise that the stimulation that learning brings to their lives can help them to remain active and independent.<sup>vi</sup> (Estyn 2012)*

Studies have shown that participation in adult learning increases civic engagement and helps people to become more involved with their local community.<sup>vii</sup> Additionally, people enrolled in ACL exercise more and are more aware of health issues than those not engaged in learning.<sup>viii</sup>

A report by Estyn<sup>ix</sup> argued that the Welsh Government's emphasis on skills for employment has led to a reduction in provision for learners over 65. Recent statistics support this view. Between March 2012 and March 2013, the number of people accessing work based learning grew by 10 per cent. Statistics show that 54% of these learners were aged under 25 and 26 per cent were under the age of 19<sup>x</sup>.

**AAW is calling for the Welsh Government to develop action plans which aim to return the numbers of older people accessing learning opportunities to previous levels.**



### **INDICATOR 3: A reduction in the rate of older people (aged 75 and over) experiencing delayed transfers of care.**

AAW compared the rate of delayed transfers of care for people aged over 75, per 10,000 population, between May 2012 and May 2014.<sup>xi</sup> During this period, the rate across Wales fell by 2.7, however this statistic does not reveal some large regional disparities. For example, in Cardiff the rate fell by 20.7 and in Merthyr Tydfil by 22, but the rate in Caerphilly went up by 14.4 and in Newport by 13.1. In addition, the total rate of delayed transfers of care due to social care reasons doubled in Newport between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The recent CSSIW report on the performance of Newport's social services department states that:

*We understand that the efforts of the Frailty team to align with the hospital and health service have not been entirely successful and the hospital has altered its discharge system. The head of service believes this has contributed to the doubling of the rate of delayed transfers of care in 2012/13.<sup>xii</sup>*

This statistic demonstrates the negative impact that failure to develop close working relationships can have on older people. A report by WIHSC states that delays in transfers of care can cause anxiety and discomfort to the patient and their family and, in some cases, lead to more serious physical and psychological harm<sup>xiii</sup>.

These statistics reveal some worrying regional variations in the quality of services for older people across Wales. **AAW is calling for local health boards to fully investigate the reasons for these variations in performance and to identify how they can share and learn from good practice to ensure the provision of high quality healthcare for all.**



### **INDICATOR 4: An increase in the proportion of older people, especially people in the oldest age groups, who use the internet**

Many older people continue to be digitally excluded. Over the last 5 years, people over the age of 65 have shown the largest increase in use of the internet, but are still 39% less likely to be using the internet than those aged between 45 – 64.

The National Survey for Wales' results for 2012 - 2013<sup>xiv</sup> show that 95% of people aged less than 45 years old have used the internet, compared with only 22% of people aged 75 or over.

Older people are significantly less likely to want to contact public services via internet or email than younger age groups<sup>xv</sup>. A recent report by the Wales Co-operative Centre<sup>xvi</sup> states that older people are particularly disadvantaged in the digital age:

*The impact of digital exclusion on people in Wales is greater than ever. Digital exclusion makes people poor. It keeps people out of work. It isolates people: this can lead to poor health and reduced life expectancy.*

The number of public services that can only be accessed online is increasing. Older people are the highest users of the health service and are at risk of becoming increasingly isolated and marginalised. For older people with limited mobility, accessing Skype and online learning can offer access to new information and social networks that can not only increase their quality of life, but help them to save money and learn new skills.

**AAW believes that digital literacy should be promoted as a means to narrow the digital divide and increase essential skills amongst older people.**



### **INDICATOR 5: A reduction in the number of older people living in poverty**

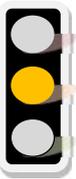
In Wales, 10% of pensioners live on less than £200 a week. 14 per cent of pensioners in Wales live in households in relative income poverty. This is same figure as last year, and

continues the downward trend. Despite this, concerns are being raised about the impact of the economic recession on pensions for people approaching retirement.

The DWP Family Resource Survey 2013 found that the number of working age people contributing to a private pension is continuing its downward trend from 46% in 1999/2000 to 37% in 2010/11<sup>xvii</sup>. The traditional image of older people living within their means is changing. Baroness Sally Greengross, chief executive of ILC-UK, has warned: “*Without further intervention, problem debt will continue to blight the lives of older people, impacting on relationships, quality of life and mental health.*”<sup>xviii</sup>

In addition, a recent report<sup>xix</sup> by Age Cymru reveals the reality of life for older people living in poverty in Wales and states that in real terms the rising cost of essential goods coupled with low interest rates has led to the incomes remaining static. The report states that “*Older households tend to spend a higher proportion of their incomes on essential goods, which makes them especially vulnerable to price increases.*”

In Wales, unclaimed Pension Credit is worth £168 million each year. **AAW is calling on the Welsh Government to publish a plan showing how it will ensure that all older people are aware of and accessing the benefits they are entitled to.**



### **INDICATOR 6: A reduction in elder abuse**

The number of completed referrals for adult protection fell by 14 per cent between 2009-10 and 2011-12, however the rate of referrals varies greatly across Wales. In Torfaen the rate was 5.4 per thousand population compared to 1.7 in Pembrokeshire. During 2011-12, 32% of alleged abuse cases were recorded as having taken place in a care home. This represents a 4% drop from last year<sup>xx</sup>. As in previous years, most victims of alleged abuse lived in their own home. Older women continue to be the most common victims. The ratio of completed referrals for women to men was almost 2:1 in 2011-12.

The CSSIW Adult Monitoring Report 2010 -12 states that:

*Since the launch of In Safe Hands in 2000 very significant progress has been made in arrangements to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. There is much greater awareness of the potential for abuse. The growth in referrals, until recently, is a positive indication that people are more ready to report their concerns than in earlier decades.*

The increase of third sector organisations providing advocacy and advice for older people at risk of abuse may also, in some areas, be helping to reduce the number of referrals for abuse. However, many advocacy programmes funded via the Big Lottery Fund’s AdvantAGE programme will end this year. This will inevitably have a negative impact on the availability of services for older people.

AAW is pleased that the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) will introduce new legislation that will require local authorities to provide independent advocacy to services when investigating a concern of risk or abuse. However, in order to ensure that all older people receive dignified care, health and social care staff must receive mandatory training in human rights, dignified care, and dementia care.

### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that over the past decades there have been improvements in the lives of older people - the abolition of the default retirement age, social security benefits, free travel and healthcare have increased wellbeing for many.

However, this report reveals that too many older people receive inadequate health and social care with the quality of these services dependant on where they live. Two years on from the publication of the original report, too many older people are still living in poverty with limited or no access to the internet. Too many are treated with a lack of dignity or respect, or at worst, are abused.

In addition, large scale cuts to community services have decreased opportunities for social contact. Our statistical research suggest that cuts to local services are hindering the realisation of the Welsh Government's vision to support more older people to live as well and as independently as possible in the community.

AAW recognises the pressure on public finances, however, in order for Wales to become a good place to grow old, people must be able to access services that empower them to age well in their local communities.

**Age Alliance Wales is still calling on the Welsh Government, local authorities, health boards and other agencies to take urgent action to fulfil their pledges to equality and social justice for older people. We do not want more fine words, more policies or strategies. We want action at the frontline, to improve services for older people and thereby improve their quality of life.**

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<sup>i</sup> StatsWales table CARE0005: Adults receiving services by local authority and measure

<sup>ii</sup> CSSIW - *Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012 – 2013, Anglesey*. Available online @ <http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/governance-and-performance-/external-assessments/care-and-social-services-inspectorate-wales-cssiw/cssiw-annual-review-and-evaluation-of-performance-2012-2013/121705.article>

<sup>iii</sup> CSSIW - *Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012 – 2013, Denbighshire*. Available online @ <http://cssiw.org.uk/docs/cssiw/publications/131028denbighshireen.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Welsh Government *Written Statement - Integration of Health and Social Services for Older People with Complex Needs* Available online @ <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2013/olderpeoples/?lang=en>

<sup>v</sup> Welsh Government statistical bulletin SDR 53/2014 *Further education, work-based learning and community learning in Wales*,  
<sup>vi</sup> Estyn (2012). *Skills for older learners: the impact of adult community learning on the wellbeing of older learners - January 2012*: <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/231367.5/skills-for-older-learners-the-impact-of-adult-community-learning-on-the-wellbeing-of-older-learners-january-2012/?navmap=30,163>,

<sup>vii</sup> Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus, Duckworth. *The Social and Personal Benefits of Learning*

<sup>viii</sup> Parsons and Bynner (2007) *Illuminating Disadvantage: Profiling the experiences of adults with Entry level literacy or numeracy over the life course*.

<sup>ix</sup> Estyn (2012). *Skills for older learners: the impact of adult community learning on the wellbeing of older learners*

<sup>x</sup> Welsh Government statistical bulletin SDR 101/2014 *Further Education, Work-based Learning, Community Learning Statistics 2012-13*

<sup>xi</sup> StatsWales SDR 103/2014 26 June 2014 *Delayed Transfers of Care in Wales: May 2014*

<sup>xii</sup> CSSIW, *Annual Review and Evaluation of Performance 2012/13, Newport Social Services Department*

<sup>xiii</sup> WIHSC (2008) *Independent Review of Delayed Transfers of Care in Wales*

<sup>xiv</sup> StatsWales statistical bulletin SDR 82/2013 *National Survey Wales 2012-13 Headline Results*

<sup>xv</sup> StatsWales (2012) Statistical Bulletin SB 120/2012: *National Survey for Wales, January – March 2012, internet results*

<sup>xvi</sup> Wales Co operative Centre (2014) *Digital Inclusion: Stronger Communities*

<sup>xvii</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2013) *Family Resource Survey: Estimates of Private Pension Participation Rates 1990/00 – 2010/11*

<sup>xviii</sup> Kneale D., Walker T. (2013) *Tales of the Tallyman: Debt and problem debt among older people*

<sup>xix</sup> Age Cymru (2014) *Life on a Low Income*, available online

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/PageFiles/41168/Life%20on%20a%20low%20income%20-%20FINAL%20-%20E.pdf?dtrk=true>

<sup>xx</sup> CSSIW (2013) *Adult Protection Monitoring Report 2010 – 2012*. Available @

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/cssiw/report/130320adulten.pdf>