

PROGRESS WITH THE DELIVERY PLAN FOR AGE FRIENDLY WALES: OUR STRATEGY FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS

The following provides a narrative on key areas of progress in implementing the delivery plan for our Strategy for an Ageing Society. The Older People's Rights Team leads on the strategy in collaboration with teams across Welsh Government and external partners in the statutory and voluntary sector.

Implementation of the strategy is delivered with valued support and guidance from the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing.

CREATING AND AGE FRIENDLY WALES

Age Friendly Communities - In response to the global challenge of ageing populations, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has established a Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. The Strategy for an Ageing Society recognises this Network and aspires for Wales to be age friendly, no matter where in the country you live. To support this, the Programme for Government 2021-2026, commits to fund a dedicated post in every local authority to drive forward the work of making Wales an age friendly nation.

In April 2022, the Deputy Minister for Social Services realised this commitment by announcing funding of £1.1 million to local authorities across Wales to support their work to become age friendly. This funding was to build on the foundations of the £550,000 that was awarded at the end of 2021.

The funding supports local authorities to appoint a lead officer to work with older people in their communities, planning and delivering local services that meet their needs and aspirations. Placing older people's voice and experiences at the centre of the policy making process is a key part of creating an age friendly Wales.

Every local authority in Wales submitted a workplan outlining their activity for the 2022-23 financial year. There is continuous dialogue between officials and the Age Friendly Leads to discuss how this work is progressing and what support is required. From looking across the workplans, officials have been able to identify the common themes and challenges faced by each authority.

Every local authority is considering their approach to making an application to the WHO Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. In 2022, Cardiff became the first local authority in Wales to join the network and Flintshire submitted their application in March 2023. Officials have ensured that other local authorities can

learn from the experiences of Cardiff and have facilitated online seminars to support this. Quarterly meetings are also facilitated by officials to provide an opportunity for the Age Friendly Leads to link up with each other, share ideas and good practice. Regional meetings will be held from April 2023, with the potential for neighbouring local authorities to collaborate and to progress with their activity.

The local authority workplans highlighted that more work needed to be done to identify health and wellbeing opportunities for people in their communities. In order to build connections and share good practice, officials have made connections with key sports, culture and arts bodies such as Sport Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru, The National Library and The Arts Council of Wales. From these connections we have been able to produce a briefing for the Age Friendly Leads, detailing the range of opportunities available to older people across Wales. This briefing has also included a range of examples from the Healthy and Active Fund.

The Older People's Rights Team also issues a quarterly Age Friendly Wales newsletter, informing our stakeholders of the ongoing work around creating Age Friendly cities and communities across Wales and progress with the Strategy for an Ageing Society

In May 2022, and to further strengthen Welsh Government's relationship with local authorities on the age friendly agenda, the Deputy Minister for Social Services wrote to all newly elected local councillors and asked them to consider becoming an Age Friendly Champion. The Older Person's Champion is an elected local councillor who can drive this agenda forward and act as a voice for older people in the Council Chamber.

There are currently 19 local authorities with a dedicated Older People's Champion, most of whom are already linking with the Age Friendly Leads in their local area. Welsh Government is currently looking at opportunities for the Age Friendly Champions to link up nationally and network with each other, in addition to working with their local officials.

Since 2019, the Commissioner has been working with and supporting local authorities to develop as age friendly communities and to apply for membership of the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC).

In 2021, the Commissioner joined the GNAFCC as an Affiliate Member, which allows the Commissioner to provide direct administrative support to local authorities regarding the application process and to facilitate the sharing of learning with other affiliates.

The Commissioner's Ageing Well Lead said that "the availability of funding from the Welsh Government to local authorities for age friendly engagement can enable older people, their communities and the service providers that support them to collectively play a vital role in shaping how the places that they live become more age friendly."

As a result of the development of *Age Friendly Wales: Strategy for an Ageing Society* and the commitment of £1.1 million funding to support Age Friendly Communities until 2026, work to support older people in Wales has made significant progress over the last few years. The injection of funding has re-ignited the commitment of stakeholders in Wales to ensure that Wales is a great place to grow older. The projects, initiatives, and breadth of engagement across the country, including with older people who were previously harder to reach, is impressive.

PROMOTING A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

Older People's Rights Campaign - Welsh Government funded Age Cymru to deliver a campaign to raise awareness of older people's rights through interactive workshops, online messaging, poster campaigns and advertorials in key media outlets. The initial campaign ran until August 2022; however, a toolkit has also been created so that awareness raising can continue for many years to come. 7 ambassadors have been trained to use the older people's rights toolkit by Professor John Williams who will continue to deliver workshops across Wales. Volunteers have been recruited from under-represented groups.

AIM 1: ENHANCING WELL-BEING

Unpaid Carers - since January 2022, £42m has been announced to support unpaid carers. This figure includes £29million to provide unpaid carers in receipt of Carers Allowance with a £500 payment in 2022; £4.5million to continue the Carers Support Fund until 2025 and £9million to establish the Short Breaks Fund over the next three years.

This funding is in addition to the annual funding settlement for local authorities via the Revenue Support Grant which has been uplifted in 2023-24.

In 23-24, £1million has been made available to support to unpaid carers when the person they care for is admitted to or discharged from hospital. From April 2023 this funding will be allocated via Regional Partnership Boards.

Unpaid carers are also able to access small grants and access to ongoing support via our investment in the Carers Support Fund. From this financial year, £9m over three years is being invested to establish an innovative short breaks scheme for unpaid carers on low incomes who are struggling to cope with their caring responsibilities.

The scheme will increase opportunities for unpaid carers to take a break from their caring role and have a life alongside caring. A short break is a service, support or experience, which helps an unpaid carer take time away from their caring responsibilities.

Carers Trust Wales has been appointed as the national coordinating body to establish and oversee the scheme and is working collaboratively with Regional

Partnership Boards, local authorities and the third sector across Wales to encourage innovation and promote good practice.

Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund - The Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund (RIF) is delivering a programme of change from April 2022 to March 2027. The projects are overseen by the Regional Partnership Boards and have a strong focus on supporting older people. Funded projects include community support, staying well at home, and fast track adaptations for homes.

Allied Health Professionals and GPs - Since January 2023, an additional £5 million has been committed by Welsh Government to recruit more Allied Health Professionals and improve access to community-based care. The Train Work Live campaign aims to recruit more GPs especially in areas of Wales where numbers are low, in 2022 an additional 175 GPs were recruited.

Access to GP services - The General Medical Service Access Standards are gradually being introduced so that GPs are easier to reach. This Access Commitment requires GP practices to adopt a blended model of access, offering a mix of remote, face-to-face, urgent, on-the-day and pre-bookable appointments. By March 2022 89% of GP practices had achieved the Standards, March 2023 the Standards became compulsory at the end of March 2023.

A National Care Service for Wales - The Co-operation Agreement between Labour and Plaid Cymru described a shared ambition for the creation of a National Care Service which is free at the point of need. An Expert Group was established with members from across local government, social care, trade unions and academia. Their task was to prepare a set of recommendations on practical steps that can be taken to achieve this ambition. This is with a view to agreeing an implementation plan by the end of 2023. Here is a link to the [Final Report](#)

AIM 2: IMPROVING LOCAL SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENTS.

Housing - The Housing with Care Fund is up and running, with a budget of £60.5m available to Regional Partnership Boards in 2022-23 and the same in 2023-24. Amongst the projects that focus on supporting **Independent Living** are:

- **Care & Repair:** £4.8m revenue grant, an increase of £0.5m on the previous year. The increase is to enable Care & Repair Agencies to provide additional services in relation to complex hospital discharge cases. The Care & Repair capital grant for Rapid Response Adaptations has also increased, from £1.64m in 2021-22 to £3m in 2022-23.
- **Enable:** this capital grant to local authorities increased to £6m in 2022-23 from £5m in 2021-22. The additional funding is to ensure all local authorities can provide Disabled Facilities Grants for all small and medium adaptations without applying a means test.

- **Physical Adaptations Grant:** housing associations are receiving £10.5m capital funding to provide adaptations for their tenants.

Transforming Towns Fund – funding for the development of 10 town Placemaking Plans was awarded to date in 2022-23. Placemaking is an approach to human-centred planning that relates to planning, designing and managing communities to promote people's health, happiness and well-being. The local authorities are currently working on proposals for more than 30 further settlements across Wales. Officials are collating information relating to community engagement methodologies utilised. A Position Statement is due to be published in May 2023 and a series of groups established to progress actions identified.

Transport - new legislation is being developed to reform how the bus industry is regulated and improve community transport and taxis. In Easter 2022, a White Paper which set out plans to regulate the bus industry in Wales was published. Legislative reform is the lynch pin of the Bws Cymru Strategy, and we remain on target to introduce the bill within this government term.

Officials also continue to work with the community transport sector. On 9 March we published a [white paper on the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle \(Wales\) Bill](#). Our proposals will deliver on our Programme for Government commitment to modernise the taxi and private hire vehicle sector - addressing cross-bordering and reforming licensing to make services safer, greener, and fairer.

AIM 3: BUILDING AND RETAINING PEOPLE'S OWN CAPABILITY

Older workers - since the pandemic, the numbers of older workers re-entering the workforce has not rebounded in the same way as other age groups. This is an area of increasing concerns as labour shortages are stifling economic recovery. Academics, policy makers and third sector partners are looking for ways to tackle the issues. The Welsh Government Employability and Skills Board met on 8 March to discuss how to support older people to re-enter the labour market. This is now part of a wider discussion on economic inactivity where options will be considered on what more Welsh Government can do.

Business in the Community already offer a range of services to encourage businesses to become age inclusive and to support older workers. Closer links are being built with Business Wales and bigger businesses.

AIM 4: TACKLING AGE RELATED POVERTY

Income Maximisation - We have set up an Income Maximisation Task and Finish Group. Through cross-government approaches and by joint working with local authorities and other key partners this group will drive improvements in the take-up of welfare benefits and payments.

In December 2022 Welsh Government launched its new national integrated communications campaign – ‘Here to help with the cost of living’. The campaign aims to reassure the people of Wales that help, and support is available for those struggling financially due to the cost-of-living crisis. The main Call to Action signposts people towards Advicelink Cymru and encourage them to check their eligibility for further financial support.

Through the Welsh Government’s Single Advice Fund, partners are also working together to reach older people to raise their awareness of their welfare benefit entitlements. So far almost 4,000 people aged 65+ have been helped to claim welfare benefit income totalling £12m and to manage debts of £1.9m.

Older people are a key priority group for all the Single Advice Fund services. 33% of all people accessing the SAF are older people.

Intergenerational activity – supported by Welsh Government, intergenerational projects from across Wales were showcased during international intergenerational week in April 2022. This activity led to further activity such as establishing new Repair Cafes in deprived areas through the Foundational Economy Fund. Repair Cafés aim to repair household items that might otherwise end up on landfill. They also aim to achieve much more by bringing communities together and providing valuable opportunities to share skills and knowledge. The new Repair Cafes focus on creating community links with primary and secondary schools.

Looking ahead to the international intergenerational celebrations in April 2023; through a collaboration approach between the local authorities and Welsh Government plans are again in place to share good practice from across Wales and to shine a pink intergenerational light on key public buildings.