



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 2019-20' consultation**

September 2018

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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 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 2019-20’ 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’ consultation.¹

Q2. What expectations do you have of the 2019 – 20 draft budget proposals?

2. My focus is to ensure that any budget proposals designed to support the objectives laid out in Welsh Government’s ‘Prosperity for All’ - deliver for older people throughout Wales. In scrutinizing these budget proposals, it is essential that the personal and national well-being outcomes of older people are considered in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, and the National Outcomes Framework for Social Services. I expect older people’s rights to be at the core of budgets and service delivery in line with the Welsh Government’s commitments on making rights real for older people.

Q3. a) Approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocation.

3. I expect the Welsh Government to consider the needs, circumstances and contribution of older people across the four cross-cutting strategies within the Programme for Government and, as stated in the national strategy ‘Prosperity for All’.²

I support the Committee having a focus on preventative spending. This is a crucial area of investment in terms of positive outcomes

¹ [Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2019-20 – \(2018\)](#)

² [Welsh Government Prosperity for All – \(2017\)](#)

for older people, with the potential to help people stay independent as well as reduce the need for more costly intensive services.

Within health and care budgets there needs to be continued investment in preventative services. Beyond this

Housing, transport, leisure, culture, sport, education, and the physical and natural environment as well as non-statutory social care initiatives all have a crucial role to play in enabling older people to have a good quality of life.

This cross-cutting approach supported by the Welsh Government Strategy for Older People 2013-23³ and local Ageing Well Plans should be at the core of budget proposals on preventative spending for older people.

4. 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 costs⁴;
- The introduction of community navigators, who carry out effective work in linking older people with relevant local services, cost £480 and save £900 per person⁵;
- In Scotland, an investment in telecare of around £12.6m resulted in a gross financial benefit of some £48m⁶.

5. However, these initiatives can only be successful if there is continuity of funding. Short-term funding cannot produce the

³ [The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023 \(2014\)](#)

⁴ [SCIE Research \(2011\)](#) - Preventing loneliness and social isolation

⁵ [Campaign to End Loneliness \(2012\)](#) – Combating Loneliness

⁶ [University of York \(2011\)](#) - The Costs and Benefits of Preventative Support Services for Older People

easing on future demand that the preventative agenda is seeking to achieve. Older people need assurance that the support that helps them to maintain and sustain their independence, as well as the interdependent relations essential for them to stay in their own home will not be withdrawn due to ever-changing budgetary decisions.

I have seen good examples of the use of the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) in providing effective and valuable services for older people: preventative services such as Community Connectors, social prescribing and other supportive initiatives and approaches but I have heard concern regarding the lack of assurances about continuity of funding. This uncertainty militates against long-term planning at local level, and can hamper the effectiveness of services. There are also perceptions in some areas that ICF can only ever be used for new and innovative developments.

The original intention of the ICF was to mainstream proven projects that delivered positive preventative outcomes for older people within core budgets. It is understandable that this may not always be possible; however, the Welsh Government should seek assurances about the probity of repeated funding changes via actively monitoring ICF spend. This will ensure that any decisions taken about need to deliver differently are firmly evidenced, and clearly outweigh the benefits of continuity of service for older people, whilst maximising the use of public funds in line with the Welsh Government's priorities.

6. Most care and support in Wales is provided by families and friends and the physical, mental and social well-being of these unpaid carers must be supported.

In Wales older carers save the Welsh economy an estimated £1.88 billion in care costs. This is predicted to rise to £2.44 billion by 2030. Other estimates indicate that the value of total carers contributions in Wales could be estimated at £8.15 billion per year⁷.

7. 'Rethinking Respite'⁸ was published by my predecessor on 26 April 2018 and provides evidence of how respite care for people affected by dementia can be positively transformed. It aims to help policy makers, commissioners and providers to deliver change.

Whilst the report focuses specifically on people living with dementia and their carers, many of the key messages are relevant to a wide range of carers.

A key theme running throughout the report was how carers and people living with dementia identified low-level preventative interventions as 'positive respite experiences' that enabled them to maintain their personal wellbeing and sustain positive caring relationships. Interventions that enabled people living with dementia to maintain their social, physical and intellectual abilities such as, befriending and short breaks were identified as delivering positive outcomes as well as maintaining individual's health and vitality and encouraging self-care.

It is therefore of concern that a bed in a care home (or even hospital) remains the predominant respite offering across public services. This is not negative if it matches the needs and wishes of the carer and person living with dementia, however public money could be invested more wisely, to meet the wellbeing outcomes of

⁷ [Bangor University \(2018\) – Living Well for Longer](#)

⁸ [Older People's Commissioner for Wales \(2018\) - Rethinking Respite for people affected by Dementia](#)

a larger number of carers and people living with dementia through an embedded outcomes approach.

The Rethinking Respite report concludes with an outcomes map that aligns to the outcomes within the Social Services National Outcomes Framework. It would be highly beneficial for Welsh Government and Public Bodies to consider this map alongside the report's findings as a means of delivering a preventative budget that would impact positively on health and social care pan Wales.

Q3. b) Welsh Government policies to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, gender inequality and mitigate welfare reform

8. Poverty amongst older people in Wales is increasing (from 14% to 18% over the past five years)⁹. Improving the uptake of financial entitlements amongst older people is a key way of tackling poverty. It is estimated that £168m of Pension Credit goes unclaimed and is returned to HM Treasury¹⁰. Investing in measures to improve take-up - such as a public awareness-raising programme and resources for third sector information and advice providers could have an in-year impact on poverty levels and bring money into local economies.

At the UK level, around 11% of older people in retirement are owner occupiers with a mortgage, at least 25% of older people retiring in 2017 owe money, whilst increasing numbers of 'asset rich, cash poor' older people are turning to equity release as a way of supporting themselves in their retirement.^{11 12 13}

⁹ [Bevan Foundation \(2016\)](#)

¹⁰ [Age Cymru \(2014\)](#)

¹¹ [Telegraph \(2010\)](#) – Mortgages in Retirement

¹² [Guardian \(2017\)](#) – Debts in retirement

¹³ [ICAS \(2015\)](#) - Asset Rich, Cash Poor

Research in England suggests that for every £1 invested in financial entitlements uptake schemes, between £4-8 is generated for local economies.¹⁴

9. The Age Cymru 2014 'Life on a low income' report found that 84,000 older people were living in poverty in Wales i.e. living on a weekly household income of £220 or less, with 50,000 older people living in severe poverty i.e. living on a weekly household income of £183.50 or less¹⁵. By 2017, Age Cymru research found that 112,500 older people were living in poverty, and both single older people and older couples had the lowest average incomes in the UK.¹⁶

Engaging with older people and helping them to better manage their finances and increase incomes will, for some, avoid 'eat or heat' dilemmas and tackle the estimated 140,000 older households living in fuel poverty in Wales, affecting some 360,000 older people¹⁷.

10. Across the UK, fuel poverty has increased 43% since 2011, and after Northern Ireland, Wales has the greatest proportion of fuel poor households. Wales also has the highest percentage of homes with solid walls compared with England and Scotland (solid walls let through twice as much heat as cavity walls), and Wales has a lower number of households on mains gas in comparison with England (alternative forms of fuel are more expensive).

Q3. c) How evidence is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations

¹⁴ [University of Salford \(2011\)](#) - The impact of financial inclusion interventions

¹⁵ [Age Cymru \(2014\)](#) – Life on a Low Income

¹⁶ [Age Cymru \(2017\)](#)

¹⁷ [OPCW \(2014\)](#) - Community services

11. The Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 was a positive piece of legislation but there is some concern regarding its implementation which appears to be variable across Wales. The data to evidence the implementation of specific requirements within the Act (such as the offer of independent advocacy) is not robust or, in some instances, not available. Evidence on the way that the Act is being implemented, and what is working effectively and what is less effective, should be gathered in order to inform spending decisions at both local and national level. For example, it is not clear how effective the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Services as a 'front door' to social services.
12. Greater oversight is needed to ensure that population assessment reports, area plans that take forward the required action identified in the population assessments and also the forthcoming market stability reports deliver their intended aim and work to complement other planning mechanisms, such as the well-being plans required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2016. Effective planning is essential if we are to meet the care and support needs of older people in Wales, yet there appears to be little scrutiny and oversight of the robustness of these tools that inform the planning process and budgetary decision-making.
13. The publication, by Welsh Government, of the local authority data collected as part of the performance measurement framework (Statistical First Release) provides limited insight into whether the duties under the Act are being implemented, reporting instead on what is delivered. It is unclear how local authorities and Welsh Government are using the data produced by either the Performance Framework (the Statistical First Release data) or the

National Outcomes Framework (Annual Report on the Framework) to drive change. For example;

- the Statistical First Release data shows that of the 6,207 carers assessments that took place in the year 2016-17, only 1,823 led to a Support Plan, with 6,864 carers refusing an assessment.
- the Annual Report on the National Outcomes Framework shows that 79 per cent of people who received care and support agreed that they had been involved in any decisions made about how their care or support was provided.

14. Further work is therefore required to understand why so few carers' assessments led to support plans, why so many carers declined an assessment and why 20 per cent of people were unable to participate in decisions made about their care and support.

Tender specifications for an independent 3-year evaluation on the implementation and impact of the Act have been published and bids are currently being assessed, however the final report is not expected until July 2021.

Q3. d) The Welsh Government policies to strengthen the economy and promote innovation

15. With an ageing population policies and measures to enable older people to continue to work, or to re-enter paid work after a period out of the labour market (for example because of caring responsibilities or ill-health) are essential for a strong economy.

Within the next 5 years 1 in 3 working age adults in Wales will be over 50. By 2034, almost 1 in 4 of all people in the UK will be over 65. It is predicted that over the next 10 years, UK employers will need to fill an estimated 13.5 million job vacancies but only 7 million young people will leave school and college over this period. Furthermore, immigration (which is predicted to fall following 'Brexit' in 2019) will not fill the gap and employers will have to rely on older workers to fill these vacancies.¹⁸

While the Welsh Government has cited the above statistics any future actions to ensure that the benefits of a multi-generational workforce are mainstreamed, and meaningful opportunities promoted within policy are limited. There is an annual campaign¹⁹ to encourage employers to utilise the skills and experiences of older people but this on its own will not drive the cultural change that is required amongst employers.

16. The age-inclusive 'programme to deliver 100,000 all-age apprenticeships aligned to economic requirements'²⁰ is welcome. However, if the programme is to drive meaningful change then new terminology is needed as apprenticeship is not a term that older people would identify as pertinent to their years of experience. It also appears that the programme is primarily focused on the 62,000-younger people (16-25) Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) rather than the corresponding estimated 198,000 number of older people (NEET).

¹⁸ [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development \(2012\)](#) - [Insights into managing an age-diverse workforce](#)

¹⁹ [WG \(2017\)](#) – No 'Best Before Date' for Welsh Workers

²⁰ [WG \(2016\)](#) – Apprenticeship programmes

17. The wealth of skills, knowledge and experience that older people possess is currently under-utilised in Wales. Moreover, given the increasing number of older people who want or need to work for longer, rising levels of poverty amongst older people in Wales and the critical role of employment as a route out of poverty, it is imperative that Welsh Government takes meaningful and sustainable action in this area.