

Meeting with Commissioner for Older People - Covid-19

Recovery Plan

We discussed a report that Helena is preparing for publication at the end of the month about what should happen for older people in the recovery plan for Covid-19. Some of the themes that are likely to emerge are:

- the context of what life for older people was like before the pandemic and the problems and discrimination that existed
- need for intergenerational solidarity
- Urgent action on - Care Homes and Domiciliary Care, impact on older workers, take up of financial entitlements, access to the NHS
- social care and NHS use particularly Mental Health
- Abuse of older people including scams
- digital exclusion
- Volunteering
- Age Friendly Communities including transport, toilets, built environment etc

The National Organisations raised the importance of giving older people confidence to resume normal activities and the safeguards needed including use of masks, clarity of information and guidance. Equality for older people rather than special treatment was called for in presenting the report which should neither "pull any punches" but shine a light and hold to account on poor services/outcomes for older people.

If there are any other priority issues you think should be covered in this report please let me know as soon as possible.

Issues Raised by COPA

Food Access

I raised the Which? report just published which shows that in the UK 25% of older people including 40% of non-clinically- vulnerable older people (29 May to 17 June) faced difficulties getting essential groceries

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/07/one-in-four-vulnerable-people-still-struggling-to-access-food-100-days-into-coronavirus-lockdown/>

Social Care

Despite no local authorities in Wales formally using their derogation powers under the Covid-19 Act to suspend services, there are reports from the practice level of services to older people being suspended due to Covid-19. This is unacceptable practice that needs to be discontinued. It was also suggested that some older people had decided to

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cancel their care because they did not want different care workers coming into their home during the pandemic.

Engagement Survey

We discussed the survey of older people on Covid-19 that COPA had proposed. The Welsh Government and Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing have supported it and Age Cymru have commenced initial design and planning work on implementation. We discussed the purpose of the survey i.e. to ensure older people were engaged as to their views on recovery from the pandemic. The coverage will need to be wide including Forums, national organisations, age charities, local age organisations etc as well as the general public through the media/on-line etc as well as through different formats including hard copy. The survey will need to be forward looking at the recovery and older people's wishes and expectations. Analysis of surveys completed already to identify experiences of people over the last 3 months should be examined to identify trends from those over 60+ participating rather than duplicating that "looking back". Further dialogue with partners will be undertaken over the next few weeks to ensure the survey design is right and the process maximises the potential to reach as many older people as possible.

Other work by the Commissioner included a statement next week from the Abuse Partnership Group about on-line safety and further engagement work with older people, with this round targeting older people who are not part of older people's groups.

I hope you find this summary helpful. The next meeting with the Commissioner is on 16 July so grateful for any questions by 14 July.

Kind regards

Steve

S G Milsom
Chair

2nd June 2020