

Speech

Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi am y gwahoddiad i'r gynhadledd yma. Rwy'n edrych ymlaen yn fawr at gael darllen eich adroddiad newydd 'Cymru: Lle Da i Fynd yn Hŷn?'.

Thank you so much for inviting me to this conference. I am very much looking forward to reading your new report 'Wales: A Good Place To Grow Old?'.

Rwy'n credu bod Llywodraeth Cymru eisoes wedi gwneud llawer dros bobl hŷn ond mae rhagor eto i'w wneud. Dyma adeg cyffrous i Lywodraeth Cymru a'r uchelgais sydd gyda ni i hybu lles a hawliau pobl hŷn ym mhob agwedd ar ein cymdeithas.

I believe that the Welsh Government has already achieved much for older people but there is more to be done. These are exciting times for the Welsh Government and our ambition to advance the wellbeing and rights of older people in all facets of our society.

Rydyn ni'n cyflwyno Bil Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol i Gymru, a bydd yn rhoi fframwaith cyfreithiol newydd i wasanaethau cymdeithasol er mwyn gwireddu ein gweledigaeth i gael Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cynaliadwy ac Integredig. Cafodd ymgynghoriad cyhoeddus llawn ar y Bil ei lansio ym mis Mawrth 2012, a bydd y Bil yn cael ei gyflwyno i'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol.

We are introducing a Social Services Bill for Wales which will provide a new legal framework for social services, to implement our vision for Sustainable and Integrated Social Services. A full public consultation on the Bill was launched this year and the Bill will be introduced into the National Assembly for Wales.

Through the Bill, local authorities will have to demonstrate how they are discharging their wellbeing duties for people in need through prevention and early intervention.

We also have a new Older People's Commissioner, Sarah Rochira, who was of course your Chair. I am sure you will wish to join me in congratulating her on her appointment. I expect her to build on the

foundations laid by Ruth Marks, our first Commissioner, and develop a Commission that will challenge unfair and outdated stereotypes, attitudes and tackle practices that adversely affect older people every day.

Both Sustainable Social Services and our Programme for Government give a commitment to develop phase 3 of our Strategy for Older People. The Strategy is 9 years old and has achieved much during this time. I will launch the third phase in April 2013 and will focus on supporting my ambition as stated in Sustainable Social Services for a stronger voice and real control for citizens in the services they need and use.

The priorities you have identified are ambitious and wide ranging. I welcome that challenge which recognises the value that we place on providing very high standards and services that older people deserve and should receive.

Moving forward means putting an end to old-fashioned stereotyping of people and greater recognition of the valuable contribution older people make to society every day.

Care is also a priority for us in government. Around 44,000 of the 340,000 carers in Wales are 65 or over, and this number is increasing. We recognise the value and contribution that these carers make not just to those they care for but society as a

whole. Recognising this has led us to refresh our Carers Strategy.

Dignity in Care remains a priority for the NHS and social services in Wales. In March 2011 the Older People's Commissioner for Wales published a report on the experiences of older people in hospital in Wales. Of the report's 12 recommendations, five apply to the Welsh Government. We have agreed our response with the Commission and are now taking these improvements forward.

Through the White Paper: Sustainable Social Services for Wales we are driving forward the development of early intervention and preventative services. These will help to keep people

independent in their own homes and communities and will improve their quality of life.

I would like to assure you that we share the importance you place on tackling poverty. This year the Welsh Government issued a Written Statement on tackling poverty. This was issued in the name of all Welsh Ministers and Deputy Ministers. This statement provides us with the framework for the development of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan which will set out our policies and programmes to poverty in Wales.

We have provided funding to help pensioners with their council tax. 36,000 pensioners received help in 2009-10, this figure rose to 58,000 pensioners helped in 2011-12.

Financial exclusion remains a problem in the current economic climate. We are taking forward our Financial Inclusion Strategy which places emphasis on widening access to affordable credit and assisting people facing housing difficulties.

We have consolidated existing Welsh Government benefit take-up schemes and have aided Citizens Advice Cymru with funding to provide advice services in Wales, including through Adviceline Cymru.

We know that demand for advice will increase when the impacts of Welfare Reform are felt and recognising this we will shortly be undertaking a Review of Advice Services in Wales, and how they

can support increasing numbers of people accessing them.

Our Keep Well This Winter campaign is organised around three main themes Keep Well, Keep Warm and Keep Safe. It includes messages around, for example, eating healthily, being as active as possible, keeping your home as warm as possible, ensuring that all entitled benefits are claimed, and getting immunised against seasonal flu.

The Welsh Government has published a Strategic Equality Plan which puts the spotlight on the practical differences we as government need to make to change people's lives. The objectives are based on robust evidence gathered by Welsh public bodies, and on engagement with organisations and

individuals. We will require public authorities to justify their actions and set clear and robust outcomes against which change can be measured.

We are developing our approach under the Wales Specific Equality Duties which will help us to mainstream actions to support Independent Living across Welsh Government departments.

We are also developing a Framework for Action on Independent Living and disabled people are being engaged, involved and consulted throughout the process.

We are maintaining our £2 million funding to the Rapid Response Adaption Programme delivered by

Care and Repair Cymru which provides home adaptations to enable older people to return to or remain in their own homes.

It is estimated that every £1 spent on their services, saves more than £7.50 from the Health and Social Care Budget.

We remain committed to free local bus travel for older and disabled people recognising the benefit of the pass to individuals and communities. Over 680,000 passes are in circulation and concessionary journeys now represent 43% of all bus journeys.

You will I am sure agree that clearly these examples demonstrate the Welsh Government's

ongoing commitment to championing the wellbeing of our ageing society. There are considerable challenges ahead that I do not underestimate but we must face them together if we are to achieve our ambition and shared goals and move towards a fair and inclusive society in Wales.

The Deputy Minister closed by thanking you for the privilege of addressing your conference. She emphasised her appreciation of the work done by Age Alliance Wales organisations and the opportunities you provide us to hear older people's concerns.