



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing meeting: 5 May 2020 session 1

Minutes from the first session of the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing meeting held on 10am to 11am 05 May 2020.

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Contents

Present

Strategy for an Ageing Society

Wider impact of Covid-19

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Present (via Teams)

- Barry Stephens (BS), Active Wales
- Aileen Haskell (AH), Civil Service Pensioners Alliance
- Bob Dutton OBE (BD), Pensioners Forum Wales
- Vicki Lloyd (VL), Chair of MAFA
- Rachel Lewis (RL), Welsh Government
- Emma Harney (EH), Welsh Government

Item 1. WG update on the Strategy for an Ageing Society

VL welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed her sadness at the death of Phyllis Preece. Phyllis was such a prominent member of MAFA and it is going to be very sad without her.

RL explained that due to the coronavirus pandemic a lot of government work has been put on hold in order to focus on the emergency response.

By way of progress update RL confirmed that just before the outbreak, our team were about to launch the public consultation for the Strategy for an Ageing Society. Prior to Covid-19 the strategy had undergone considerable scrutiny throughout government, including challenge sessions with the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services. As a result of this, the team were confident that we had a strong consultation document to present to the public. The pandemic then hit and as we are based in social services we had to reposition in order to take forward Covid-related work.

Our team is still working on older people and carers policy, however, and even though we have had to refocus our efforts more from the Covid angle, RL

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confirmed that we are still keen to continue our engagement with you so that we know what's happening on the ground.

RL reassured the group that we want to revisit the strategy as soon as possible. Hopefully early summer. The team will need to revisit the current document in light of the pandemic.

We will keep you up to date regularly and hope you can support us with the consultation. We will need to consider how services have changed and what they look like going forward.

2. Group discussion on wider impact of Covid-19 on organisations, older people and local services

Key points and actions

- AH said that the issue of a “blanket ban” on all over 70s not being allowed to go out urgently needs consideration.
- The Older People’s Commissioner meets weekly with the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services and Albert Heaney, Deputy Director General and RL speaks with VL on a regular basis. Reassurances were given that older people certainly haven’t been forgotten during the pandemic.
- AH said that everyone understands that these are unprecedented times and are also appreciative of the work that is being taken forward.
- BS said that he would like more information on testing and who is being tested. Also concerned about the “blanket ban” for over 70s, adding that confining older people over 70 to their own homes is not fair.
- A positive to come out of the pandemic is the goodwill of individuals and the number of people who have started volunteering; this needs to continue post-Covid. RL said that this will be something that will need to be explored

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as lots of these volunteers head back to work and will no longer have as much time as they did.

- AH said that there is a danger of negative ageist stereotyping, for example younger people having to make sacrifices for older people. RL added that the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services (DM) is aware of this issue. The DM is speaking at the online MAFA meeting at 11:30am this morning and we will share her speaking note with you.
- **Action:** EH to circulate the DM's speaking note along with the meeting notes.
- The group agreed that more co-ordination is needed between the Welsh Government and UK government. There should be more co-operation between the 4 nations as it feels like there is some political conflict.
- BS said that information around testing is critical. RL confirmed that Welsh Government has updated their "Testing: Your Questions" page on our website and we will send a link around to this.
- **Action:** EH to send link to "Testing: Your Questions" along with the note of the meeting.
- BS said that in the Rhondda Cynon Taff area volunteers are being co-ordinated locally and its currently working very well. Community councils are well placed to respond to this crisis.
- AH said that older people in her local area have been given cards to put in their window which say "Need Help" or "I'm Fine". -this should be continued post-Covid. RL added that this fits in nicely with the "Age Friendly Communities" part of the Strategy for an Ageing Society. This initiative is something that the Older People's Commissioner is taking forward and it will be interesting to see how this develops.
- There is a concern that the intergenerational work that was taking place in care homes, which was proving very successful, has had to be suspended which will ultimately lead to residents becoming more isolated.
- There needs to be more effort made to alleviate fears about attending appointments at medical centres. Some older people are very frightened about attending GP surgeries and hospital appointments for non-Covid

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conditions and need to be re-assured.

- The new technology that allows people to undertake their medical appointments seems to be working very well. However, there are fears around digital exclusion; this will make more people feel even more digitally excluded than they were previously.
- Local authorities need to receive specialist training on older people's issues, including digital exclusion. The Digital Heroes initiative which involves individuals going into care homes to train staff and residents will not be happening in the current climate. RL said that an alternative has been put into place and we will share the details with the note of this meeting.
- **Action:** EH to send information on Digital Communities Wales initiative for care homes along with the note of the meeting.
- The plans for the introduction of a TV licence fee for the over 75s has been extended until later in the year. This should be scrapped altogether. The TV is a way to get information out to older people; especially those who are digitally excluded.

The meeting ran out of time, however it was agreed that agenda item 3 (protecting the rights of older people) had been covered through the discussions.

To conclude, RL re-assured everyone that the team is still here and we are still working on your behalf. She thanked everyone for taking the time to speak to us and that we would be in touch. Please also keep in touch with us.

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