



Consultation Response
Call for Evidence and Projects
National Development Framework
Welsh Government
March 2017

Introduction

Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to respond to the Welsh Government's call for Evidence and Projects regarding the National Development Framework (NDF) in the context of creating an age friendly Wales. Our response relates to the Call for Evidence.

Towards creating an age friendly Wales

Age Cymru welcomes the opportunity to contribute towards the development of the NDF, as we believe it has the potential to help to create an age friendly Wales. We deem that the NDF has the potential to support longer term decision making, and we believe it should reflect the importance of demographic change.

A more equal Wales

The number of older people in Wales is growing and we are, on average, expected to live longer. 2014-based National Population Projections for Wales indicate that the number people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 292,000 (44 per cent) between 2014 and 2039.¹ This is a cause for celebration and a major achievement for our society. It provides us with opportunities for the future, but also challenges and it will require changes to the way in which we plan and deliver public services. The fact that

¹ Welsh Government (2015) 2014-based National Population Projections for Wales. A report, produced by the Office for National Statistics, on trend-based population projections by age and sex. 29 October 2015. <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-population-projections/?lang=en>

older people make up an increasing section of the population makes it ever more vital that future planning reflects their needs.

An age friendly Wales is one in which older people have equal rights, respect, opportunities and the same access to services as the rest of the population.

- We believe that planning for, and responding to, demographic change should be a key consideration in the NDF, and that planning decisions should take into account how they will affect people across different stages of the life course of future generations.

Given that Wales has a relatively large rural area, it is important that the NDF takes into account the impacts on people living in rural areas when creating and implementing planning policy, especially with reference to how they will be able to access services and public and community transport. A report by PPIW highlights that there is a 'rural premium' on some key goods and services because of a lack of competitive markets for food, fuel, energy and transport, which contributes to rural poverty.²

A report by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales³ highlights that the need for effective rural connectivity has been heightened by the closure of local banks, shops and other services, meaning older people have to travel further to access these services and other vital amenities. Lower levels of car ownership and car use amongst older people can also lead to them becoming marginalised and unable to access community services in rural areas, leading to significant impacts on their wellbeing.⁴

- We believe that the NDF should take into account the impacts on people living in rural areas in Wales when creating and implementing planning policy, especially with reference to accessing services and public and community transport.

A healthier Wales

Loneliness and isolation are a daily reality for many older people; 75,000 older people in Wales have reported 'always or often' feeling lonely. Feeling lonely has many detrimental effects on older people, and there is increasing evidence of the negative impacts on physical and mental health.

² Public Policy Institute for Wales (2016). Rural Poverty in Wales: Existing Research and Evidence Gaps. <http://ppi.w.org.uk/files/2016/06/An-introduction-to-Rural-Poverty.pdf>

³ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales. http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.sflb.ashx

⁴ Shergold et al. (2011) cited in: Older People's Commissioner for Wales. The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

In March 2017, Age Cymru launched a campaign on tackling loneliness and isolation in Wales⁵ which highlights how poor transport, an inaccessible built environment and a lack of local amenities and facilities can deter people from taking part in community life and can cause isolation and feelings of loneliness among older people. Removing these barriers to create an age friendly Wales will increase opportunities for older people to pursue an interest, join in and have a role in their communities. (These issues are covered in more detail below).

A vital aspect of creating an age-friendly Wales is to enable older people to play an active role in society. It is important that older people have opportunities to participate in their local community through social activities, learning and volunteering. Efforts must be made to reduce some of the barriers that can lead to isolation such as a lack of local services and amenities, and to increase opportunities for older people to participate in their communities.

The Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People recognises that older adults who participate in social and leisure activities are more likely to say they feel well. Good social relationships are associated with positive health effects for the individual, staying physically active protects health, and good physical health makes an important contribution to overall well-being.⁶

- We believe the NDF should work with communities across generations to provide vital opportunities for older people to participate in their local community and wider society, by way of learning, social activities and paid work or volunteering.

Physical activity helps to improve both physical and mental health and wellbeing and should be encouraged and facilitated at every opportunity. Staying well, feeling good and remaining as independent as possible are of vital importance to everyone in Wales.

We believe that opportunities for healthy living should be increased and barriers removed. In the context of planning, it is vital that the built environment in our communities enables, rather than prevents, older people taking an active part in their communities (see section below on 'Accessible and inclusive built environment').

A Wales of cohesive communities

Communities in Wales must meet the needs of all generations and ensure that people of all ages can access the services and facilities they need. An age friendly community is one that has the capacity to support older people to enjoy the best possible quality of life. It includes facilities, services and amenities that are accessible and that accommodate the needs of older people to help them enjoy health and wellbeing and to fully participate in society. We support the concept of 'lifetime neighbourhoods' - communities which are designed and developed to support people to enjoy a good

⁵ Age Cymru (2017) No one should have no one; tackling loneliness and isolation in Wales. <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/no-one-should-have-no-one-tackling-isolation/>

⁶ Welsh Government (2013) The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023.

quality of life during the ageing process, promote the needs of older people, and help them to retain their independence.

Public and community transport services

Transport is a crucial factor in determining older people's ability to access vital amenities. Without appropriate services and infrastructure older people can become isolated from their community and society, unable to access essential services, participate in activities or visit friends and family.⁷ Reliable and accessible local public and community transport networks become increasingly significant as people get older. 48% of pensioner households do not have access to a car compared to 26% of all households,⁸ and many older people rely on bus services to get out and about.⁹ Community transport schemes provide an essential lifeline for many older people, especially in rural areas.

- We believe that the NDF should ensure the development of a fully integrated sustainable transport network in Wales, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including community transport, pedestrian and cycle routes, and better integration between transport and key services.

Accessing public transport can present significant physical problems for many older people. For older people with limited mobility, getting to the bus stop is a significant issue which is compounded by a lack of facilities at bus stops. More bus stops and shelters with seating would make public transport more accessible. Accessibility problems at railway stations include stairs to platforms and a lack of lifts. Older people who can and want to use trains require reliable rail travel supported by adequate infrastructure, including seating and accessible toilet facilities in stations.¹⁰

- We believe that the NDF should ensure that improvements are made to transport infrastructure in Wales to improve accessibility to public transport services.

Accessible and inclusive built environment

Being able to take part in community life, with good access to local services and facilities, is a lifeline for many older people. If an older person cannot get out and about locally they are at risk of poor health, less social contact with others and a reduced quality of life overall.

⁷ Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

⁸ Welsh Government (2015) National Transport Plan 2015 – Draft. Equality Impact Assessment – Part 1 and Part 2.

⁹ Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales. A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru.

¹⁰ Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

The features that make a place desirable to live in can change as people get older. It is essential that the built environment in communities is designed and adapted in an age friendly way so that it is sustainable and suitable for people of all ages. Increasing opportunities for older people to take part locally can do much to boost independence, combat social isolation and loneliness and promote health and wellbeing.

All outdoor environments and public spaces across Wales should be accessible and usable for all older people. Safe and accessible streets, places to meet to socialise that are easily accessible by public and community transport, and adequate public seating and public toilets in our communities all help to facilitate this.

- We believe that the NDF should ensure the design and creation of accessible and inclusive built environments in our communities.

Housing

The housing needs of people may change as they get older, so it is essential that older people have access to a range of good quality housing options and services that meet their needs. People must be able to live safe, independent and active lives in the setting most appropriate to them. Specialist retirement housing, including sheltered accommodation and extra-care housing, can offer basic support for many older people allowing them to live independently for longer within a safe and secure environment.

- We believe that the NDF should look to ensure that all forms of retirement housing are built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to local services, facilities and public transport to support independence and wellbeing.

We hope these comments are useful and would be happy to provide further information if required.