CYMRU Older People's Alliance

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Cynghrair Pobl Hyn CYMRU

THE FUTURE OF 50+ FORUMS IN WALES – DELIVERING AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT WITH 50+ FORUM CHAIRS IN WALES

November 2020

CYMRU OLDER PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE - THE FUTURE OF 50+ FORUMS IN WALES - DELIVERING AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES – A REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT WITH 50+ FORUM CHAIRS IN WALES

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1. Executive Summary

This Report aims to analyse the findings from engagement by Cymru Older People's Alliance with the Chairs 0f 50+ Forums in Wales in Summer 2020 and present the evidence to support the implementation of the Development Framework that Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA) have proposed to revitalise and reform Forums.

The context for this work is the Strategy for Older People (Welsh Government, 2003) that established the concept and support structure of 50+ Forums in Wales. With 12 years and two further stages of the Strategy (Welsh Government 2008, 2013) a wide variety of projects and outcomes were delivered with the investment of over £20 million by Welsh Government. This policy for older people was successful and Wales was seen as "leading the way" in responding to the challenges of an ageing population. The impact of austerity on Council budgets, particularly from 2015, means that now Older People's Forums are very variable and patchy across Wales and need strengthening to support meaningful engagement.

This pre-existing austerity, the fundamental changes brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic and the potential consequences of Brexit, suggest that realistically additional resources for Forums will unlikely be easy to find. Therefore, the proposition from COPA is that reform and revitalisation of Forums is taken forward in a different and new way to support engagement of older people through Forums, with limited money and capacity but utilising the principles and success factors of the pre 2015 era. We believe that engagement with older people including 50+ Forums should be positioned as part of the well-being agenda and the early intervention and prevention duties placed on Councils under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. We cannot however accept that we should "give up" or that independent, self-determined scrutiny and challenge by Forums is no longer needed. It is even more important now that the voice of older people is heard and not marginalised

The key findings from our engagement with Forum Chairs from July to October included:

- At least 5 different approaches or "models" adopted by Councils in Wales in respect of their local 50+ Forums were found without any apparent evaluation or rationale for the policy changes that had been made, other than that they were driven by finance
- We estimate that a small majority (around 60%) of Councils are either very supportive or supportive of their Forum. However, many older people who are involved in Forums have a wide range and diversity of experience, depending on local circumstances and budget decisions by the Council
- We identified a clear need to strengthen Forum membership through more recruitment effort, both directly and as result of retirement programmes. Identifying leaders and succession planning are particular challenges
- Priority issues are identified by most Forums which are often driven by local issues e.g. GPs, hospitals. Care homes, transport, public toilets etc but there are also wider issues examined by some Forums that are of national concern for older people.
- Despite the divergent levels of support for Forums across Wales, there are still a number of examples where the arrangements in place with the local

authority are reasonably strong and/or have potential for revitalisation. There are also examples where the local Forum has led innovative developments to benefit their locality including intergenerational projects, as well as others addressing well-being, digital inclusion, isolation and loneliness.

- Since March 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, Forums have not been able to meet on a face to face basis. There were concerns expressed about the impact of this situation on the future of Forums and whether they would "disappear" or be able to recommence with sufficient involvement.
- The role of COPA in supporting and informing Forums was seen as important and improving. Further development of this support was called for including the sharing of practice between Forums. The recent improvement of COPA communications is recognised and welcomed. The programme of development proposed is seen as the critical factor in whether the reform and revitalisation of Forums can succeed

In the light of these findings, a series of conclusions and recommendations are made in the report. It is suggested that the wide range of approaches and differences for Forums across Wales produces unacceptable inequalities in meeting the legislative and policy framework for engagement in Wales. The demand is made of Welsh Government for a clear and consistent national policy framework for 50+ Forums in Wales. A National Development Framework to reform and revitalise Forums is set out as a basis for further dialogue with key partners. This includes actions for Welsh Government and Councils to consider to give strategic direction and bolster local structures to ensure Forums operate in a manner that allows meaningful and sustainable engagement of older people in localities, enabling them to participate and contribute in local and national decisions that impact on their lives and make a contribution on key issues such as intergenerational solidarity, isolation and loneliness and digital inclusion.

The report makes clear that whilst greater priority for engagement of older people in Forums is a prerequisite from Welsh Government and Councils, this is an agenda that should be owned and driven by older people themselves on a basis of self-determination. Therefore, a programme of work is proposed for COPA, its Voting Members and Forums to take forward to better facilitate and support Forums so that they can make a positive contribution to reconstruction post Covid-19 and help in creating Age-Friendly Communities across all of Wales.

2. Introduction

1. This Report aims to analyse the findings from engagement with the Chairs 0f 50+ Forums in Wales in Summer 2020 and present the evidence to support the implementation of the Development Framework that Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA) have proposed to revitalise and reform Forums to ensure effective engagement of older people at a local level.

2. It was the Strategy for Older People (Welsh Government, 2003) that established the concept of 50+ Forums in Wales based on Local Authority boundaries and funded through a regime of grant funding to Councils and the Voluntary Sector. (some Forums such as RCT had been formed a number of years earlier). This regime was set out in a Statutory Circular - NAFWC 11/2003. This Guidance also set out the expectation that each Council should have a local 50+ Forum, an Older People's Champion and a Development officer/Co-ordinator at officer level and funded projects and research. Over the subsequent 12 years and two further stages of the Strategy (Welsh Government 2008, 2013) a wide variety of projects and outcomes were delivered with the investment of over £20 million in total. In addition, a strong framework for the engagement of older people and a platform for their voice to be heard, through their local Forums was in place. Evaluations from a range of sources including Institute of Institute of Public Policy Research, (2009) and Welsh Local Government Association (2011) demonstrated the benefits of the policy for older people and that Wales was "leading the way" in responding to the challenges of an ageing population.

The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) in its report 'Policies for Peace of Mind? – Devolution and older age in the UK' found that: "The Welsh approach seems to be the most coherent long term commitment to improving the position of older people of any administration in the UK in the last decade…the Welsh Strategy appears the most likely of any to ensure a continuing high profile for older people's issues across many policy areas and at a local level."

The Welsh Local Government Association report "Local Implementation of the Strategy for Older People" (2011) said that "The local implementation of the Strategy has seen the genuine involvement of older people in strategy and policy development and practice". It also stated "The local implementation of the Strategy has attracted widespread appreciation and praise". It however warned "The challenge that immediately faces us is to use the experience of implementing the strategy to respond to the funding challenges currently faced by public bodies".

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3. There have of course been significant reductions in Council budgets particularly from 2015 onwards that have impacted on available resources for Forums. The need that austerity created for Councils to focus on delivering "statutory duties" - services they are required to provide by law, has also meant a diminishing level of other support for Forums. The basic framework of

a Forum, Champion and some officer support has still been sustained in a number of areas, and this provides a foundation to build on. However, this is not the case everywhere by any means and Older People's Forums are very variable and patchy across Wales and need strengthening to support meaningful engagement. Whilst this situation has arisen due to the pre-existing austerity, the fundamental changes brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic and the potential consequences of Brexit, suggest that realistically, it will be a challenge to identify new development capacity or additional resources to revitalise the structure of 50+ Forums in 2020 and beyond.
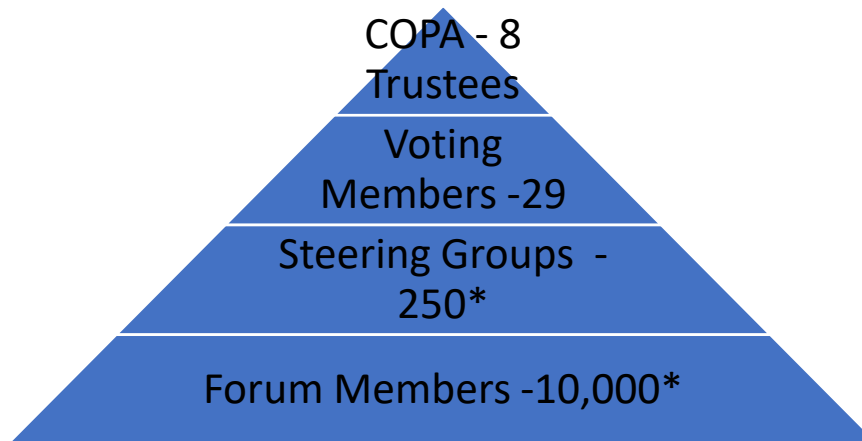
4. The thrust of this report and its recommendations is therefore to examine what can be done in a different and new way to support engagement of older people through Forums, with limited money and capacity. We cannot however accept that we should "give up" or that independent, self-determined scrutiny and challenge by Forums is no longer needed. It is more essential than ever Post Covid-19 that the voice of older people is heard and not marginalised. In this difficult and challenging context that we are all now experiencing, our aim and hope is that that the principles and key success factors of the journey that Forums have made pre 2015 can be utilised, albeit in different but sustainable way. We believe that engagement with older people including reformed and revitalised 50+ Forums, should be positioned as part of the well-being agenda and the early intervention and prevention duties placed on Councils under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This could enable progress for Forums to be successful again in the prevailing circumstances in the next few years and to be able to support the implementation of the new Strategy for an Ageing Society including Intergenerational Solidarity.

3. Background and Methodology

5. COPA was established as a Registered Charity in October 2017 as an independent, representative, national organisation run by Older People for older people in Wales. We do this by working in partnership with local Older People's fora and Older People's groups across Wales to learn from their experiences and opinions on what will make Wales a great place to grow old. Therefore, we aim to achieve a national voice for local people that feeds directly into both government and national public organisations.

6. After two years of progress as a charity, the Board of Trustees decided to undertake, as a basis for on-going improvement and refocus, a fundamental Review of our constitution, structure, operation and particularly our engagement of local Forums and groups. This was commenced in early 2020 through a Working Group consisting of Steve Milsom (Chair), Dr Ralph Stevens (Communications Officer and now also Vice Chair) and Wyn Llewellyn (then Vice Chair Carmarthenshire 50+) who provided independent advice. Regular discussions with the Board were held throughout the process of Review. In relation to this Report, an early priority was established to examine how we engaged with Forums, with the objectives of:

- Improved engagement with Voting Members and Forums by COPA creating a collaborative value chain comprising COPA, 50+ Fora and Members

- Consistent response and contribution from Forums to national level
- Consistent model for Funding and Support for Forums through new Age Friendly Communities initiative
- Enhanced Communications including on Social Media

7. It is estimated that the 50+ Forums (and similarly named groups) in Wales have around 10,000 registered members and circa 250 people who are more actively involved on a regular basis as officers and members of Steering Groups. COPA has in its membership 17 of the 22 Council-area Forums with 29 COPA Voting Members nominated from them (Annex 5). There are currently 8 Trustees on the COPA Board, 7 of whom are a Chair or Vice Chair of a local Forum and 1 who is the Older People's Champion for their local Council.

Table 1 Forums Structure

COPA - 8 Trustees

Voting Members -29

Steering Groups - 250*

Forum Members -10,000*

*Informal estimate from feedback by Forums

8. A methodology was established to undertake the review of engagement with Forums that sought to establish a dialogue or "buddying arrangement" with each Forum Chair/Vice Chair individually so that they could sustain and build a relationship with COPA. To ensure genuine and effective engagement we identified a named "partner trustee" who undertook the informal discussion. Whilst these could be described as semi-structured discussions, the main questions to be posed could be summarised as:

i.   What are local circumstances of your Forum? (Steering Group, Members, Meetings, Projects, Council Support)

ii. what are the barriers and solutions to your Forum making progress? (funding, venues, additional support, capacity, sharing good practice)

iii. How best can the two-way flow of views and information between your Forum and COPA be improved? (Consultations, Emails, Website, face book, meetings, workshops etc)

iv.   What support do you think would be helpful from COPA? (lobbying on issues, securing Council support, training, information)

9. This initial dialogue with Forum Chairs/Vice Chair sought to commence a conversation on these issues and find out some key facts rather than being any comprehensive evaluation at this stage. The outcomes of these meetings were written up and analysed to inform the findings of this Report. Further meetings using these "buddying arrangements" will be required to develop the breadth and depth of understanding of the differing circumstances and concerns of Forums across Wales. During the process of the Review, monthly meetings (from May 2020) were also held which all Voting Members collectively were able to join on a virtual basis and these have proved a good means of communication with Forums, alongside regular email dialogue.

4. Main Findings

10. This chapter presents a summary of findings analysed from interviews with Forum Chairs or Vice Chairs between August and October 2020.

11. The evidence we have gathered in our engagement work suggests that the following different approaches or "models" adopted by Councils in Wales in respect of their local 50+ Forums can be typified. It has been difficult to find any evaluation or rationale for the policy changes that have been made in respect of Forums in recent years other than that they were driven by finance and the need to prioritise budgets.

Table 2 - Models for Forums Identified

Model	Features
Very Supportive	Some Councils strongly support their Forum through meeting arrangements, officer time and involvement of a Champion, and in some cases, an annual budget. The Forums are active and valued by older people. The Forum is used by the Council as a channel for consultation and scrutiny. There are examples of a range of innovative projects being undertaken and a sense of the agenda being driven by older people
Supportive	Some Councils have maintained their support for the Forum albeit at a much-reduced level. Whilst loss of dedicated support may well have occurred, in-kind help and small-scale resources for specific purposes have been maintained. In this model

	communications with the Forum usually remain good. This model has good potential for improvement but includes some examples where the Council would appear to be driving the agenda rather than by older people themselves.
Neutral	In this model, Council have reduced resources and support to a minimal level. The Forums meet less regularly now and are not supported strongly by older people. There are indications in this model that the Forum could be revitalised.
Regressive	In response to budget constraints, a few Councils have dismantled their 50+ Forum and amalgamated it with other Community Interest Groups who have different priorities and agendas to the older people. This has caused some resentment and a feeling that older people are marginalised and not engaged properly. This model has meant that challenge and scrutiny of Councils by Forums has been dissipated.
No Evidence	For a small number of Councils, we have been unable to illicit a response and there is no current information available on their web sites about the local Forum

12. It would be inappropriate for this initial evaluation to make definitive or specific assessments of the levels of support provided by Councils to their Forums but taking into account the changed financial environment, we would broadly estimate that a small majority (around 60%) of Councils are either very supportive or supportive of their Forum.

13. The older people who are involved in Forums across Wales have a wide range and diversity of experience, depending on local circumstances, budget decisions by the Council and the level of involvement and interest of officers. The following quotes illustrate the differences:

"We get excellent support from our Local Authority Older People Strategy Co-ordinator. He attends every Forum, each Older People's Council and since March we have held Virtual meetings of the Older People's Council sub group" [Forum Chair].

"The Forum whilst having a strong history has not been proactive over the last year or so. It is just "ticking along". [Forum Vice Chair]

"Older People's voice is not being heard. The right to challenge and express opinions has been neutralised. Older people are not being treated with any dignity, respect or priority" [Forum Chair].

14. Whilst direct funding for Forums has reduced significantly in recent years there are still some Forums receiving annual allocations. However, the inconsistency of funding decisions in this respect is shown by these examples from adjoining areas of South East Wales where 200,000 of the 660,000 (rounded figures) over 65s in Wales live:

Table 3 – Illustrative Example of Forum Funding

Annual Grants
Caerphilly – nil
Rhondda Cynon Taf - £5,000
Vale of Glamorgan - £4,000
Cardiff – nil
Newport - nil

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15. In a few instances, Forums are supported through contracts with the 3rd sector commissioned by their Councils. This model has some positive features and potential to achieve wider linkages and engagement of older people in developments locally. However, a constraint on this possibility is the level of funding provided particularly if it only allows for basic administration. It also requires the continued involvement and interest from the Council if it is to work to the benefit of older people.

16. There is evidence of a long- standing commitment by individuals in a number of Forums across Wales to their role, however some have felt they have been left abandoned by their Council or left to "wither on the vine" with reducing levels of support.

"Given the previous contribution from the Forum and its volunteers that has been made locally, the reduction of support by the Council is "throwing baby out with the bath water".

17. Steering Groups have been established to lead and manage most Forums. In a few examples these have been formed as an Older People's Council and actively involved in consultation, challenge and scrutiny by their local Councils. Inevitably with the age profile of these groups, some have been weakened by people leaving due to ill-health or caring responsibilities. These Steering Groups (or Older People's Council in some areas) are pivotal in a successful Forum and we identified a clear need to strengthen their membership through more recruitment effort, both directly and as result of retirement programmes e.g. in Councils. Identifying leaders and succession planning are particular challenges.

18. Whilst the involvement of an Older People's Champion in some Forums continues, this is often not with the same level of involvement anymore and a number of Forums no longer see their Champion at meetings. There was a call for the role to be re-launched and fresh guidance provided about its duties and expectations.

19. Priority issues are identified by most Forums. These are often driven by local issues e.g. GPs, hospitals. Care homes, transport etc. There are also wider issues examined by some Forums that are of national concern for older people. These are generally in line with those promoted by the Commissioner for Older People and Age Cymru.

20. Communications by Forums through Web sites, Facebook, Newsletters etc is rather variable and dependant on individuals with the necessary skills and interest being available locally. In particular, there are only a handful of Forums who have vibrant and up to date websites and Facebook pages – see Annex 2.

21. A number of Forums reported linkages with smaller local groups to good effect e.g. local stroke association, sheltered accommodation, local churches, community groups etc. This model would appear to have potential for replication and to support agendas for addressing isolation and loneliness, digital exclusion, intergenerational tensions etc.

22. Despite the divergent levels of support for Forums across Wales, there are still a number of examples where the arrangements in place with the local authority are reasonably strong and have potential for revitalisation. Examples of engagement including older people who are not usually involved provide a template for others. (Annex 3). There are also some examples where the local Forum has led innovative developments to benefit their locality including intergenerational projects, as well as others addressing well-being, digital inclusion, isolation and loneliness (Annex 3). A number of these have benefited from National Lottery and other independently sourced funding. The impact of these projects will need to be evaluated in due course but this model of Forum activity has potential to add value and be replicated in other Forums, if the good practice can be shared.

23. A particular focus of some Forums in recent years has been inter-generational work, especially involving schools and care homes (Annex 3). In previous years when support was stronger, many Forums were involved in this beneficial activity that helps bring generations together.

24. Since March 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, Forums have not been able to meet on a face to face basis. Whilst there are a few examples of virtual meetings being undertaken this is not widespread or easy to arrange in the absence of Council support and generally limited digital skills amongst most Forum Steering Groups. There were concerns expressed about the impact of

this situation on the future of Forums and whether they would "disappear" or be able to recommence with sufficient involvement.

25. The role of COPA in supporting and informing Forums was seen as important and improving. In particular the increased involvement of Voting Members by COPA including regular virtual meetings and notifications e.g. on Covid was welcomed. Further development of this support was called for including the sharing of practice between Forums including guidance on "how to get started". Improved COPA communications were recognised but the greater awareness and use of the enhanced website and Facebook is required. The key features of the actions that COPA were asked to undertake for Forums is summarised in the Development Framework at Annex 1.

5. Conclusions

26. There are a wide variety of arrangements across Wales for 50+ Forums that amount to unfair and unequal access to local representation for older people. Despite this, there are still examples of Forums at County level proving the effectiveness of this model of engagement and undertaking innovative work. If these approaches were strengthened and replicated consistently across Wales, it could make a real difference in the post Covid-19 period and provide a catalyst for the creation of Age Friendly Communities (AFCs) and more intergenerational projects.

27. Whilst the need for local determination and flexibility to meet divergent circumstances is acknowledged, the wide range of approaches and differences across Wales produces unacceptable inequalities in meeting the legislative and policy framework for engagement in Wales (Table 4). As has happened in other areas of central policy in Wales (e.g. Social Services, Carers, Autism) the model for 50+ Forums in Wales should be stronger and produce more consistent outcomes for older people. The role of Older People's Champions should be re-launched as part of that process.

28. We believe that engagement with older people including reformed 50+ Forums should be positioned as part of the well-being agenda and the early intervention and prevention requirements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Our findings and in particular the examples of innovative practice at Annex 3 demonstrate that Forums could practically contribute to the delivery of these principles and responses by Councils.

29. This model of engagement requires a national voice to co-ordinate the local voice of older people in Forums. This should continue to be in the form of a reformed Cymru Older People's Alliance as the only national organisation for older people in Wales that does not include retired Trade Union representative bodies in its membership.

30. In progressing an agenda of reform and revitalisation for 50+ Forums, it will be important to take into account the legislative and policy framework that has been published in Wales. Summary of the key features is set out at Table 4.

31. A number of Forums have engaged with other smaller local groups to good effect e.g. local stroke association, sheltered accommodation, local churches, community groups etc and it would be useful to examine how these linkages can be extended and strengthened consistently in all Forums. Isolation and Loneliness in particular could be tackled through this route. GDPR barriers to access to databases to be able to contact these groups need to be addressed in a practical manner.

32. Welsh Government should establish a clear and consistent all Wales policy for 50+ Forums. We want to see an end to the post code lottery of access to engagement for older people and piece-meal dismantling of the 50+ Forum Structures by Councils. The dilution of the independence and strength of older people's voice locally - by reducing or withdrawing support or amalgamating them with other community interest groups – should be halted.

33. Continuing to let Forums "wither on the vine" is not an acceptable. Government policy position – a clear rationale for local engagement of older people and accompanying policy should be established urgently so that Forums are fit for purpose to provide self-determined, independent and co-ordinated challenge to Councils and Government.

34. In the future, no specific age definition for engagement should be used, particularly as we are aiming for an "Ageing Society". In moving towards responses to an Ageing Society, the guiding principle on Forums should be encouragement of individuals who want to contribute rather than their age. The generic title 'older people's Forums/Councils without any age definition would be a better approach.

35. There is further work to be completed on creating Age- Friendly Communities in Wales which COPA could support and help facilitate but it is not a model that should replace Forums. Indeed, Forums could if revitalised, play an important role in supporting the implementation of a policy of local AFCs and help make it a reality. Council engagement in the creation of AFCs should not attempt to replace the role of Forums and the independent challenge they provide. Indeed, if Councils want to achieve recognition under the World Health Organisation Framework for Age-Friendly Communities then improved engagement with their local 50+ Forum would appear to be required.

36. There is a clear agenda of work for COPA to take forward in improving its engagement of Forums across Wales including regular communications and

involvement, ensuring a two-way channel of meaningful dialogue, sharing good practice and developing it, supporting Forums to apply for grants etc (see Annex 1). Whilst strategic direction and more consistency is needed from governments at Wales and local levels, this is an agenda that must be owned and driven by older people themselves on a basis of self-determination. Momentum is needed to take forward these actions to better facilitate and support Forums so that they can make a positive contribution to reconstruction post Covid-19 and help in creating Age-Friendly Communities including increased intergenerational activity, across all of Wales.

37. The case for regional 50+ Forums should continue to be rejected. Welsh Government agreed in 2019 that COPA no longer needed to create Regional Forums as specified in its 2017 Constitution, as their policy is now creating Age Friendly Communities. There are fundamental problems with this model that remain i.e. purpose, added value, undermining of local Forums, development capacity for and costs of Regional Forums.

38. Some Forums consider wider national issues of concern to older people e.g. Digital Inclusion, Intergenerational Practice, Isolation and Loneliness, Ageing Well. If reformed, Forums can play a continuing and enhanced role in contributing to how these Wales-wide policies are implemented. However, examples of where these wider issues are tackled locally through a funded project would seem to have more immediacy and practical impact (see Annex 3) and the potential for replication across Wales should be considered.

39. In light of the recent renewed focus on Intergenerational Solidarity and the establishment of a Welsh Parliament Cross Party Group on this issue, the role and potential of Forums to help support this agenda should be maximised, building on recent, as well as, legacy examples.

40. Our findings have confirmed that despite the very uneven picture of how local 50+ Forums operate and are supported across Wales, there is good evidence (see Annex 3) that this model of engagement can be successful again and make a meaningful contribution if a programme of reform and revitalisation is taken forward with direction and support from Welsh Government and Councils, but essentially led and driven by older people in COPA and Forums.

TABLE 4 - ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICPATION OF OLDER PEOPLE – POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Declaration of Rights of Older People in Wales (2013)
I have the right to work, develop, participate and contribute My life does not come to an end because I have reached a certain age. I have a right to work. I have a right to full involvement in my own community. I have a right to thrive and to continue learning, developing and growing. I have a right to support so I can continue contributing. I have a right to explore new things.
http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageism/declaration-of-the-rights-of-older-people.aspx

United Nations Principles on Older Persons

Participation

7. Older persons should remain integrated in society, participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.

8. Older persons should be able to seek and develop opportunities for service to the community and to serve as volunteers in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities.

9. Older persons should be able to form movements or associations of older persons.

http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r091.htm

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
When exercising functions under the Act in relation to adults who need care and support and adult carers who need support, any persons exercising functions under the Act must have due regard to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 16th December 1991.
https://socialcare.wales/hub/home

Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Duty on Public Bodies

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves

To ensure transparent, open and honest public services, that people can feel a part of, you should ensure that you use a variety of accessible, inclusive engagement methods and formats, including online and offline. This provides opportunities for the public to get involved in and shape their services and the decisions that affect them.

https://www.futuregenerations.wales/aotp/involvement/

National Principles for Engagement in Wales

These principles were developed by Participation Cymru and endorsed by the First Minister on behalf of the Welsh Government in March 2011

1. Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference Engagement gives a real chance to influence policy, service design and delivery from an early stage.

2. Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose. The people affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or as part of a group or community, with their views both respected and valued.

3. Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way. The engagement process is clear, communicated to everyone in a way that's easy to understand within a reasonable timescale and the most suitable method/s for those involved is used.

4. Work with relevant partner organisations. Organisations should communicate with each other and work together wherever possible to ensure that people's time is used effectively and efficiently.

5. The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable People are well placed to take part in the engagement process because they have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs.

6. Make it easier for people to take part People can engage easily because any barriers for different groups of people are identified and addressed.

7. Enable people to take part effectively Engagement processes should try to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants.

8. Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective Appropriate training, guidance and support are provided to enable all participants to effectively engage, including both community participants and staff.

9. People are told the impact of their contribution Timely feedback is given to all participants about the views they expressed or decisions or actions taken as a result; methods and form of feedback should take account of participants' preferences.

10. Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement People's experience of the process of engagement should be monitored and evaluated to measure its success in engaging people and the effectiveness of their participation; lessons should be shared and applied in future engagements.
https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/publications/guidance/14-07-01/Best_Practice_Guidance_for_Engagement_and_Consultation_with_Older_People_on_Changes_to_Community_Services_in_Wales.aspx

6. Recommendations

41. In the light of the findings and conclusions reached in this report, the following recommendations are made:

I. A new clear policy direction should be introduced by Welsh Government to ensure that the independent, self-determined and coordinated voice of older people' Forums continues to be heard at national and local level in the future on a consistent basis.

II. As society recovers from the pandemic in 2021, co-ordinated support (including from COPA and Councils) should be provided to facilitate a consistent "re-start" for Forums across Wales so that they can provide an effective contribution to reconstruction post Covid-19 and to the establishment of Age Friendly Communities and increased intergenerational activity.

III. Engagement with older people including action to reform 50+ Forums should be positioned as part of the well-being agenda and the early intervention and prevention requirements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and contribute to effective responses by Councils.

IV. A consistent framework of funding and support for Forums should be agreed that provides for fair and equal access to local representation for older people. This should recognise the prevailing circumstances and be based around small level funding, support in-kind and facilitating grant applications by Forums to a variety of funding sources.

V. A refreshed policy of effective Older People's Champions with updated Guidance on role and expectations and support should be promulgated to ensure Champions play an active and constructive role in all Forums in Wales.

VI. A new model of National Standards for Older People's Forums in Wales (draft at Annex 4) should be discussed and agreed that establish a consistent guide and expectation of both what Forums will do and how they will be supported on an equal basis by Councils in Wales including arrangements for sharing information.

VII. 50+ Forums should be supported to develop their role with smaller local groups on a more consistent and purposeful basis across Wales, particularly to address isolation and loneliness. Barriers to progress from GDPR should be addressed.

VIII.   COPA working with Voting Members should devise a Recruitment Campaign to find a new intake of Forum members and in particular to identify transitional leaders in localities where that is required. The campaign should be designed at a national level but be capable of adaptation for relevant use locally.

IX.   The programme of work that COPA has commenced to improve its engagement with local Forums should be continued and intensified including taking the "buddying scheme" to its next stage. Regular engagement of Voting Members and improvements to communications should also be undertaken. Visits to Forums should commence when it is safe to do so.

X.   A programme should be developed by COPA to increase funding to the Charity and Forums through Grant applications to a variety of sources independent of local and national Government. Guidance and support for Forums should be made available to facilitate the process.

XI.   COPA should examine how best to facilitate the replication of current innovative projects undertaken by some Forums so that they can be utilised by other Forums across Wales if they had a "how to get started" Guide.

XII.   Research should be undertaken by COPA on how elsewhere in the UK key priorities such as isolation and loneliness, inter-generational practice, digital inclusion and well-being are addressed at a local level and practical examples shared with Forums.

XIII.   COPA working with Age Cymru and Voting Members should examine how the "Help the Aged Forum Resource Manual" could be updated and made relevant to the 2020s. Digital web-based publication should be considered.

XIV.   The Forum Development Framework (Annex 1) agreed by the Board of Trustees on 23 October 2020 should be discussed with key partners and further enhanced. A timely implementation programme should be agreed and progressed with momentum. A monitoring and evaluation process for these reforms should also be introduced to ensure effective outcomes are achieved.

Annex 1

THE FUTURE OF OLDER PEOPLES FORUMS IN WALES – A FRAMEWORK FOR REFORM

1. Following consideration by the COPA Board of Trustees and Voting Members, we have written to Welsh Government Ministers with a series of recommendations about the reform and revitalisation of Older People's Forums in Wales. We have asked for Government to provide a clear policy direction for Forums.

2. This paper sets out the Board's initial proposals about what "reform and revitalisation" of Forums might look like. It is important we are able to articulate realistic plans and proposals about what we want to see happen. The framework below is set out as a basis for further development.

3. As a starting point we can all acknowledge that the Covid-19 pandemic and pre-existing austerity will have a significant impact on availability of public monies for at least the next 5 years. Whilst, therefore we must be realistic about our expectations and demands for support, it does not mean that we should "give up" or wait to see what lies ahead without any planning. It is essential that if COPA and the Forums are to be able to play a part in post Covid-19 reconstruction that we look to plan to reform and revitalise Forums starting now so that they can contribute effectively next year and beyond.

Proposal	Details	Action
1. A Welsh Government policy that provides the basis for consistent outcomes from and support to Forums	• Ministers letter to Council leaders • Guidance from Welsh Government • National Standards for Forums • A funding scheme to give a level playing field of small-scale and in-kind support for Forums by Councils	Welsh Government/WLGA/COPA
2. A refreshed policy of effective Older	• Guidance on role and expectations • Identification of committed	Welsh Government/WLGA/COPA

People's Champions	- Champions in each Council - Support mechanism for Champions - Links to each Forum established	
3. Forums provide support for creation of Age Friendly Communities (AFCs)	- Strategy for an Ageing Society published - Commissioner's launch of AFC programme - Further Advice to Forums on how to support development of AFCs - Clear role for Forums in local development work on AFCs	Welsh Government/Commissioner/COPA
4. Forums support local Covid-19 recovery plan	- Dialogue with COP and other national organisations on reconstruction plan re Older People - Regular feedback to Voting Members - Utilise Covid-19 Survey Findings - Advice on potential role of Forums in recovery and dialogue with Councils	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer
5. Recruitment Campaign to find new Forum members	- Identify transitional leaders - Design a national campaign that can be used locally - Consult with Forums, CVCs etc - Launch campaign with Comms Strategy	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer

6. Improved Engagement of Forums by COPA	• Finalise Mapping Report on Forums • Further develop "buddying" arrangements • Regular Voting Members meetings • Refreshed Website/Facebook • Visits to Forums (post Covid)	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer
7. Increase funding to COPA and Forums through Grant applications	• Advice from experienced Forums re making grant applications • Hold discussions with National Lottery and other potential funders • Pilot scheme of COPA supporting local Forums or coordinating all-Wales applications for project funding	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer
8. Replicate current innovative projects to Forums	• Identify/describe innovative Forum projects • Share with other Forums • Produce "How to get started" guide	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer
9. Develop a suite of good practice for Forums	• Identify key areas e.g. inter-gen, isolation/loneliness, digital inclusion, well being • Research practice examples in UK • Share in easy format	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer
10. Develop Resource Manual for Forums (including 9 and 8 above)	• Revisit and update 2007 Help the Aged Forum Resource Manual • Working Group to develop	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer

	• Web Publication and follow up support	
11. Monitoring and Evaluation of Reform Programme	• Methodology established • COPA/Forum Group set up to monitor • Periodic reporting	COPA/Forum Chairs/Age Cymru Development Officer

4. Whilst this is an ambitious programme of reform and revitalisation that can readily be described, it is another matter to ensure it is implemented. The Framework in the table above presents a substantial programme of work that would need to be prioritised, timetabled over a reasonable period, resourced and in particular the capacity found to take it forward. This will need full involvement of the Board to be implemented and other volunteers to support the process would be required. The successful reform of Forums in Wales will only be achieved if it is undertaken on a co-productive basis with others such as Voting Members (initial discussion held on 16 October), as well as Welsh Government, Office of the Older People's Commissioner, Age Cymru and of course with Councils themselves. Further consideration of implementation planning will be needed in the light of the response from Welsh Government. The dialogue about how the Framework is taken forward may well reveal additional actions that are required.

5. Trustees have agreed that this Development Framework should be utilised as a basis for dialogue with Welsh Government and other key partners to move forward this agenda.

Cymru Older People's Alliance

23 October 2020

Annex 2

Web Sites - Local Older People's Forums and Groups

Local 50+ Forums and Groups have been established by, but independent of, each County Council across Wales. Some Forums have local area Forums as well. The structure, strength, support for and activity of the Forums and groups varies widely dependent on local circumstances and local Council policy. Some will have websites but others do not. Some are up to date but others are not. A few are independent whilst others are part of the local council or supporting charity web content. Examples are:

Independent Web sites

https://www.caerphillyover50.co.uk/

https://carmarthenshire50.org.uk/50-Forum/

http://www.fiftyplusForumrct.co.uk/

https://www.vale50plus.org/

https://50plusflintshire.co.uk/

http://www.webster.uk.net/In-the-Community/Torfaen-Older-Peoples-Forum/Home.aspx

Supported Web Sites

https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Health-and-social-care/Adults-and-older-people/Older-persons/Pages/Older-persons.aspx

https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/merthyr-tydfil-50plus-Forum/

http://www.ceredigion50.org.uk/en/about-ceredigion-50/

https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/social-care-whats-available/full-of-life-at-50-plus

https://swansea.gov.uk/50plus

https://www.npt.gov.uk/1673

https://www.ageconnectsmorgannwg.org.uk/older-peoples-Forums

https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/events/event-details/news/blaenau-gwent-50-Forum/

https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/2015/09/council-hosts-residents-over-50s-Forum/over-50s/

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/powys/activities-and-events/Forums/

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/gwyneddamon/activities-and-events/Forums/

http://www.ageconnectsnwc.org/en/Forums/

Annex 3

Cymru Older People's Alliance – Reform of Forums in Wales

Examples of Innovative Projects in 50+ Forums in Wales

Caerphilly

Virtual Reality Project - Inside – Outside A Virtual Reality project that will support those who have not been able to get outside through the coronavirus pandemic. Residents in care homes, particularly, will be able to take virtual visits to a wide range of interesting locations. These would cover iconic sites, such as the Botanical Gardens and the Museum of Welsh Life (St Fagan's), through to local areas that may bring back memories or anywhere of general interest. We will also 'take' our audience to venues where we film entertaining events e.g. an Elvis Tribute act

https://www.caerphillyover50.co.uk/vr-filming-begins/

https://www.caerphillyover50.co.uk/elvis-tribute/

Poetry Together – an innovative intergenerational project that brings together schools, care homes and older people to recite poetry and learn from one another

https://www.caerphillyover50.co.uk/poetry-together-part-2/

https://www.caerphillyover50.co.uk/poetry-together/

Chatty Cafes

Working with local venues to provide an informal opportunity for people who are lonely to have a coffee and a chat at a designated table that has a sign welcoming people to interact with others

https://www.caerphillyover50.co.uk/chatty-cafe/

Carmarthenshire

Walking Well Carmarthenshire - providing guided walking opportunities for walks, these tend to be up to an hour long but can be shorter if that is required. Some of thew walks focus on wildlife watching and others on litter picking and keeping areas of beauty clean and tidy.

West Wales Walking for Wellbeing - this is a project in conjunction with Pembrokeshire National Parks and Ceredigion Council this is designed for people with health issues, low fitness levels and walks can be very short, walks can also be socially prescribed.
https://carmarthenshire50.org.uk/4w/

Reconnecting - this is an online project which aims to reconnect generations of people and also people in general, many people have been isolated during lockdown and we have developed this scheme to help those people where we can. We offer, befriending calls, a weekly online chat session for all on a Sunday evening, craft sessions, information sessions, mental health awareness and coping sessions, exercise sessions and some session that are pure entertainment. We started in mid-August with 1 1 hour session a week and now regularly do 3 sessions a week, all are welcome to attend and take part.

https://carmarthenshire50.org.uk/reconnecting/

Your Group Your Way - this is a project that has been a long-term aim of 50+ Carms, we have tried in the lockdown gaps to get a few people together but it has not been possible. I have volunteers ready to get started in 3 areas as soon as we can and we hope to grow from there. Each group will be assisted by a volunteer but will run itself and hopefully after a while will become self-financing. Each group will decide for itself what it's wants and needs are and 50+ will facilitate those needs - where possible.

Bytes and bites. Carmarthenshire 50+ Forum has been funded to run a cross-generational community project across locations in Carmarthenshire to connect people who are 50+ with local young people to share learning and skills. The aim is to enrich lives, improve health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation and digital exclusion. We hope to revive this scheme as soon as possible and have young people teaching older folks how to use their technology.

https://carmarthenshire50.org.uk/bytes-and-bites/

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Public Toilets – a survey about the Council Public Toilet Strategy

http://www.fiftyplusForumrct.co.uk/news

Active Mind Active Body', this event was organised by the officers of the Rhondda Cynon Taf 50+ Forums whose aim was to bring the 5 Forums together to get information and advice from the many stallholders and also to try some new activities such as Pickleball and Tai Chi.

Pembrokeshire

Our Forum realised our numbers were quite small and so decided to form an Older People's Network in Pembrokeshire. This has been welcomed by organisations throughout the county. It helps our 50+ to know what is available for older people

and for the organisations to become familiar with us. The Network meets bi-monthly and reports to the Council's Older People's Strategy Committee.

Anglesey/Ynys Mon

The Forum is held four times a year. Between 45-60 members attend with representation from most of the Island's geography. There is also an Anglesey Older People Council meeting – also meeting up on a quarterly basis – this is more strategic in nature with around 12-15 in attendance.

The main role is to give older people a voice, and give them information about current and prospective changes/ developments in local services by a range of speakers (but we only invite two speakers to each session – to ensure that attendees are given time and opportunity to ask questions and participate in discussions).

Speakers are invited on the basis of requests that we get from attendees. At the end of every session, we allow time for members to share good practices / concerns.

Light lunch is provided for members and this allows for networking and the opportunity to ask questions or voice opinions to speakers (as some are not confident enough to do this in public).

The meetings are bi-lingual. Speakers/presenters and participants use their language of choice. A translator works at every meeting. This is effective and inclusive. A strong feature of our Forum meetings.

The Digital Inclusion Project, Creation of Hubs and the Push to Talk initiative demonstrate that Anglesey continues to develop this work during the crisis and is looking forward to Post Covid - maintaining momentum.

Vale of Glamorgan

Vale 50 plus organised a "Debate of the Age" where representatives of both young and older people formed a panel to debate a range of issues relevant to society and ageing. It was a well-attended and successful event

Vale 50 plus have established four sub groups each with their own chair. These groups are.

- Health, Transport, Arts, Culture

The Sub groups meet every 2 months. The Executive group meets 10 times annually (made up of 16members)

Information Days

Annual Information Days are organised by Councils and 50+ Forums in both Newport and Flintshire. These attract significant numbers of attendees including many older people.

Annex 4

DRAFT NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUMS AND GROUPS IN WALES

National Standards for Forums/Groups

These Draft National Standards set out the expectation and commitment needed for the operation of local Forums and groups for older people at the County level in Wales. They set out the governance, organisational and main activities of Forums/groups with the aim of raising standards and establishing consistency across the Wales so older people everywhere can participate on an equal basis and influence decisions that impact on their lives. They are meant to provide National Standards for Forums which would need to be implemented taking account of local circumstances and needs.

- Purpose – as an independent organisation, promote the interests, participation and engagement of older people in each County Borough and provide them with an opportunity to express, publicise and present their views, opinions or complaints. Promote the creation of Age Friendly Communities in Wales.

- Constitution – agree a straightforward Constitution to ensure good governance of the Forum/Group.

- Appoint Forum Officers – appoint officers to provide leadership to the Forum which is administered by a Steering Group. All executive powers of the Forum are exercised through the Steering Group voting members.

- Meetings – hold regular meetings of the Steering Group that are minuted and invite participation by the Council and Third Sector organisations and others on an observer status. Hold an AGM.

- Membership – promote and seek contributions to the Forum/group by registering for Membership, residents in the County to make it possible for the Forum/Group to contact them directly to provide information or seek their opinion. Keep a register of members in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1988.

- Communications – raise awareness of the Forum/Group and provide information and guidance relevant to older people through a website, social media, written form, leaflets etc or through contributions to other organisations.

- Projects – undertake (subject to funding and/or support) local projects in partnership with others to improve the lives of older people including intergenerational work.

- Finance - Raise funds, receive grants and donations, apply for funds to carry out the work of the organisation.

- Partnership - Co-operate with and support other groups with similar purposes. liaise with Council officers and elected members, and statutory bodies, as appropriate, to promote the aims of the Forum.

- Consultation - comment on various policy and other documents from national and local government and related bodies so the Forum's voice is heard.

- National Representation - Act as the fulcrum in the 2-way exchange of opinions and information between Forums members and COPA to ensure the views of older people in local Forums are represented nationally and issues for older people that may have a national significance are raised.

- Cymru Older People's Alliance - participate in the democratic processes of COPA- the national voice for local Forums/groups - including appointing representatives who attend AGMs, periodic meetings and participate in fulfilling the aims of the charity.

Draft National Standards for the Support of Local Older People's Forums and Groups

These draft Standards set out a minimum requirement of Councils to ensure vibrant and successful engagement of older people through representative Forums/Groups is achieved on a consistent and equal basis across Wales.

- Coordinating Support by Councils is provided through close partnership working with the Forum/Group officers to meet statutory duties for the engagement of older people and to create Age Friendly Communities. Facilitate contributions from across relevant Departments to ensure the interests of older people are recognised and reflected in relevant policies and services.

- Funding – provide small scale funding to enable the Forum/Group to achieve its ambitions on a basis of reciprocity in recognition of the benefits and added value the Forums/Group provide in respect of supporting Council objectives.

- Attendance by Council officers by Department is arranged as relevant to the agenda of the Forum/Group and that they receive appropriate information to help achieve an effective dialogue.

- Attendance by the Older People's Champion, Councillors is facilitated on a regular basis, ensuring they are appropriately briefed to contribute effectively.

- Partnership – ensure that a coherent contribution is made to Forums/Groups by facilitating the contribution of other relevant Council groups such as Carer's, dementia, healthy living etc and through communication networks.

- Projects - Joint working with Forums/Groups on projects that have mutual benefit and promote both the work of the Council and the Forum/Group e.g. inter-generational, Care Homes, Sheltered Accommodation, Safeguarding, ageism, loneliness and isolation etc

- Accommodation – provide or facilitate the availability of a room and related support for meetings of Forums/Groups where required.

- Support for special events is provided where feasible e.g. AGMs, conferences and seminars etc.

- Advice and training e.g. Information Technology, website, social media is provided where feasible to promote digital inclusion of older people in the County.

- Ownership of the member database by the Forum is recognised and supported to ensure compliance with GDPR.

Annex 5
COPA Register of Voting Members October 2020.

Caerphilly	**Ralph Stevens** **Steve Milsom**
Pembrokeshire	**Gaynor Davies** **Ken Davies**
Flintshire	**Roy Davies** **Barry Harrison**
Bridgend	**Geoff Cheetham**
Torfaen	**Brian Price**
Vale of Glamorgan	**Lynda Wallis** **Gilly Davies**
Cardiff	**Lyn Finn** **Huw Bendall**
Neath Port Talbot	**Clive Owen**
Gwynedd	**Sue Jones** **John Owen**
Conwy	**Sylvia Challinor** **Cynthia Clarke**
Swansea	**Hazel Maguire**
RCT	**Angela Tritschler** **Lynda Corre**
Wrexham	
Anglesey	**Yvonne Owen** **Penny Welsby**
Powys	
Newport	**Keith Wood**
Monmouth	
Denbighshire	
Ceredigion	
Blaenau Gwent	**Alun Lewis** **Judy Phipps**
Merthyr	**Brian Lewis** **Ceinwen Statter**
Carmarthenshire	**Karen Evans** **Denise Kingsley**

This report was produced by Cymru Older People's Alliance (Reg. Charity no. 1174518)

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