

Age Alliance Wales Annual Conference Note 12 June 2018



Welcome and Introduction

Jeff Hawkins, Chair of Age Alliance Wales, opened the conference. He noted the timeliness of the event, given that the Welsh Government had published, on 11 June, *A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care*.

Presentations:

Chris Williams – Age Alliance Wales Officer

[A PowerPoint presentation is available here](#)

- Chris opened with a brief reminder of the work carried out in 2017, before giving details of some of the work carried out since last year's conference.
- He gave a brief overview of some of the findings of AAW's two online surveys, made available for completion during late 2017 / early 2018. The first was aimed at Local Authority staff with responsibility for, or knowledge of, the commissioning of social services for older people and the second aimed at staff of Age Alliance Wales member organisations with knowledge of commissioning practices.
- It was found that there was a lack of consistency surrounding local authorities' funding of the third sector, differing levels of partnership working and a lack of consistent LA engagement with third sector organisations across local authority areas.
- Alliance members also indicated that a lack of common approach across Wales is leading to increasingly difficult and time-consuming funding processes, with particular difficulties for pan-Wales organisations having to negotiate a range of processes.
- Chris also gave an overview of some of the results relating to health and social care from the focus groups carried out in Wrexham, Bangor, Swansea and Newport during Spring 2018, particularly those relating to access to social care and health care.
- Whilst many older people were happy with their GP service, waiting a number of weeks for an appointment with a GP was not uncommon. Further, patients are sometimes required to attend one of the practice surgeries in another village, but public transport may be a problem, whilst some surgeries do not offer the opportunity to make appointments in advance, instead expecting

patients to phone the surgery in the morning. It was also found that GPs are very reluctant to conduct home visits

- Older people also reported problems with hospital visits: bus services can be unreliable, particularly in rural areas, and non-emergency Patient Transport Services (PTS) can require very early pick-ups and late drop-offs. Car parking at hospital was also found to be a problem.
- The surveys also considered access to social care. Again, there were numerous positive comments, but older people also told of a range of difficulties: being made to feel they were making themselves “a nuisance”, people with hearing loss being inadequately supported and patients having to “chase for updates”.
- Chris compared these results to some of those indicated in “Wales: A Good Place to Grow Old?”, a Bevan Foundation report commissioned by Age Alliance Wales, issued in 2012 – highlighting that many of its findings are essentially the same as those resulting from the focus groups.
- He asked delegates to provide ideas for making quick and noticeable improvements to the problems raised by older people, and place them on the table for collection after the event.

Questions and observations:

A delegate commented on the difficulties older people in her area have in accessing GPs, including matters such as problematic appointment procedures and receptionists’ approaches being seen as obstructive and/or intrusive.

- Chris agreed that similar comments had been made during focus group sessions, particularly the notion that receptionists may be seen by some people as a barrier to access the medical services they need.

Another delegate reported similar findings: that patients are not engaging with GP services due to the actions or stances of receptionists, particularly the asking of personal questions in a public area.

A further delegate noted that there is an alternative approach to the tri-age practice found at some GP surgeries (which had been welcomed by some at the focus groups, but seen as intrusive by others), whereby the patient is seen by the most highly qualified person for an initial assessment, who would then direct that person to the most appropriate practitioner, rather than the patient being assessed by a less well qualified member of staff.

Heather Ferguson – Project 360 ° **[A PowerPoint presentation is available here](#)**

Heather explained that Project 360° is a partnership project between Age Cymru, Woody’s Lodge and Age Alliance Wales. Funded by Aged Veterans Fund, the project supports military veterans aged 65 and over.

Heather clarified that there are estimated to be 124,000 older veterans in Wales, but there remains a lack of clear data on this group and the services necessary to

address their unique experiences and needs. The aim of Project 360°, therefore, is to improve all round support for older military veterans across Wales, with their wishes being kept at the heart of the process.

Work has been taking place to map the services of Age Alliance Wales members applicable to the needs of older veterans, and to engage with older veterans across Wales. There is also a great deal of support being given to the development of Woody's Lodge, a day centre currently based in Sully which welcomes all ages of veterans and former staff of the emergency services, and engagement work is ongoing with armed forces charities, Armed Forces Champions and other organisations. The project will also deal with the allocation of internal grant funding.

Veterans, Heather explained, and those that support them, are at the heart of the service development. A key tool in ensuring their needs are met is a questionnaire, which covers a wide range of matters of interest to veterans. Delegates were provided with copies of this document.

Heather asked for the support of delegates in spreading details of the project, and to help identify additional groups or organisations the Project 360° staff could speak with about their work

Heather's contact details are:

Email: project360@agecymru.org.uk

Telephone: 029 2043 1555

Website: www.agecymru.org.uk/project360

Questions and observations:

A delegate asked what is intended to be done with the information gained in the survey regarding veterans' knowledge of AAW member organisations, and whether this information would be provided to those organisations.

- Heather said that information may be provided to organisations, particularly as it is known that many are doing some very good work aimed at veterans, but which may not be well known by those who may benefit. As such it would be beneficial to inform them of difficulties so that they may remedy the situation.

It was also asked whether there would be any safeguarding obligation if approaches from veterans would indicate they are in need of assistance.

- It was clarified that whilst the project is not a referral service the context of the discussion would allow relevant organisations to assist.

An observation was made that the survey is looking for deficits, rather than positives.

- It was agreed this is correct: this is the work which needs to be carried out in order to find where services are lacking, with the aim of addressing those deficits.

Katie Cooke – Measuring the Mountain Project Manager

[A PowerPoint presentation is available here](#)

Katie provided an overview of the Measuring the Mountain project. It is essentially a pan-Wales project gathering opinions on individual peoples' experiences of the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014. Funded by Welsh Government, it will contribute to Welsh Government's 3 year evaluation of the Act.

In order to carry out this work the project depends upon organisations to recruit and support "Listeners" – individuals who will collect people's stories.

A video demonstration of SenseMaker was provided - the questionnaire tool used to gather "stories" and to later analyse them. A paper-based version of this information is available for those who need it, which would be particularly suitable for those who are not able to complete the online survey in a single sitting. Details can be found via the website at www.mtm.wales

Katie explained that a good story could be just about anything regarding accessing social care, good or bad, but she is interested in collecting details of experiences, not journeys – it would be useful to split longer stories into shorter blocks.

Delegates were asked to get involved with the survey work and pass information to those who may be able to assist – it is extremely important to gather as much information as possible in order to ensure the project's findings are seen as a valid representation of the situation faced by the people of Wales.

The role of the "citizen jury" was also considered, which will examine key issues arising from people's stories, with "jurors" examining evidence and questioning "witnesses". Taking place at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea, from September 24th to 27th, its conclusions and recommendations will be shared with Welsh Government, stakeholders and the public.

Further information on the project can be obtained from Katie via the following methods:

Phone: 07964 407 739

Email: kcooke@interlinkrct.org.uk

Or at the website: www.mtm.wales / www.mym.cymru

Questions and observations:

How will the juries be selected?

- It was explained that the questions the juries will discuss will arise from the feedback from the project work. Once this is known appropriate individuals can be sought from the respondents.

How can people find out about becoming "listeners" (those who assist people to provide their stories)?

- It was suggested they could contact SPICE (a time banking group involved in the initiative), Social Care Wales or ideally Katie herself.

Nick Selwyn – Wales Audit Office

[A PowerPoint presentation is available here](#)

Delegates were provided with an overview of WAO work on the Strategic Commissioning of Learning Disabilities, plus their imminent work on first point of contact and assessments under the SSWBA.

Additionally, they were given background information on the position of the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office, including the legal basis for the Auditor General's work and the relevant duties and powers.

Further, Nick gave an overview of the current programme of work, including work on the first point of contact and assessments for adults by local authorities under the Social Services and Well-being Act, and the intended fieldwork and research for the 2018-19 period.

The future programme of work will be consulted on this year, to set a three year programme for 2019-20 to 2021-22. Nick would welcome delegates' thoughts and suggestions on what WAO should consider.

Strategic Commissioning of Learning Disabilities:

The review has focussed on assessing whether local authorities have effective approaches to commissioning accommodation for adults with learning disabilities (those aged over 16).

The research carried out shows no discernible pattern or rationale that helps explain or justify variations in expenditure.

- Local authorities generally do not have effective arrangements to commission accommodation services for people with learning disabilities
- Not all local authorities have developed strategic commissioning options in line with Welsh Government guidance and the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act
- Whilst there are sometimes substantial variations in numbers of commissioning staff in LAs, WOA found no correlation between the standard of commissioned accommodation services for people with learning disabilities and commissioner numbers.

First point of contact assessments

Delegates were also provided with an overview of WAO's imminent work on First point of contact assessments. The study will focus on adults, and will consider whether "... local authority first point of contact assessment and processes better meeting the needs of service users and carers in line with the commitments of the Act...". A national report is to be published in late 2019.

It will consider:

- the comprehensiveness of the assessments
- whether the assessment is person-centred including ease of access
- whether the assessment process is leading to a shift towards prevention in social care and non-social care services; and
- the impact of assessments on people's wellbeing and interaction with the requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

This will involve:

- A telephone survey of carers to identify the level of care and support they receive and to determine whether they feel the Act has supported improvement
- An online survey of third sector provider organisations
- Working with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to analyse complaint patterns relating to social services (pre and post SSWB Act)
- Review a sample of documents from each of the 22 unitary authorities
- Review of published performance data

There will also be detailed fieldwork in five local authorities:

- Interviews and focus groups with a range of officers, Elected Members and local partners
- Walk-throughs of councils' end-to-end process
- Interviews with national organisations

There will also be an online survey of third sector provider organisations. Nick would therefore welcome engagement from AAW members, and provided written information sheets to give attendees an opportunity to provide comments and show an interest in becoming further involved. Those who missed this opportunity to feed back on the day should contact him via nick.selwyn@audit.wales

Questions and observations:

A delegate pointed out that the term "carers" can include those who provide formal or informal care, and asked which the study is interested in.

- Nick clarified it would cover both groups, as well as the opinions of care recipients.

Another delegate asked about the nature of the "walk-through" of LA procedures: doesn't the fact that the WAO is requesting this information (rather than a member of the public) have an impact on the findings? Would a lone individual get the same response?

- In response Nick felt that an evaluation of the processes should identify problems (if any) with the systems, but this would then be complimented

by feedback from those who have tried to access services from the consultation / focus group events. Overall a good picture should be built up from a combination of sources.

Rachel Lewis – Welsh Government **[A PowerPoint presentation is available here](#)**

Rachel is working on secondment to the Welsh Govt from Age Cymru, looking at Phase 3 of the Strategy for Older People.

She explained the “vision” to ensure people in Wales feel valued and supported, whatever their age, so that “all older people in Wales have the social, environmental and financial resources they need to deal with the opportunities and challenges they face”.

This Strategy for Older People identifies three main priority areas for action:

- social resources
- environmental resources
- financial resources

Furthermore, it is recognised that physical and mental health, lifestyle factors, access to information and advice, equality and diversity, language needs and preparation for later life are important issues to be considered in each of the three priority areas.

Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing:

The Ministerial Advisory Forum for Ageing (MAFA) was set up in 2004 to coincide with the publication of the Strategy for Older People 2003. The Forum has provided expert advice to Ministers on the implementation of the Strategy and a range of issues relating to older people and ageing.

In order to take forward the Welsh Government’s commitment to supporting everyone in Wales to age well, MAFA members agreed to form 5 working groups to focus on the following areas:

- Living in the community – housing and built environment
- Preparing for retirement – income maximisation and older workers
- Transport
- Participation – loneliness and isolation and healthy ageing
- Making rights real

The role of the working groups is to provide expertise and knowledge to support the Welsh Government to identify and address the key issues that affect older people in Wales.

With regard to the “Making rights real” aspect the Welsh Government will, Rachel says, build on the statutory rights and entitlements put in place under transformative social care legislation, by co-producing practical guidance that demonstrates how to make the UN Principles real for older people.

Initial guidance will focus on commissioning, safeguarding and advocacy. These are the areas that WG feels must be right if they are to support all older people to have voice and control over their health and social care.

Advocacy

Rachel also gave an overview of the work being carried out by Welsh Government on advocacy matters, clarifying that a National Framework for Commissioning Independent Advocacy for Adults is being developed with the aim of improving the quality, consistency and availability of advocacy services across Wales. The Framework is also intended to support local authorities to fulfil their duties under the Social Services and Well-being Act.

Those who may wish to contact Rachel regarding her work can do so via email:

Rachel.Lewis016@gov.wales

Questions and observations:

It was asked whether the statutory guidance referred to in the PowerPoint presentation refers to ALL health and social care services, or only local authority social care.

- Rachel confirmed Welsh Government is looking at a rights based approach across all health and social care services.

A delegate asked whether, in absence of a true “Rights for older people act”, Wales would be leading the way in this approach.

- Rachel confirmed this would be so

Another asked whether there would be support for older people to ensure they can use their (human) rights with public bodies.

- Rachel confirmed there would be such support, and WG is currently working on the means by which this may be provided.

A delegate noted that there is a lack of anything specific on social care and ageing in the third phase of the Strategy for Older People.

- Rachel agreed with this, stating it is something they would be addressing. The “making rights real” work should be a starting point.

Finally, a delegate noted that whilst this work was welcome, there are people who are facing difficulty right now – what will be done to help them?

- Rachel said she and her colleagues are moving forward as quickly as possible, looking at a wide range of matters including social care and a

social care levy. This will take time to complete, but will be done as soon as possible.

Conference Close

Jeff Hawkins, Chair of Age Alliance Wales, closed the conference, reminding delegates of the opportunities available to engage with speakers and their organisations.

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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