

INFLUENCING MANIFESTOS ON BEHALF OF OLDER PEOPLE' FORUMS IN WALES

COVID-19 Recovery for Older People

1. 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 Strong Strategic Direction

2. **A resourced Strategy for an Ageing Society in Wales** should continue to drive forward the agenda to “make Wales a great place to grow old” on an all-party basis. The Strategy for an Ageing Society should be a significant step forward but it must be ambitious and strategically focussed. **There needs to be extensive consultation with older people before it is finalised** and especially in its implementation.

Engagement and Participation of Older People

3. **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 by Welsh Government and Councils to be able to make an impact on an equal and fair basis. A clear policy for the future of Forums and for the effective engagement of older people must be implemented.** We want to see continued support for the National Older People's Organisations in Wales. Collaborative working by all to achieve the mission of “Wales is a great place to grow old” is the only way forward. A programme is needed to ensure very local groups who provide vital early intervention and prevention services for older people are supported and also reach those who are not normally engaged. A new Welsh Government Strategy for Inter-generational Practice is needed to demonstrate fairness across the generations. **Most importantly sufficient funding to enable our Commissioner for Older People to undertake her role effectively is essential.**

Human Rights, Discrimination and Abuse

4. The implementation of the Equalities Act 2010 has failed older people. 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

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through **robust new legislation for all groups with protected characteristics, that is at least the equivalent of the Children's Measure** and its supporting Regulations. Meaningful action must be taken to ensure that the rights of older people across Wales are upheld, particularly for those who may be vulnerable or need care and support. This must include raising awareness of rights both amongst the public and staff who look after older people. **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

5. We want to see the **creation of Age Friendly Communities across Wales** which recognise and celebrate diversity, brings people together to challenge ageism and ensure that all ages can fully participate in community life. This should take account of the need to develop Dementia Friendly Communities and meet the World Health Organisation 3 Themes and 8 Domains for age-friendly communities. This concept should be developed and supported by Councils and Health Boards in Wales but should not supplant the need for older people to have a strong, independent voice through Forums. **We want Age Friendly Communities (AFCs) to be recognised as an essential starting point to ensuring that the civil and human rights of older people can be upheld. The Ageing Well in Wales programme should also be given full support** to further develop and reach its potential to ensure an active old age for all older people in Wales. Many older people in Wales are also disabled including sight and hearing impaired and action to ensure good access to community facilities and resourcing them to help older people live independently is essential.

From these key strategic aims we want to see the following key policies introduced and implemented.

Social Care

6. The full implementation of the **Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in respect of older people must be accelerated through a new funding model that provides the resources for Councils to meet their duties and to go further to meet best practice standards.** Care Homes and Domiciliary Care services provide vital support to over 60,000 vulnerable older people in Wales and must be given greater priority, support and funding to be efficient and cost effective and **provide high quality person-centred care and support to older people at all times.** Councils must be funded to support older people to live independently at home for as long as possible. Early intervention and prevention must be available consistently across Wales. **We want seamless health and**

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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

Fair Funding of Social Care

7. In respect of Funding and 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. **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.** It is not right that because you develop one medical condition such as dementia over another, you can be left facing care costs of £100,000s. We want this issue to be dealt with urgency – older people do not have time to wait any longer. Self-funders in care homes are cross subsidising council funded residents and this must be addressed. Top Up fees are sometimes being paid or families put under pressure to pay - when they should not be and this practice must be brought into line with the statutory requirements. **We want robust and radical change to the Paying for Care arrangements so that they are based on key principles of equity and fairness – whatever financial model is utilised. We also want a new approach to ensure that Social Care in Wales is properly funded.** A clear and transparent timetable with commitment to action from the earliest possible date should be agreed on a cross-party basis and involving older people's representatives from the outset.

High Quality Health Service for Older People

8. 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. Waiting times for appointments for very old people should be minimised. NHS Financial Planning should take account of the impact of demographic trends transparently. **Mental Health services for older people whatever their age is vital and should be accessible and of high quality. Improvements and priority for these services must be implemented**

Support for Carers

9. The majority of unpaid Carers are also older people. The significant contribution they make must be recognised and the support they receive improved. They should not be put at a financial disadvantage because they have undertaken a caring role. **A specific fund to deliver the well-being of carers is required.**

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Carers must always receive their legal right to an assessment and where required also have their identified needs met.

Reliable and Integrated Transport

10. 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 and we oppose any increase of the age of eligibility to pension age.**

Digital Inclusion

11. **Improvement of Digital inclusion of Older People** through learning and support is needed. We want to see an **end to age discrimination through digital exclusion by default** – by statutory organisations as well as businesses, ensuring ready access to consultations, application processes and complaint procedures that are not only available on-line but also paper-based. If Public Services are to be run on-line then publicly funded access to the internet on a means tested basis would remove barriers to digital inclusion as well as access to user-friendly digital devices for those who cannot afford them.

Action to combat Isolation and Loneliness

12. Isolation and Loneliness has an adverse impact on the health and lives of over 75,000 of older people in Wales. The Welsh Government must give **a high priority to tackling isolation and loneliness amongst older people and lead to the funding of practical solutions at a community level**. Access to independent professional advocacy must be guaranteed for vulnerable older people. Community Groups should be supported to help the “hardest to reach” older people in Wales. 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.

Housing to meet needs of Ageing Society

13. Housing should be fit for all older people whatever their circumstances. **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

14. 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**. 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 sustainable employment, retirement planning as well as help for change of career for older workers.

Environment, Community Safety and Cohesion

15. 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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