

Intermediate Care Fund

Age Alliance Wales and WCVA joint briefing

Age Alliance Wales (AAW) and WCVA welcomed the announcement of a new Intermediate Care Fund of £50m. It was pleasing to note that, in a climate of austerity, the importance of delivering integrated care services to those most in need is being prioritised. Creating a more joined up approach between housing, health and social care is vital to ensure that individuals are supported to live independently and to maintain a good quality of life.

However, many of our members have expressed their concern that the fund will be allocated exclusively to local authorities. Third sector organisations provide a range of community based services that reduce the pressure on emergency care services and we believe that excluding these organisations from directly accessing the fund will seriously compromise the development of a fully integrated care service. In addition, we believe that the third sector should be fully involved in the planning, development and delivery of services. Involvement at a strategic level will allow the third sector to support the Welsh Government in ensuring that this fund achieves its aim of improving the lives of older people and carers.

Older people are the main users of the NHS and the group most likely to have an emergency admission¹ and yet the service is not currently organised to recognise or respond to older people's needs. Locally managed and coordinated services mean that third sector organisations are able to provide services that are agile and responsive to individual need. In addition, by funding these services directly, there will be no need to utilise any often lengthy and costly commissioning processes.

The current increase in the rate of emergency admissions to hospital, combined with reductions in local authority budgets, has heightened the need for effective partnership working between the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. Many third sector organisations already adopt a pro-active approach to developing partnerships across health, housing and social care sectors. For example, Care & Repair Cymru works in partnership with a number of organisations including the Welsh Government, local government housing and social care teams, local health boards, occupational therapists, other third sector organisations and housing associations to ensure that older people have access to a range of housing and social solutions that support them to live in housing that meets their individual needs.

A hospital admission can occur when an older person reaches breaking point and emergency re admissions are often caused by a failure to provide social rehabilitation and practical help. Many third sector organisations provide preventative services that ensure that older people and carers receive support before reaching crisis point. For example, the Stroke Association prevents hospital re admission by enabling stroke survivors to access community based services specifically tailored to the individual's need, with a specific emphasis on person-centred care. Services include support for carers and families via hospital and home visits, drop in surgeries, access to peer-support groups, information and advice and signposting to appropriate agencies.

Care & Repair Cymru provide home improvements and adaptations which support older people to live independently in their own homes by reducing the risk of accident or illness; a newly installed fuel efficient boiler and loft insulation can prevent the onset or worsening of respiratory and circulatory disease. Installing a grab rail and repairs to a broken step can prevent falls and serious

¹ See www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/sites/files/nuffield/Trends_in_emergency_admissions_REPORT.pdf

injury. Falls are often the cause of emergency admission to hospital and, in some cases, can lead to a longer term residential placement. Age UK estimates that that around 30% of people over 65 and 50% over 80 will have a fall in their home, many of which are preventable.

In many situations, offering that a small amount of support can prevent an older person from becoming isolated in their own home and from feeling that they can no longer cope without more formal interventions. Services delivered by third sector organisations can be particularly effective in minimising the impact of loneliness which has been linked to depression, the onset of Alzheimer's disease and general ill health in older people.² Recently published data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 46% of people over the age of 80 reported feeling lonely some of the time or often, and that people who are widowed or in poor health were more likely to report feeling lonely.³

RVS Cymru provides community transport services which ensure older people can get to the shops or to hospital appointments. The organisation also offers social support, such as day centres and social clubs, which allow older people to socialise in a relaxed environment and provide something to look forward to.

Collectively members of AAW and other third sector organisations are very well placed to provide community-based, integrated services tailored to meet an older person's health, housing and social care needs. In order to limit the impact of local authority cuts on older people, it is vital that the third sector is supported to continue to provide preventative services and to develop sustainable partnerships with the statutory and private sectors. Including the third sector in the primary allocation of money from the Intermediate Care Fund will lead to an increase in the availability preventative services and consequently rates of emergency admissions and re admissions to hospital will fall.

Representatives of Age Alliance Wales and WCVA would be happy to discuss services and intermediate care solutions offered by third sector organisations in more detail.

² Oxfordshire Age UK (2011) *Safeguarding the convoy: A call to action from the Campaign for Loneliness*

³ Office for National Statistics (2013) *Measuring National Well-being – Older people and loneliness*