



# AGE ALLIANCE WALES

## The experiences of older people in Wales following the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

### Summary Document

September 2017

#### Introduction

In May 2017, more than a year after the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), Age Alliance Wales (AAW) launched the 'React to the Act: Older People have your say' survey, along with the 'React to the Act: Professionals have your say' survey targeted at professionals working with older people.

These surveys aimed to capture the opinions, experiences and voices of older people, their families and carers, on how the SSWBA had impacted on older people's lives and their experiences of accessing support and care services. It also aimed to capture the opinions of professionals working directly with older people requiring care and support following the implementation of the SSWBA.

It is acknowledged that the survey results reflect the opinions of individuals at a specific point in time. We also note that the research is limited to those who were able to respond to a detailed survey that was primarily circulated on line, so the results do not necessarily reflect the views of those individuals that organisations and services find harder to reach.

#### Our Findings

AAW is concerned by the picture that has been revealed by these surveys. They do demonstrate that there has been progress and some positive outcomes as a result of the legislation, for example, with regards to the empowerment of older people and encouragement to identify their own strengths. However, around half of older people are not being asked what matters to them as part of the social services assessment process and large numbers of older people are not having their needs reviewed.

In terms of advocacy, 48% of older people who had experienced an assessment felt they had not been offered support, and 9% had been offered support but no suitable person or professional was available.

While we recognised that changes as significant as those brought about by SSWBA take time to become fully operational and embedded, it is of great concern that the older people who responded to the question about the nature of the change believe it has been for the worse.

This point is underlined by the gaps revealed in the availability of appropriate services and the lack of consistent information and advice.

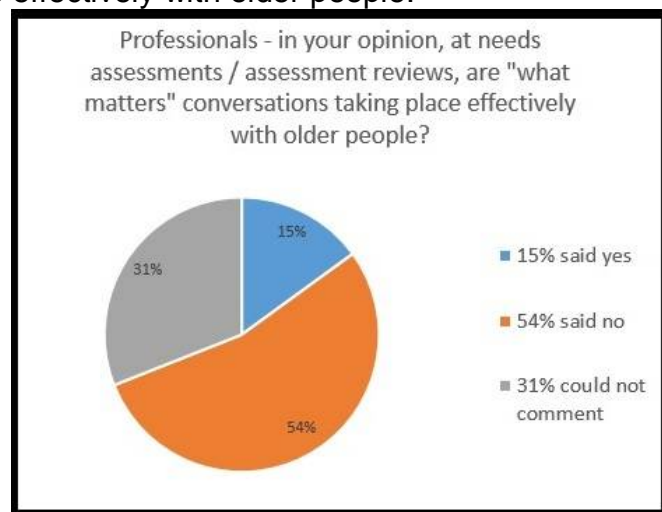
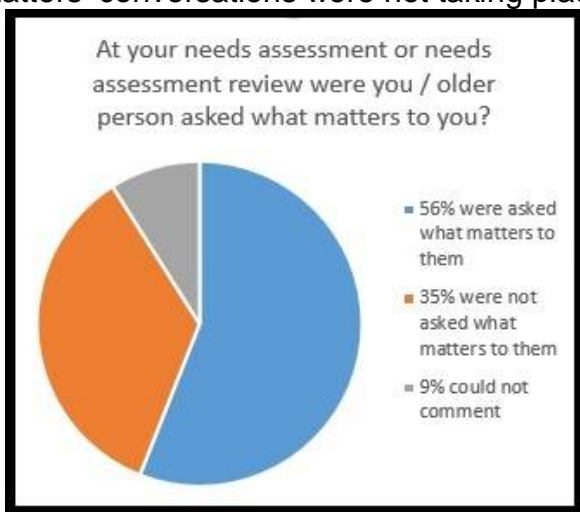
Change is needed across Wales so that older people get the care they need, when they need it building on the positive progress we have seen in some areas. AAW supports a change of culture that places the older person at the centre of decision making and sees organisations from all sectors working together to make sure appropriate care and support is available.

**Ceri Jackson**  
**Chair, Age Alliance Wales**

## Assessment Processes

The SSWBA made significant changes to social services assessment process. Local authorities have a legal duty to carry out an assessment of anyone living in its area who may need care services, once it has become aware of this need. The assessment must take into account all aspects of needs.

Survey responses indicate that although the legislation has led to changes in the assessment processes, there remains a need to continue to grow and embed this practice in order to ensure a consistent experience. It was found that just over half of older people reported being asked 'what matters' during an assessment – a key point of importance in the Act - and a large majority felt that they were 'fully' or 'somewhat' able to express their own views, wishes and feelings. Professionals views were more critical, however, with over half believing 'what matters' conversations were not taking place effectively with older people.



Overall, these findings show further action is needed ensure consistency in experiences.

Respondents also indicated positive progress towards ensuring older people are given an opportunity to identify their own strengths and support networks: half of the professionals believed that older people were 'fully' or 'somewhat' encouraged to do this, and nearly 70% of older people agreed.

Signposting to support services for well-being appears inconsistent. This could mean services are provided by social services so no signposting is necessary, but there is a danger older people are missing opportunities for support. There was an almost equal divide between older people who had been signposted to care and support services that would support their well-being and those who had not been signposted. Professional opinion was mixed, with the largest percentage believing older people are signposted but not always able to access support services. A total of 30% of professionals believed that older people were signposted to services that had now ended or had not been signposted at all.

Finally, respondents indicated there is a lack of consistency in the monitoring and evaluation of 'person-centred care plans'. One third of older people had their 'person-centred care plans' reviewed on a regular basis, but nearly half stated they had 'not really' or 'not at all' had their plan reviewed. Professional opinion of performance in this matter was even more concerning, with no respondents believing older people had their care plans reviewed on a regular basis, the majority stating monitoring and evaluation did 'not really' or 'not at all' happen.

## Provision of Services

Although only a small proportion of older respondents commented on the provision of services, those who reported witnessing a change in services as a consequence of the Act believed these changes had negatively impacted on the lives of older people. Older people also indicated a general increase in the levels of dissatisfaction in the standard of services they had received after 6th April 2016.

Professional opinion on the provision of services was more divided: there was an equal split of those who had, and those who had not, observed a change in services that had directly impacted on older people. General levels of dissatisfaction in the standard of services available to older people in professional opinion had increased since April 2016.

### Access to services

Responses indicated that whilst the majority of older people undergoing a needs assessment had accessed appropriate support services, over 30% of people either had not, or reported that services have ended, indicating a potential gap in service provision and a danger that those in need of care and support are not accessing the services they need.

Furthermore, 67% of professionals said they believed that older people are able to access services, but they do not always meet the needs of older people. 17% said that they do not believe older people are able to access appropriate services and none believed that older people are able to access services that fully meet their needs.

## Information and advice

Respondents' indicate a lack of effective communication to ensure older people are aware of how the changes made by the SSWBA will impact on them, their family members and their carers, with 76% stating they have seen no information from their local authority. Of those who had received information, 11% described it as "somewhat useful" and 9% "useful". 31% of professionals found information produced by their local authority to help older people understand how the changes in the SSWBA may impact on them and their family members, "somewhat useful" again suggesting a lack of effective communication with older people.

There are also concerns regarding the ability to access information and advice: 25% of older people said it had not been easy accessing information and advice. This was supported by 38% of professionals who said there had been no change since the introduction of the Act, and 8% who stated that they felt it was less easy. Respondents also indicated that signposting to other organisations for support is limited, with 44% of older people stating they were not directed to other organisations, and 5% reporting that they were directed but, in their opinion, the support did not meet their needs. There is the possibility that older people are accessing appropriate support services elsewhere, and so do not need to be signposted to other organisations, but nevertheless finding that 44% of older people are not being signposted by local authorities is concerning.

Professional opinion on signposting was mixed: 23% believed there had been a change in the numbers of older people directed to other organisations and that services mostly met their needs, 23% believed there has been a change in the numbers of older people directed to other organisations and support does **not** meet their needs, and 23% believed there had been no change in the number of older people directed to organisations for support. Essentially, there seems to be a lack of consistent and appropriate signposting.

## Advocacy

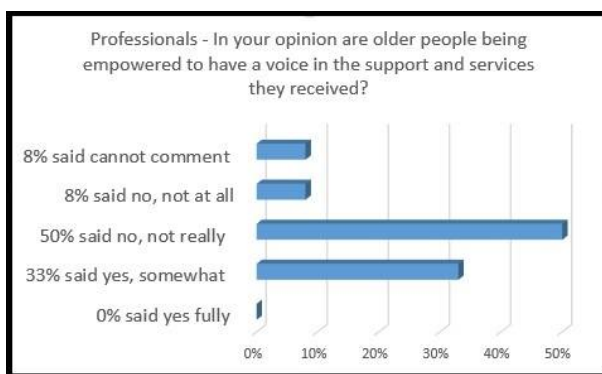
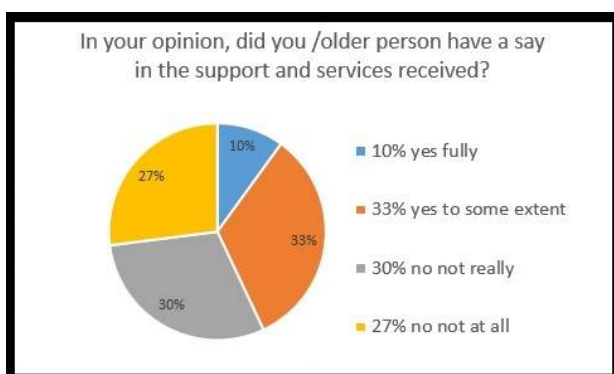
The professionals and older people who had experienced a needs assessment or needs assessment review had a varied opinion of advocacy support during those evaluations. Of the professionals, there was an equal split between those that felt older people were given the opportunity of support from an appropriate 'other' or professional advocate, and those that believed they had not. 48% of older people who had experienced an assessment felt they had not been offered support, and 9% had been offered support but no suitable person or professional was available. Only 22% of older people stated that the opportunity had been offered and they had accepted (although there is no indication whether this was a family member or professional advocate).

With regard to the availability of advocacy other than at an assessment, 41% of older people felt that if needed 'yes absolutely' there was someone who could speak on their behalf, with 23% believing 'yes possibly'. However, a total of 36% said either 'no, not at all' or 'no, not really'.

Professionals, when asked whether someone would be identified who could speak on behalf of an older person, leaned positively towards 'yes' or 'yes possibly', with 31% saying 'no not really'.

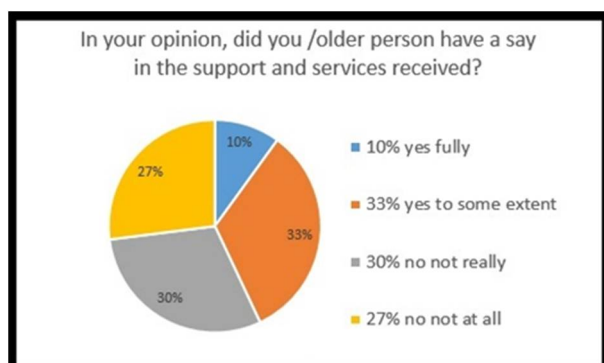
## Co-production

Even though the Act requires local authorities to ensure service users have a strong input into service provision, survey respondents indicated this is not always the case: over half of older people said 'not really' or 'not at all' when asked if they had a say in their support services, and only 10% said "yes fully". Further, when asked whether older people have been empowered to have a voice in the support and services they received, no professionals believed older people 'fully' had a say, and 58% responded 'no, not really' or 'no, not at all'.

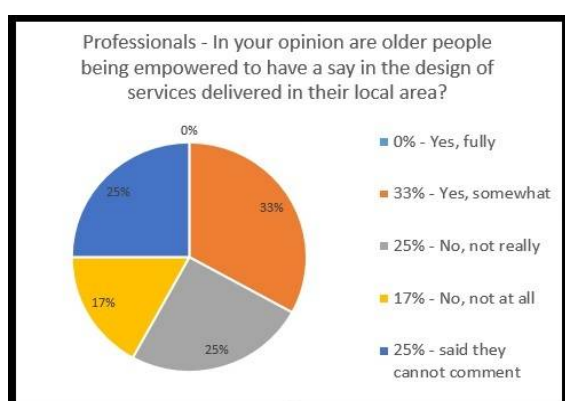


Whilst the SSWBA clearly discusses the importance of citizen involvement in the design of services, survey responses indicate a lack of knowledge of how to contribute to service design and delivery. Despite this, the general opinion expressed by professionals is that older

people are not really empowered to have a voice in the support and services they receive, as shown above.



The majority of older people felt they did not have a say in the design of services delivered in their area, with 67% in total saying “no, not really” or “no, not at all”. This was backed up by professionals’ responses, which indicate none believed older people would be fully able to have a say. Only 7% of older people said they felt fully able to have a say in the design of services delivered in their local area



42% of the professionals who responded stated that older people do ‘not really’ or ‘not at all’ know how to contribute to the design of services delivered in their local area. Clearly, this is a problem. One respondent noted: “Hardly any of the clients we have seen would know how to contribute to the design of services in their local areas. They tend to be quiet vulnerable, isolated and unsure about what is available to them, let alone influence that”

## Recommendations

1. The experience of older people accessing care and support following the introduction of the SSWBA in April 2016 is inconsistent and varied. To help alleviate these experiences strategic relationships should be developed to consistently embed the third sector in health and social care discussions and support integrated approaches to meeting need across sectors.
2. The third sector, health and social care providers need to consistently and effectively work together to share information, to plan and co-design services for older people with older people that are appropriate to meet their needs.
3. There is inconsistency in the approach experienced by older people involved in needs assessments and need assessment reviews. Whilst progress is being made in the changes brought in by the person-centred approach and ‘what matters’ conversations, there remain gaps in user experience. The Welsh Government, local authorities and local health boards need to work together to identify and address barriers to the realisation of a fully integrated care assessment process that is easily accessible to older people. This should include opportunities for joint training and the sharing of knowledge and expertise.
4. The experience of older people in accessing information and advice varies. The Welsh Government and local authorities need to ensure that older people have an understanding of their rights and entitlements with regard to social care.

5. There needs to be a robust and effective programme of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the SSWBA brings about the changes that are needed to improve the wellbeing of older people in Wales.