

CYMRU OLDER PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE: CAMPAIGNING PRIORITIES

Cymru Older Peoples Alliance - Campaigning Priorities 2023/4

1. The priorities for older people in Wales in improving and changing lives have been well debated and agreed by the Board and Forum Representatives on a number of occasions. These are set out below and are backed by research evidence including direct feedback from older people. The top 5 priorities are set out in the first section and other priorities – to be actioned more generally and dependant on capacity and opportunity – are in the second section. The issue of the impact of Cost-of-Living increases (including energy) on older people is clearly a fundamental priority.

Framework for Campaigning

2. An overview of a framework for campaigning on the priorities is below but will need to be linked to our new Marketing Strategy and include:
 - i. to influence policy makers by providing well presented evidence, opinion, and other information to back up the case being made through research, surveys, direct views e.g., emails, meetings, workshops, social media etc and especially Forum Representatives;
 - ii. Working with others to present our arguments e.g., Forums, Age Cymru, other National older peoples organisations, other charities;
 - iii. Utilising our representative role through Welsh Ministers and officials, Senedd Committees, MAFA, Commissioner for Older People, WLGA, Councils, Health Boards, UK Government etc and seeking meetings with them as appropriate;
 - iv. Communicating the campaign through press releases, social media, letter writing to newspapers, MSs and MPs, our website, face book page etc;
 - v. Follow Up action including informing our network of the outcome of campaigns (what difference has it made), returning to raise issues again, evaluating campaigns and any lessons learnt;

Main Priorities for 2023/4

These are the key issue that COPA will focus on and where we will utilise our capacity and resources to campaign.

Impact of Cost-of-Living Pressures

There are increasing pressures on daily living costs for older people as a result of increases in costs, particularly energy bills and food costs, and from below inflation increases in state pensions and other income. This is especially difficult for those on fixed incomes and leads to difficult decisions as to whether ration heating or cut back on food to save money. COPA will continue to campaign with other age organisations for increased support as well as disseminating information on the Energy Grants from Government to tackle these issues.

Recovery from the Pandemic

Older People in Wales have been the population group most adversely impacted by Covid-19 and it is essential that a recovery plan, that “builds back better” gives a priority to their needs. The disproportionate effect on older people has highlighted and compounded the inequalities and discrimination facing older people and a targeted and funded action plan for recovery must ensure they are not left behind in the post Covid-19 period. A range of issues need to be addressed including NHS Waiting Lists, Access to GPs, impact on mental and physical health, isolation and loneliness, digital exclusion, community facilities for groups etc.

Digital Inclusion

Improvement of Digital inclusion of Older People through learning and support is needed. We want to see an end to discrimination through digital exclusion by default – by statutory organisations as well as businesses, ensuring ready access non-digitally to information, advice, consultations, application processes and complaint procedures. Adherence by Councils and Health Boards to the Commissioner for Older Peoples Guidance on Digital Inclusion for Older People will be a particular focus of our campaigning on this issue.

Action to combat Isolation and Loneliness

Isolation and Loneliness has an adverse impact on the health and lives of over 75,000 of older people in Wales. Action on this must be given a high priority to tackling isolation and loneliness amongst older people and lead to the funding of practical solutions at a community level. Lack of Public Toilets leads to isolation for older people with continence problems and any locally agreed Toilet Strategy must be accompanied by resources to make it a reality.

Fair Funding of Social Care

In respect of Paying for Care, the misunderstanding and confusion about social care as a chargeable service and its relationship to NHS Funded Nursing Care and Continuing Health Care must not continue. In light of evolving decisions by Governments and an Expert Group Report in Wales, absolute clarity is needed to enable people to plan effectively for their long -term care. There is a tangible injustice in the care system for people with dementia which must be dealt with.

We want robust and radical change to the Paying for Care arrangements so that they are based on key principles of equity and fairness. A clear and transparent timetable with commitment to action from the earliest possible date should be agreed involving older people’s representatives from the outset.

Other Priorities

These are issues that older people have raised with COPA as important. They will be actioned more generally in our work and dependant on capacity and opportunity. They also provide a “position statement” for Trustees and Forum Representatives to utilise.

Engagement and Participation

Meaningful and effective engagement and participation of older people across all of Wales on a more consistent basis must be the standard reached. Local Forums should be supported sufficiently to be able to make an impact. A new Welsh Government Strategy for Inter-generational Practice is needed to demonstrate fairness across the generations. Most importantly adequate funding to enable our Commissioner for Older People to undertake her role effectively is essential. We will utilise the COPA Framework for Engagement of Older People in AFCs to promote sound principles and fair expectations about how older people re engaged on a co-productive basis

Human Rights, Discrimination and Abuse

Human Rights of Older People in Wales is a key priority. It is essential that a rights-based approach is embedded across public services for older people in Wales

Abuse of Older People in all its forms must be addressed. We want to see an end to ageism and age discrimination wherever it occurs through a national campaign that takes age discrimination as seriously as other discriminations in society.

Age Friendly Communities

We want to see the creation of Age Friendly Communities across all areas of Wales which take account of the need to develop Dementia Friendly Communities and meet the World Health Organisation 8 Domains for age-friendly communities. This concept should be developed and supported by Councils and Health Boards in Wales with the full engagement of older people and especially 50+ Forums utilising the requirement in law for Councils to do so on the basis of the principles of coproduction

Social Care

Councils must be properly funded to provide high quality social care and to implement their statutory duties to older people and to go further to meet best practice standards. Councils must support older people to live independently at home for as long as possible. Early intervention and prevention must be available consistently across Wales. The Labour /Plaid Cymru agreement is examining the case for creating a National Care Service in Wales and COPA will work with Forums to give views on implementation of any plans emerging

Care Homes and Domiciliary Care services must be given greater support and funding to be efficient and cost effective and provide high quality person-centred care and support to older people at all times. We want integrated seamless health and social care delivery but the disparity in pay between NHS front line care workers and social care workers cannot continue if that is to be achieved

High Quality Health Service for Older People

Older People are by far the largest users of the NHS but should not be “blamed” for rising costs – there are other costs which have risen more significantly. Older people must always be treated with dignity and respect during a hospital stay or out-patients appointment and discharged from hospital in an effective and timely manner. They should not be wrongly labelled as “bed blockers” which is insulting.

Arrangements for Older people making an appointment to see a GP should be more responsive to their individual needs and circumstances especially those living with sensory loss, dementia, or a cognitive impairment, as well as their carers.

Support for Carers

The majority of unpaid Carers are also older people. The significant contribution they make must be recognised and the support they receive improved. Carers must always receive their legal right to an assessment and where required also have their identified needs met.

Reliable and Integrated Transport

Transport is essential to many older people who cannot or no longer drive a car. An effective, safe, reliable, accessible, and integrated transport system is needed across bus and rail services, especially in rural areas, which allows older people to lead the lives they want to live without restrictions. Community Transport has a vital role to play within a transport system that works well for older people and must be improved and support the role of voluntary drivers. The Free Bus Pass for over 60s must continue. COPA will continue to engage in debates and representation about how the Wales Transport Strategy and Wales Bus Strategy are taken forward.

Housing to meet needs of Ageing Society

Housing should be fit for all older people whatever their circumstances. Local housing needs assessments must be carried out as an integral element of local authorities' well-being plans and involve fully people over 50 and the groups representing them. An expansion of the "Help to Stay, Help to Move" service and the aids and adaptations schemes is needed. We want to see introduction of more viable and innovative accommodation options for older people as they age. More Extra Care schemes should be available in all areas of Wales. Fuel Poverty and its impacts on older people in Wales must also be addressed

Employment for Older People

Employment – older people are a valued and essential part of the workforce in Wales. They need to be explicitly covered in the economic planning for Wales and

the recent downturn in employment of over 50s addressed. Action is required to ensure the “Age is But A Number” concept works well to combat age discrimination in the workplace and introduces programmes to promote retirement planning as well as change of career for older workers. With the occurrence of “unretiring” due to economic pressures becoming more prevalent COPA will need to work more closely with other stakeholders on this issue.

Community Safety, Cohesion and Climate Change

Programmes are needed to ensure all older people feel safe in their homes and communities with better awareness raising, stronger and quicker action to prevent scams and support to combat age related hate crime and make its reporting made more effective. The gains achieved during the pandemic in bringing communities closer together, including valued support for many older people, must not be lost and action should be taken to stabilise and build community cohesion. Older people are just as concerned about Climate Change and the environment as others and should be included in the debates about how Wales should tackle these priorities

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October 2022