



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

**Response from the Older People's
Commissioner for Wales**

to the

**National Assembly for Wales Finance
Committee 'Welsh Government Draft
Budget Proposals 2018-19' consultation**

September 2017

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About the Commissioner

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people across Wales, standing up and speaking out on their behalf. She works to ensure that those who are vulnerable and at risk are kept safe and ensures that all older people have a voice that is heard, that they have choice and control, that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against and that they receive the support and services they need. The Commissioner's work is driven by what older people say matters most to them and their voices are at the heart of all that she does. The Commissioner works to make Wales a good place to grow older - not just for some but for everyone.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales:

- Promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales.
- Challenges discrimination against older people in Wales.
- Encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales.
- Reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

National Assembly for Wales 'Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2018-19' consultation

1. As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales I welcome the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee 'Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2018-19' consultation¹.
2. Unprecedented challenges face the Welsh Government budget proposals. The uncertain implications of 'Brexit', the devolution of certain tax raising powers, and real terms funding reductions from the UK Government mean that difficult decisions will have to be made on funding allocations and prioritising actions. The 'public purse' will continue to face real challenges and the implications for older people across Wales are wide-ranging.
3. My focus remains on positive, preventative outcomes for older people that help maintain their health, independence and wellbeing within sustainable, resilient and inclusive communities. I am a rights-based Commissioner and I expect older people's rights to be at the core of budgets and service delivery. Such an approach reduces the need for costly health and social care packages at a later stage and is a 'win win': individuals have a better quality of life and improved healthy life years expectancy in their own homes, whilst health and public services reduce their costs and pressures on frontline delivery. It also addresses the key challenges for older people in today's Wales: for example, tackling rising levels of loneliness and isolation (exacerbated by the reduction in community services), supporting people living with dementia (as well as their families and carers), and building communities that take into account the needs of people of all ages.
4. The prevention agenda should drive forward the forthcoming budget proposals, and I am keen to move away from reactive approaches to health and social care in Wales^{2 3}. Wales has an ageing population, and whilst this does present certain challenges,

¹ <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=268>

² <http://www.iwa.wales/click/2016/09/need-establish-national-care-service-wales/>

³ <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/ourservices/unscheduledcareimprovement>

it also presents a range of opportunities as well. I urge the Welsh Government to take forward the asset-based approach i.e. invest in older people, who have a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience that can strengthen and develop communities across Wales. Older people already make a £1bn annual contribution to the Welsh economy, almost £3 million a day: how can the Welsh Government budget help to double this contribution and more⁴?

5. By seeing older people as valuable assets that can continue to contribute as workers, carers and volunteers, the Welsh Government can do much to build stronger, more inclusive communities and reduce the dependence on health and social care services amongst older people. Examples of smart, preventative and outcomes-focused investments include the following:

- Befriending schemes cost £80 per person per year and can annually save around £300 per person in health and social care costs⁵;
- The introduction of community navigators, who carry out effective work in linking older people with relevant local services, cost £480 and save £900 per person⁶;
- Research in England suggests that for every £1 invested in financial entitlements uptake schemes, between £4-8 is generated for local economies⁷;
- In Scotland, an investment in telecare of around £12.6m resulted in a gross financial benefit of some £48m⁸.

6. My Framework for Action 2013-17 prioritises 'Embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services'⁹. Such an

⁴http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.sflb.ashx

⁵ <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing39/>

⁶ <https://campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/03/A-guide-for-local-authorities-combating-loneliness.pdf>

⁷ http://usir.salford.ac.uk/19311/3/Final_technical_report.pdf

⁸ http://www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk/docs/The_Costs_and_Benefits_of_Housing_Support_Services_for_OlderPeople_in_Scotland_draft_21.pdf

⁹ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/Framework_for_Action.sflb.ashx

approach is at the core of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and also Ageing Well in Wales, the national partnership programme to improve the health and wellbeing of people aged 50+ in Wales¹⁰. It also complements the prudent healthcare agenda and I emphasise the need for an outcomes-based budget. The National Outcomes Framework that supports the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act provides the type of outcomes that should drive forward budgets and service delivery¹¹. Ensuring that older people are, for example, safe, healthy, treated with dignity and respect, are able to get out and about and do the things that matter to them, benefits individuals, public services, health boards and governments at all levels.

7. Much of my work on highlighting the importance and impact of community services in Wales has been with the new Public Services Boards (PSBs). I am keen to ensure that all PSB partners, Welsh Government departments and portfolios recognise that they have a key role to play in maintaining older people's health, independence and wellbeing, and providing their lives with value, meaning and purpose. I expect the Welsh Government to consider the needs and circumstances of older people across the four cross-cutting strategies within the Programme for Government¹².
8. The prevention agenda and asset-based approach is dependent on new, creative and innovative investments in sectors outside health and social care: housing, transport, leisure, culture, sport, education and the physical and natural environment for example have a crucial role to play in enabling and empowering older people to remain as contributors. This cross-cutting approach is supported by the Welsh Government Strategy for Older People 2013-23 and should be at the core of future budget proposals¹³.
9. My Guidance to the PSBs, published in October 2016, emphasises this point and it is something that should drive forward budget

¹⁰ <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/home>

¹¹ <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/160610frameworken.pdf>

¹² <http://gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf>

¹³ <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf>

planning and service delivery in Wales¹⁴. My Guidance includes six key issues for PSBs to address and take forward, and I challenge Welsh Government budgets to consider these as well:

- A reduction in the number of older people falling in the Local Authority (falls prevention is an Ageing Well in Wales priority);
- A reduction in the number of older people affected by domestic abuse in the Local Authority ('Standing up for older people who are at risk of harm and ensuring that they are safeguarded and protected' is another of my Framework for Action priorities);
- A reduction in the number of older people affected by loneliness and isolation in the Local Authority (tackling loneliness and isolation is an Ageing Well in Wales priority);
- A reduction in the number of older people living in poverty in the Local Authority. Solutions could include reducing the number of older people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in Wales; and improving the uptake of financial entitlements amongst older people (opportunities for learning and employment is an Ageing Well in Wales priority);
- An increase in the number of older people with dementia supported to live well in their communities within the Local Authority (dementia supportive communities is an Ageing Well in Wales priority);
- An increase in the number of older people who are and feel safe in their local communities and are able to do the things that matter to them (age-friendly communities is an Ageing Well in Wales priority).

10. Should the Welsh Government draft budget proposals follow the same structure as 2016-17¹⁵, then I offer the following comments:

¹⁴ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/16-10-05/Preparing_Local_Wellbeing_Plans_Guidance_for_Public_Services_Boards.aspx

¹⁵ <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/publications/161018-budget-proposals-en.pdf>

- **Health, Wellbeing and Sport:** An important area however the needs and circumstances of older people are not confined to this funding strand. 'Driving up the quality of, and availability and access to, health and social care' is another of my Framework for Action priorities and it is of course essential that older people benefit from high quality and consistent health and social care services across Wales. That said, research suggests that should the Welsh Government protect only the core NHS budget in line with the NHS Budget in England, other service areas, including local government, would see real terms reductions averaging 7.4% over the next three years¹⁶. A balance is needed between investing in quality health and social care and acknowledging the crucial role of local government in delivering preventative services for older people.

The wellbeing aspect is crucial and this should be anchored in the prevention agenda and asset-based approach I have outlined. The four wellbeing 'pillars' in my Framework for Action Quality of Life model provide an indication of how and where governments need to invest in order to improve older people's lives¹⁷. As outlined in her 'Wellbeing in Wales' report, the Future Generations Commissioner refers to my emphasis on encouraging public bodies to think about services that make the most of older people's wisdom, experience and time¹⁸. The potential mid to long-term cost savings are significant in return for improved wellbeing and positive outcomes for individuals.

Access to participate in sport is linked to this approach and I am keen to see older people take part in sporting activities across Wales, not only free swimming but also other opportunities e.g. walking football/rugby, outdoor walking, exercise/dance classes. Participation in sport is not only good for older people's physical and mental health but also encourages social interaction and reduces the risks of loneliness and social isolation. This funding

¹⁶ <http://www.walespublicservices2025.org.uk/files/2016/09/IFS-report-R120.pdf>

¹⁷ Quality of life model: Wellbeing 'pillars': I feel safe and listened to, valued and respected; I can do the things that matter to me; I can get the help that I need; I live in a place that suits me and my life

¹⁸ https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FGCW_Well-being_in_Wales-Planning_today_for_a_better_tomorrow_2017FINALENG.pdf

strand needs bold and creative initiatives to help maintain the health, independence and wellbeing of older people.

- **Local Government:** As my 2014 report on community services emphasises, older people cannot afford not to have these ‘lifeline’ services¹⁹. These frontline services, including public buses, toilets, libraries, day centres, lifelong learning and befriending schemes, are mostly delivered by Local Authorities and the loss of these services in recent years has had devastating impacts on older people across Wales. I am aware that the funding outlook for local government has been very challenging in recent years, and the expectation to do more with fewer resources is something that every Local Authority in Wales must address. As suggested elsewhere, service transformation and new approaches in local government are difficult to achieve without knowing budgetary settlements in the mid to long term: twelve month cycles can stifle innovation²⁰.

These community services must continue in one form or another and this means a more robust funding package is needed to take forward the prevention agenda and asset-based approach. Older people cannot continue as community contributors without these services and new, creative and innovative solutions are required e.g. community asset transfer, making better use of existing facilities and infrastructure, and working closer with the private sector to develop technological solutions to maximise the benefits of an ageing population²¹.

Forthcoming legislation on local government reform may present opportunities to look at outcomes-focused service delivery for older people, with better integration between national, regional, local and town/community levels to drive forward the prevention agenda. Other developments, for example Welsh Government plans to support the bus services industry and the introduction of the Public Health (Wales) Act

¹⁹http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.sflb.ashx

²⁰<http://ppi.w.org.uk/files/2015/12/Coping-with-the-Cuts-Final-Report-PDF.pdf>

²¹<http://www.walespublicservices2025.org.uk/files/2016/03/State-of-Innovation-v6-single-page1.pdf>

and its obligation on Local Authorities to outline public toilet provision, should also benefit older people across Wales.

- **Communities and Children:** This is closely linked to the local government funding strand, and the need to be proactive in how we deliver services for older people. Enabling and empowering older people to remain in their communities as workers, carers and volunteers is crucial and benefits everyone: improved quality of life, health and wellbeing for the individual, more economic productivity locally, reduced dependence on health and social care packages, pressures on the National Health Service alleviated.

The overarching theme of Ageing Well in Wales is developing age-friendly communities and I expect to see a stronger focus on such communities, and also dementia supportive communities, in this funding strand moving forward²². Such communities take into account the needs of people of all ages, particularly as we grow older. An age-friendly and dementia supportive community is more inclusive and encourages older people to come together with other age groups to design and deliver low-cost, high-impact community solutions that make a real difference in people's lives. As my 2016 report on dementia highlights, further work is needed to ensure that Wales' communities, public services and organisations are more inclusive for people living with dementia²³.

With the removal of the Communities First programme, this funding strand needs to consider how best to tackle poverty amongst all age groups. An estimated 112,000 older people are living in poverty in Wales, and new approaches are required to tackle the root causes of poverty amongst the older generation²⁴. Finally, it is regrettable that older people are not mentioned in this portfolio and funding strand. Both children and older people have specific needs and circumstances that

²² <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/resource-hub/afc-resources>

²³ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/More_Than_Just_Memory_Loss.sflb.ashx

²⁴ <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/latest-news/age-cymru-calls-for-fulfilled-lives-and-a-decent-income-for-older-people/>

require cross-department collaboration across governments at all levels, and including older people in future Welsh Government funding strands and portfolios demonstrates renewed commitment.

- **Economy and Infrastructure:** This funding strand again links to local government and communities and children. The challenge for Welsh Government is to unleash the wealth of skills, knowledge and experience of older people. Older people are already huge economic contributors but could contribute so much more given investments in community services, facilities and infrastructure. I am clear that public services would grind to a halt without the contribution of older people, however the skills of older people are currently under-utilised and under-valued. In the context of an ageing population, a new approach to budgets and service delivery is required that maximises the potential of older people as economic assets and enables and empowers them to remain as community contributors.
- **Education:** I am clear that learning should be truly lifelong. Budgets for adult community-based learning have been significantly reduced in recent years, with detrimental impacts on older people across Wales²⁵. For older people in retirement, education is important for social interaction and networking, mental stimulation, and new challenges and self-fulfilment. For older people who want or need to work for longer, education in later life is crucial in order to renew skillsets or acquire new skills and qualifications that enable older people to remain in or return to employment. This budget strand will of course focus predominately on children and young people, however I am clear that funding for education in later life is crucial for a number of reasons. As with public transport, community centres and spaces, education plays a crucial role in the health and wellbeing of older people and this should be reflected in future budget frameworks.

²⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-34486505>

- **Environment and Rural Affairs:** As I have outlined, both the physical and natural environment has a crucial role to play in maintaining the health, independence and wellbeing of older people. Age-friendly buildings and transport can mean the difference between an older people remaining housebound or able to get out and about and participate in community activities and/or use local services and amenities. Encouraging older people to make the most of the natural environment is also crucial in developing positive, preventative outcomes for the individual. Through Ageing Well in Wales, I am working with partners to develop age-friendly environments across Wales, and this again is something that the Welsh Government should consider when developing budgets and service delivery.

Older people living in coastal, urban and rural communities across Wales face similar challenges, however ‘rurality’ can bring about specific challenges for older people²⁶. For older people who are using digital technologies, poor broadband infrastructure can affect their ability to use online services or connect with friends and family. The closure of rural services such as banks and shops can also have devastating impacts on older people, and the limited availability of public transport in some areas and the distances involved to major towns particularly affects older people who have no access to private transport. Again, the funding strand for rural affairs should consider the prevention agenda and asset-based approach for older people.

11. I hope that the Finance Committee and the other Committees find these comments helpful. The funding landscape for Wales remains challenging and uncertain and the need to stretch every penny further, embrace new and innovative ideas and avoid duplication is clear. In the context of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and other pieces of legislation, I look forward to working further with the Welsh Government and others to develop an outcomes-based budget and services that

²⁶<http://www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk/sites/default/files/Older%20People%20and%20Place%20in%20Wales%20Demography%2C%20policy%20and%20community%202013.pdf>

focus on positive, preventative outcomes for older people, that consider key societal challenges such as dementia and loneliness and isolation, that take forward the rights-based agenda for older people and the age-friendly communities concept, and take proactive steps to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older for everyone.