

Age Alliance Wales



Demonstrating the Benefits of Preventative Services

Context

The Social Services and Well - Being (Wales) Bill intends to place a duty on local authorities to provide a range of services which will contribute towards “preventing or delaying the development of people’s needs for care and support.” Local authorities and local health boards will also have a duty to work together to assess the range and level of services required to achieve the above however it is not clear how the Welsh Government intends to define these services. Age Alliance Wales (AAW) believes that a clear definition of what constitutes a preventative service must be provided and is concerned that failure to address this issue could lead to a lack of recognition of the value and breadth of services that can be categorised as preventative and to an acceptance of a narrow or excessively medical definition.



This briefing provides an example of how attending a craft activity class can limit the effects of loneliness and help to prevent the onset of ill health by providing a valuable informal support network for older people.

Aberdare Beading Group provides ‘a lifeline for older people living alone’

Mrs B contacted Age Cymru after listening to a radio discussion on the importance of keeping active for older people. She was concerned that the local authority were about to increase fees for her craft class from £10 a term to £50 a term which she would not be able to afford. Mrs B joined the class twelve years ago on the advice of her doctor when she was struggling to cope with the loss of her husband. She says it gives her a chance to *‘get out of the house and not get so depressed, even if it is just chatting. It stops me feeling lost in the house.’*

The Aberdare beading group meets once a week in a church hall and prior to the recent rise in tuition fees, members in receipt of pension credit were able to attend classes with a tutor for a reduced rate. For some group members who live alone the class provides the only chance during the week to get out of the house and meet with others. Mrs C spent a year suffering the from the anti social behaviour of her neighbour which kept her awake at night and feeling vulnerable and scared. The group was the only place she could go to talk to other women and although she does have visits from family members, she still spends 80% of her time alone, and says the class *‘really brightens my day.’*



Mr G joined the group when an accident left him unable to continue his volunteering role as an akido instructor. He felt

stuck in the house and was desperate for something to do. When a flyer advertising courses at a nearby adult community learning centre was posted through his letterbox, he enrolled on an art class. Due to recent local authority cutbacks, the centre no longer runs art and craft courses. Mr G now travels 3 miles to attend the Aberdare beading group which he thoroughly enjoys. However for other learners in his area who do not have access to transport, the chance to attend community classes has been lost.



All members are keen to stress that this group provides a vital lifeline to older people living alone, by providing peer support through illness (several members have received a cancer diagnosis and are at various stages of recovery) and stressful periods. For some, it provides the only opportunity during the week to socialise. The benefits of attending the group for members are evident — the group acts as an informal support network, a chance to share problems and to celebrate achievement.

Following the proposed rise in tuition fees, the group made the decision to continue independently of the local authority by paying rent directly to the church hall. Mrs B is concerned that they will not be able to cover the cost on a permanent basis and is keen to recruit new members. It is positive that group is continuing independently and that members are so determined to preserve this opportunity to learn and socialise. However, even in the face of the current public sector cuts, there is more that could be doing to ensure that this group and others facing similar challenges are supported to continue and to flourish. Mrs B comments: 'The government talks about healthy ageing, but it feels like they are trying to turn us all into hermits.'

In order to keep the classes open, group members feel they would benefit from the following support:

- Support to produce and distribute promotional material to encourage other older people within the local area to become members
- Advice and guidance on forming a constituted group and applying for funding
- Transport for people unable to travel to the venue
- Occasional input from a tutor to ensure that the group members remain engaged and are supported to try new techniques and ideas.

The following 18 organisations represent Age Alliance Wales: Age Cymru, Alzheimer's Society Wales, Arthritis Care, The British Red Cross in Wales, Care & Repair Cymru, Carers Trust, Carers Wales, Contact the Elderly, Cruse Cymru, CSV-RSVP Wales, Deafblind Cymru, Disability Wales, NIACE Dysgu Cymru, PRIME Cymru, RNIB Cymru, Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, The Stroke Association and RVS Cymru.

Full details of the preventative services delivered by AAW members can be found on the website at: www.agealliancewales.org.uk

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