

Age Alliance Wales Annual Conference Report June 2017



One year on: How the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 is impacting on the lives of older people and on the role of the third sector

Background

Age Alliance Wales (AAW) is an alliance of 21 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 June 2017 AAW held their Annual Conference exploring the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act) on the lives of older people. It also considered the wider implications of the Act on the role of the third sector. The event brought together AAW members and invited guests from local authorities and Welsh Government.

Speakers included Chris Stevens from Welsh Government, Nick Selwyn from the Wales Audit Office, Keith Moultrie from the Institute of Public Care, and a presentation from Coralie Merchant the Age Alliance Wales Officer.

This paper provides an overview of the presentations as well as a summary of group discussions including proposed actions and recommendations.

Summary

The Act came into force in April 2016 and, one year after its implementation the impact on the lives of older people and the third sector continues to evolve. The Act presents challenges and opportunities for older people and the third sector, current experience would suggest developments to date appear inconsistent and variable.

An increase in understanding across the health and social care community, and one hopes in wider society, since 2016 has provided a foundation for the delivery of the aspirations of the Act.

The Act imposes duties on local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers that requires them to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need support, this will require significant, cultural and organisational transformation to ensure effective developments in policy and practice to address the fundamental principles of the Act which are:

- The Act supports people who have care and support needs to achieve **well-being**
- **People** are at the heart of the new system by giving them an equal say in the support they receive
- **Partnership and co-operation** drives service delivery
- Services will promote the **prevention** of escalating need and the right help is available at the right time.

While the health and social care community, generally, may recognise and understand the cultural and organisational challenges ahead, there remains much to do to ensure a consistency in approach. Evidence suggests that older people are beginning to experience ‘what matters’ conversations¹ but this could be improved and older people remain uncertain of their rights and responsibilities under the Act. There is a lack of clear understanding in regard to rights to advocacy and participation in the design and development of service provision. There is a need to raise awareness with citizens around their perception and understanding of the Act. This would ensure progress in realising the 4 principle set out above, people’s voices and the views of older people must be represented and heard.

The Act’s principle of partnership and co-operation, is being driven, in part, by Regional Partnership Boards (RPB) that have been operating for 12 months, a clear foundation to understanding the challenges ahead has been the RPB’s production of Population Needs Assessments (PNA). RPBs are developing and the inclusion of a national third sector representatives for older people is a positive move. Questions however remain around the genuine level of integration.

There is a need to stabilise the involvement of third sector representation at all levels, and across all sectors, in strategic and decision making processes. Representation should be consistent across all of the RPBs with a priority to develop a supportive and effective infrastructure that is reflective of the diverse nature of the third sector. Beyond RPBs the strategic involvement of the third sector should be embedded in health and social care decision making structures and processes. Third sector representation should be consistently apparent in the design and development of services and in the decision making of service provision. This need is also reflected in terms of the engagement of citizens and older people. There remains a need to clearly identify the responsibilities of RPBs so that outcomes can be measured and more effective communication to the public can be addressed.

When thinking about the partnership and co-operation principles under the Act there is a need for local authorities to make ‘best use’ of their resources in working with the third sector. A proactive approach to engaging and working with the third sector will see the best return on investment. Inclusion at strategic level would allow for

¹ ‘What matters’ conversations take place during needs assessments, local authority staff must work with individuals to identify what matters to them. People may wish to achieve different aspects of well-being, dependent on circumstances, and these make personal outcomes.

improvements in understanding and in establishing appropriate and proportional commissioning and procurement processes. Delivering on the aspirations of the Act requires consideration in how local authorities and other public bodies work with the third sector. Greater understanding of the diverse purchaser and provider market in commissioning is needed. To address this, opportunities should be regularly established for providers to engage with commissioners across all sectors.

Recommendations

In response to the conference presentations, group discussions and in order to realise changes that will positively impact the lives of older people in Wales and the role of the third sector working with older people in Wales, Age Alliance Wales would make the following recommendations;

R1 - Develop strategic relationships which consistently embed the third sector in health and social care discussions ensuring full participation in decision-making processes.

R2 – Actively seek opportunities to work together across the third and public sector to increase public awareness and public perception of the Social Services and Well-being Act to enhance citizens understanding of rights and responsibilities in their care and support.

R3 – Ensure effective inclusion and support of third sector representatives on Regional Partnership Boards. Develop a structure which effectively supports third sector representatives and which maintains a clear system of communication, feeding into and back from RPBs.

R4 – Establish regular local opportunities for providers to engage with commissioners across health and social services, including the provision of opportunity that sees the upskilling of staff across sectors and improved understanding across sectors.

Conference Introduction

Ceri Jackson, Chair of Age Alliance Wales and Director of RNIB Cymru, opened the conference explaining the role of AAW and the purpose of the day. She highlighted the unintended consequences of commissioning following the introduction of the Act and the impact this is having on the role of the third sector and the lives of older people.

In relation to practices stemming from the Act she raised concerns around the generic approach of first points of access and a concern for older people trying, often unsuccessfully, to enter the system in order to access appropriate care and support.

Age Alliance Wales: How is the Act impacting on the lives of older people?

In May 2017 Age Alliance Wales launched their 'React to the Act' survey for older people and their families or carers. The purpose of the survey is to give older people

the opportunity to have their say on how the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act is impacting on them and their lives.

The interim findings from the survey are based on the responses of 77 individuals across Wales. The findings indicate a clear lack of consistency in the experiences of older people in relation to their care and support. During needs assessments it appears that older people are experiencing 'what matters' conversations and in this are being given the opportunity to express their views, wishes and feelings. A positive shift is being made in practice towards this approach and it is hoped that this will continue to grow. The findings show that further developments are needed in relation to the sharing of information, advice and signposting with older people and older people lack knowledge and opportunity to contribute to the design and development of services and have limited choices available in terms of service provision.

The survey has so far highlighted that consistent care and support is falling short with a danger of older people 'falling through the gaps' in terms of needs assessments and access to appropriate services.

Chris Stevens Welsh Government: One year on a Welsh Government update

Chris explained that the journey to the implementation of the Act has been extensive and reminded that the Act is an enormous and transformational legislative measure with large adaptations to the way care and support is delivered across Wales. He discussed how the Act is underpinned by the complimentary principles of well-being, people (co-production), partnership and integration, and prevention.

i) Regional Partnership Boards

Since April 2016 seven Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) have been established across Wales which are the drivers of integration. To enable co-production, memberships to the boards include the health and social sector, the third sector, citizens and carers.

A priority area for all RPBs is older people with complex needs and long term conditions, including dementia. There is a requirement for RPBs is to agree and allocate pooled funds, by April 2018 all RPBs must have allocated pooled funds in relation to care homes.

RPBs have recently produced Population Needs Assessments (PNA) which were completed with engagement from citizens, the third sector and private sector. The purpose of which was to establish an evidence base to understand how, and the extent to which, needs were being met. Based on the PNAs, RPBs are required to produce Area Plans which will detail how they will address and deliver on the needs identified. The first Area Plans are to be co-produced with citizens and the third sector by 2018 setting out a response to the local identified needs. This should include a range and level of services provided, joint actions, resources deployed and how services will be provided through the medium of Welsh. They must also set out

how planned services support the prioritising of integration in relation to older people with complex needs.

ii) Intermediate Care Fund / Integrated Care Fund (ICF)

While the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) has been around for some time it has not been tied to the Act. Moving forward it will be called the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) and the objectives will be broadly in line with *regional partnership boards'* priority areas for integration. This adaption is to support strategic links and enable a driver and delivery vehicle for the Act.

In 2016-17 ICF should be used to support the requirements contained in section 15 of the Act, including preventing or delaying the development of care and support needs. To this end it can be used in preventative services and to explore alternative delivery models. To ensure a clear evidence base, any project or scheme supported by ICF must be in response to the care and support needs identified in PNAs. Welsh Government is clear that while money goes to health boards decision making of this funding should be through RPBs.

Nick Selwyn Wales Audit Office: Recent audit findings relevant to third sector bodies implementing the Act

Nick explained that following a 10 year increase 2015-2016 saw a significant dip in funding to social care and that currently approximately 10% of older people in Wales are accessing some form of social care. He discussed that maintaining older people's independence has been identified as a priority for virtually every local authority but services for older people primarily focus only on providing social care. He went on to discuss two reports recently published by the Wales Audit Office.

Report 1: Supporting the independence of older people: Are councils doing enough?

In this report the Wales Audit Office (WAO) identified key services for older people and carried out a survey with older people to identify their priorities. They then matched the spend on these services to older people's preferences and mapped spending decisions. An example showed that there had been funding cuts to public transport which older people considered important, while there had been a spending increase in befriending which older people considered less important. Looking at decision making processes there was a lack of evidence in equality impact assessments, this matched with the message from older people themselves.

The report discussed preventative services for older people which are valued by individuals but are often not seen in the same way by authorities. Many services have been cut, closed or reconfigured but the impact of changes in service provision is often not captured or known. Decisions where to reduce expenditure is not always based on accurate and up to date information, with the Equalities Act overlooked by some councils. The changes to provision and low priority given to community services could impact councils' ability to deliver the prevention requirements of the Act.

The report concludes that councils' strategy and leadership focus too much on the delivery of social services and does not always recognise the contribution that other services can make in supporting and sustaining the independence of older people. Local authorities are not always providing the direction required to address the needs of older people, while they have identified the independence of older people as a priority, strategies and plans do not always recognise the positive contribution made by others.

Report 2: Local Authority Funding of Third Sector Services

The primary finding of this report is that local authorities do not always make the best use of resources when working with the third sector.

The third sector provide vast amounts of support and there has been a significant increase in the expectation of the third sector, with 21 of 22 councils in Wales increasing their spending on the third sector. However many local authorities have not made use of Welsh Government's Grants for Excellence Centre terms and conditions and there has been a 20% reduction in grant funding with a general increase in the number of contracts. Diminishing grant funding has a significant impact for the third sector as there is less money to cover central organisational costs.

Local authority arrangements to monitor and review the performance of third sector organisations are not always consistent or effective. There is a need for a happy medium in reporting back on funding as there is an imbalance between too much or not enough information required by authorities. It appears most local authorities have not set measures that can consistently judge the impact of their work with the third sector. Alongside this, scrutiny and risk management arrangements to evaluate and oversee third sector funding are not always suitable nor effective.

The report acknowledges that local authorities value the third sector but that changes in funding mechanisms are almost excluding the sector, with an impact of less collaboration and more competition. The move from grants to contracts is less about supporting third sector to deliver its own plans and priorities, and more towards one that sees the third sector delivering local authority plans and priorities. The report findings suggest that councils do not feel they have staff with specific skills to work with, and develop, the third sector and that they do not have the skills to commission from the sector.

To deliver on the aspirations of the SSWB Act, such as preventative services for older people, there is a need for change in how councils and other public bodies work with the third sector. Working proactively is a prerequisite for ensuring that local authorities get the best return on their investment from the third sector.

Keith Moultrie Institute for Public Care: Outcome-focused integrated care lessons from experience

Keith began by highlighting the high level of the Act in setting the tone and principles for care and support in Wales. The Act holds a long term and wide agenda and this is the start of a 5 to 10 year journey.

It is vital to understand there is huge amount in the Act which applies not just too social care but has huge implications to the health sector. It sets the tone for a substantial culture shift, which sees a move from 'what am I entitled to?' to 'what matters to you?' This is a shift in terms of how all sectors engage both now and in the future with older people, and how older people engage with the services available.

The Act is being implemented in the context of challenging times in terms of the environment of health and social care, and during huge change in structures. Fundamental and absolute changes are taking place while there is increasing complexity in the needs of the population. There also remains financial pressures, the numbers of working people versus the number of retired people, and changes in the quality of care and expectations. The Act is trying to navigate all of these while initiating a profound change in approach.

Keith explained that with RPBs established, there is need to understand the reality of a diverse purchaser and provider market. Commissioners and providers are trying to move effectively to a new way of working which requires systematic thinking so that services can become more responsive and flexible. This means trust and confidence must be built between all parties to ensure there is a fair deal in terms of activities, deliverables and outcomes. Mature, subtle and complex relationships need to be established. Working relationships need to be built over time or based on high levels of trust.

One year into the implementation of the Act we are in a position where initial informing and reflection has taken place. There is acknowledgement that many professionals have moved their practice or were practicing in this way already. Expectations and clear directions of travel have been set, however not everyone is getting to grips with the required shifts in practice. This is not limited to professionals, there are large numbers of citizens that do not particularly agree with or are not getting hold of the messages within the Act. A discussion is needed with citizens around the changes in care and support. Expectations must be explored with all rather than dealt with at an individual level, and there is a need to be clear with citizens about their rights and responsibilities. There is a fluidity to the changes in practices which presents certain danger or risks. For example professionals make use of their own judgements which may not be challenged due to a lack of knowledge or older people may be looking for resources but there may not be services available. Across the sector we need to be mindful that we are not bouncing people around.

Keith described the implementation of the Act as now being in a second phase, moving past developing understanding and into implementing the requirements of

the changes in practice. There is a need to focus on integration and build on the requirements of the Act to develop well integrated practices. This presents significant changes within teams and individuals to help reshape practice and in service redesign to build new practice guidance based on outcomes.

It is acknowledged that with such significant changes in culture it is not surprising that the required changes are still in process. Keith stated that the Act has started well and currently a 'base camp' has been established. While there are continued challenges around demand, national budget and wider engagement, there is much to be optimistic about in Wales. The level of commitment, the assumption that the Act is a good thing, the resources to support change, and Wales being small enough as a country to have a relative consensus, offer positive opportunities.

It was considered that currently the right people are supporting in the 'base camp' of the Act and that the development of RPBs and the resources being provided by Welsh Government give a promising place for discussion and progression. It was highlighted that RPBs do not belong to statutory organisations and the challenge is for the third sector to engage and ensure appropriate discussion.

Group Discussions

Groups were asked to discuss what was working well, what could be better and proposed next steps in terms of the implementation of the Act, its impact on the role of the third sector and the lives of older people.

Discussions covered a range of topics including Regional Partnership Boards, strategic relationships, procurement and commissioning, learning and development and citizens and co-production.

a) *Regional Partnership Boards*

It was considered a positive that Regional Partnership Boards had been established and that Population Needs Assessments had been completed.

Groups expressed concerns around the consistency of RPBs and questioned what scrutiny was in place for representatives on the boards. Concerns were also raised about general awareness of the work of RPBs and how accessible they were, this included the process of feeding into and gathering feedback from RPBs. The role of national third sector representatives in trying to use one organisation as the voice of the whole sector was raised as a concern as this is not representative of the whole sector and is overwhelming for those individuals. Questions were raised in how RPBs are to be evaluated and what role the national partnership board plays in this.

Suggested next steps

- Shared and clearly accessible Terms of Reference for each RPB.
- AAW to gather information and share how often RPBs meet, who is on them and what parameters they are working towards.

- AAW to catalogue the national third sector representatives and wider membership of RPBs.
- AAW or WCVA to develop a sector representative reference group to support feeding in to RPBs.
- Welsh Government to share who monitors, governs and scrutinises RPB plans / action plans

b) Strategic Relationships

It was agreed that there are good examples of integrated working amongst the third sector, local authorities and health boards. There is evidence that Tier 1 priorities for local health boards are feeding into the PNAs and it is good to see joined up thinking alongside a commitment to the aspirations of the Act.

It was identified that there needs to be better links with social services and that in some regions collaborative relationships could be improved through the development of trust.

Suggested next steps

- There is a need for a change in culture and practice with more involvement from the third sector in decision-making.
- The third sector needs to embed with health as well as social services and develop their understanding of health and social services working practices.
- While flexibility is good there is a need to explore consistency across localities.

Learning and Development

Groups identified that there was an appetite for learning and that learning was being offered by providers.

There is a need for staff training around implementing changes in culture and workforce development planning could be improved. There is a need for skilled resources within local authorities to work with the third sector.

Suggested next steps

- To upskill local authority staff to ensure their confidence in working with the third sector.
- For Welsh Government to work with others around the use of language and skills to ensure older people can be a partner in their own care.

Procurement and Commissioning

One group felt that it was appropriate that local authorities delay their procurement processes to ensure that they are getting it right and that Population Needs Assessments will provide an opportunity to commission appropriate services.

Concerns were raised that procurement is happening now that will run for 3-4 years without integration or consultation as prescribed in the Act. It was acknowledged that

the Act may be on a 5 to 10 year course but that decisions being taken now are going to impact on the aspiration of the Acts and the lives of older people. Some felt that in general procurement and commissioning processes could be improved and that requirements need to be relative to the amount of money awarded. There is a need for consistent reporting tools and frameworks with clear and realistic goals. Issues were raised around short term funding, specifically around how this makes demonstrating impact difficult.

Suggested next steps

- For commissioners to be aware that they can adjust contracts to meet new goals, both now and in the future.
- Better tracking should be implemented with a need to identify what success looks like and how measures and performance indicators are used in evidence.
- More support made available to help providers engage with commissioners.

Citizens and Co-production

It has been positive to see a focus on co-production. This has improved the engagement and awareness raising with citizens and placed a clear focus on the individual

It was felt that there is a lack of knowledge still amongst the general public and that people are being put in vulnerable positions due to not having needs that do not meet the eligibility criteria. There is a need for ongoing developments in terms of making people aware of their rights and identifying their outcomes. Public awareness of the 'culture change' arising from the Act needs to be improved and a consistent approach is needed in the use of language and terminology, specifically in information, advice and assistance and needs assessments.

Suggested next steps

- There should be a programme to manage the public perception of how the changes from the Act impact on their lives with further public information and a media campaign.
- Funding should be allocated to address the need to raise awareness with citizens of the culture changes.

Integrated Care Fund (ICF), Preventative Services and Advocacy

It was felt that the ICF was a principle that was good to build on but that there is a need for further guidance especially as bidding is currently happening. A review of its administration should be considered as short term funding has limitations.

It was felt that promotion of preventative services was a positive as a way of working and the increase in funding around this has been beneficial. It was raised that funding is still not sustainable due to short term funding limitations.

The increased recognition of the importance of carers and advocacy is in part due to the Act but it was expressed that there was a need to improve the provision of advocacy for older people to ensure that they are heard.

Conference Close

Ceri Jackson, Chair of Age Alliance Wales, closed the conference by highlighting that the involvement of the third sector in decision-making is key. We must now look at how and where the third sector can be more involved and raise awareness of the value the sector involvement can bring. There is a need to improve skills and understanding of the third sector within statutory organisations. We need to ensure that mature, co-operative and collaborative relationships are further developed across sectors and that there is continued dialogue in relation to commissioning outcomes. Clearly stating expectations and rights across all sectors and the importance of involving citizens is key to the ongoing discussion.

The following 21 organisations are members of Age Alliance Wales:

Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, Age Cymru, Age Connects Wales, Alzheimer's Society Wales, Arthritis Care Wales, British Lung Foundation, British Red Cross in Wales, Care & Repair Cymru, Carers Trust, Carers Wales, Contact the Elderly, Cruse Cymru, Deafblind Cymru, Disability Wales, Learning and Work Institute Wales, PRIME Cymru, RNIB Cymru, RVS Cymru, Sense Cymru, The Stroke Association and Volunteering Matters.

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