



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing meeting: 5 May 2020 session 2

Minutes from the first session of the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing meeting held on 11:30am to 12:30pm 05 May 2020.

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Present

- John Vincent (JV), Active Wales
- Professor John Williams (JW), Aberystwyth University
- Sue Husband (SH), Business in the Community
- Dr Martin Hyde (MH), Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research (CADR), Swansea University
- Dr Charles Musselwhite (CM), CADR
- Chris Jones (CJ), Care and Repair
- Steve Milsom (SM), Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA)
- Gaynor Davies (GD), Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA)
- Mark Williams (MW), LGBT Community
- Professor Saleem Kidwai (SK), Muslim Council of Wales
- Kelly Davies (KD), Older People's Commissioners Office (observer status)
- Lyn Cadwallader (LC), One Voice Wales (Town & Community Councils)
- Iestyn Wyn (IW), Stonewall Cymru
- Jane Green (JG), Welsh NHS Confederation
- Lynda Wallis (LW), Welsh Senate of Older People
- Dawn Jeffery (DJ), Welsh Women's Aid
- Stewart Blythe (SB), Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
- Amal Beyrouthy (AB), Women Connect First
- Vicki Lloyd (VL), Chair, MAFA
- Rachel Lewis (RL), Welsh Government
- Emma Harney (EH), Welsh Government
- Rachael Lovett (RL), Welsh Government
- Ben O'Halloran (BOH), Welsh Government

Apologies

- Colin Richards, National Pensioners Convention

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- Laura O’Keeffe, Race Equality First
- Claire Morgan, Wales Carers Alliance

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. She added that it was important to have the opportunity to feed issues back to the Welsh Government.

Item 1. Group discussion on wider impact of Covid-19 on organisations, older people and local services

Key points and actions

- VL welcomed the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services (DM) to the meeting.
- DM said she was pleased to join and it was great that so many people were able to attend. **See speaking note which will be circulated along with this meeting note.
- **Action:** EH to circulate speaking note along with note of meeting.
- VL said that ageism / age discrimination had just been discussed in the teleconference that was held for members who couldn’t join this video conference. There is a fear that ageist narratives would become embedded in public dialogue.
- DM explained that although older people have been advised to be particularly aware of the guidance on social distancing, WG has not imposed any restrictions based on age. Welsh Government continues to combat against stereotypes and everyone should play a part to make sure they are not more deeply ingrained.
- JW thanked the DM for taking the time to speak to the group and added that

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ensuring that age won't be a proxy for decision making will be welcomed. Older People are looking for reassurances that DM just gave.

- LW added that older people are concerned they will be inside until at least 2021. They are scared to go out but also scared of being locked up for months while others get their freedom back.
- SM spoke about the importance of the Strategy for an Ageing Society which now needs to refer to Covid-19 and recovery plans. COPA would like to support the consultation in any shape or form.
- GD said that older people are worried about whether they will get good treatment in hospital. Professionals may view them as old and not needing the best treatment.
- SK said that the biggest problem in BAME communities is loneliness. Some individuals have learnt to use social media which is positive, but not everyone can do that. There is a need to provide spaces for people who feel very lonely. There are no places where people can meet their friends. Most are living with their families. They are losing their English language skills as they are not using them because they cannot see their friends. There are also concerns for people who are living with dementia.
- AB added that there have been some cases of hate crime reported by some older BME women. She gave the example of a couple who were attacked on a bus (officials followed up the incident and confirmed that the correct action had been taken). Women in the BAME community are scared what will happen after lock down. They are scared to go shopping. It is a struggle to find food for older people with mobility problems.
- AB continued by saying that the community has a WhatsApp group of around 90 women. Some women reported lockdown has brought them closer to their family. Some are worried when families go back to normal they will lose this closeness. Others report family abuse, especially financial. There is also concern for individuals who are not getting medication that they need.
- DJ agreed that there had been an increase in domestic abuse. This is as a direct result of the pandemic with older women being trapped in their homes. Their organisation is struggling to reach them and offer support. She asked

whether we can get messaging out for women living with their families to let them know that there is help available.

- KD said that the Older People's Commissioner is working with 20 organisations (police, WEA, etc.) to deliver a coordinated approach to providing information and advice. They are reviewing what is happening, drawing attention to emerging issues. This is a new group which is working well. They are producing resources for professionals (training). There is also a role for the wider public to support and protect older people.
- VL told the group that digital exclusion came through strongly in the earlier teleconference; there is a need to ensure groups aren't left behind. There is an increased importance of the TV for information sharing. She added that the free TV license has been extended as a result of the pandemic.
- Action: EH to share both meeting notes with both groups.
- JW said that care homes were forgotten for some time during the crisis. He had concerns around health and welfare. When talking about easing lockdown, there's a worry that care homes will be forgotten.
- DM responded to the groups' discussions saying that this was an interesting and useful exchange of views. We must be determined that this pandemic does not affect the lives of older people going forward. Also, in terms of intergenerational relationships, we must not let this divide us. This has re-enforced the need to not let this episode set back the perceptions of younger people of older people. No decisions are made on age. There should be no intergenerational warfare.
- DM added that she is concerned about issues surrounding loneliness, particularly AB's point about women and issues they are facing.
- DM was very pleased to hear about the work taken forward by the OPC and the meetings between the relevant organisations.
- When responding about care homes, the DM said that this is a very important issue. They are currently in the front of people's minds and we want to keep them there. DM is pleased we were able to recognise the contribution of care home workers who receive low pay, however are doing skilled work. We are trying to recognise their work – Welsh Government has

announced a £500 bonus for care workers as a small recognition. DM said that she meets with Chair of Care Forum Wales and the Care Inspectorate once a week where they can feed back on issues and pressures. Testing and PPE are big issues that come up.

- In reference to extending / scrapping the TV license fee, DM said there may now be an opportunity to have the decision reviewed.
- RL said that she wanted to reassure everyone that the Older People and Carers Branch is still in place. The Strategy for an Ageing Society will be able to address concerns voiced today. Many aspects of the strategy will have to be reviewed to reflect the changes brought about by Covid-19 and the public consultation will be issued as soon as we are able.
- AB stressed the importance of access to digital technologies. Women Connect First started a trial in April with a WhatsApp group. There are 45 women in the group who are continuously active, sharing ideas, recipes, and jokes. This helps time pass and keeps them together. They also participate in yoga on Zoom and YouTube. It makes them feel there are people looking after them and that they are part of a community. However, they are struggling with some women who don't have Wi-Fi or laptops and they need more help.
- JW also said that the use of the radio shouldn't be forgotten as a useful platform.
- LW referred to the WI. There is a very large network across Wales and they are trying their best to help alleviate loneliness. They are volunteering and doing what they can to help others. It feels like community spirit is returning that has been lost over the years.
- RL asked whether this was a new thing and LW said that it was. They usually see individuals in person every week, but are now they are seeing what people need which has been a great help. The pandemic has exposed weaknesses and we can learn from this to make a positive change going forward.
- LW added that older people are finding it difficult to access cash or collect their pension from post office. There is a fear that people are running out of

money because they are too scared to go out.

- VL said that they have heard this a lot through the Age Cymru advice lines and as a result they are putting together some guidance and will share with RL who can send out details with the note of this meeting.
- **Action:** EH to send details of Age Cymru guidance on accessing money to group along with the note of the meeting.

Item 2. Protecting the rights of older people

Key points and actions

- RL asked the group to expand on their thoughts regarding their understanding of a “blanket ban” on over 70s being allowed out. This has already been discussed and the points are in the previous section, however does anyone have anything to add?
- RL added that due regard must be given to the United Nations Principles on Older Persons in care homes. There has been a substantial amount of work on older people’s rights which are detailed in the Strategy for an Ageing Society.
- JW said that a blanket lockdown would be illegal and a violation of human rights. Welsh Government would be open to challenge if this happened. It is a deprivation of liberty and would be resisted by many people.
- MH added that a blanket ban would be a contravention on human rights. It should be rejected at every juncture if decisions are based on age. The **British Medical Association (BMA) has also said that this would be wrong.**
- KD said that the Older People’s Commissioner has made it very clear that this would be unacceptable. She is very vocal about this and will continue to be so.

Item 3: Going forward

It was noted that due to discussions and time constraints not all agenda items were discussed, however they had been covered to some extent during the conversations.

RL asked the group to please feed through any thoughts that you may have once the meeting has ended.

RL 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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