

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
WFG 26
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill
Response from Older People's Commissioner for Wales



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' Environment
and Sustainability Committee Inquiry into
the Well-being of Future Generations
(Wales) Bill**

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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:

- 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.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

1. As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales' Environment and Sustainability Committee Inquiry into the general principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill¹.
2. I have publicly welcomed the Bill and its overall intent. I commend the Welsh Government's long-term vision and ambition with this ground-breaking piece of legislation, a first in the UK. Ensuring that public bodies focus on improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales is something that I fully endorse and complements Priority 1 of my Framework for Action 2013-17: Embedding the well-being of older people at the heart of public services². I also welcome the three well-being 'pillars' and how they complement the three resources 'pillars' of the Strategy for Older People 2013-2023³.
3. That said, given the ambition, scope and complexity of the Bill, I am somewhat concerned that the Bill will lose its general purpose and direction, and that the focus on well-being will become lost within the breadth of duties and action as required across the public body landscape in Wales. It is important that the expanded scope of the Bill does not mean its impact 'skims the surface' in how it influences public service delivery in Wales.
4. There are three particular areas that I believe are critical to ensuring the intent of the Bill is delivered:
 - Indicators of 'success' underpinning the six national well-being goals must be outcome focused and relevant to older people;
 - Ensuring the needs assessment process reflects the full breadth of issues that matter to older people in a joined-up and outcome-focused way;
 - Ensuring that older people's views, knowledge and experience are fully utilised to shape strategic thinking, prioritisation and service delivery with an asset-based approach adopted.

¹ <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=140&RPID=1504039457&cp=yes>

² http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/13-05-23/Framework_for_Action.aspx

³ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf>

5. The proposal has changed considerably since the ‘A Sustainable Wales’ White Paper⁴, which was grounded in the principles of sustainable development. While the expansion of the proposal to be all-encompassing and relevant to the entire public services landscape is to be welcomed in theory, further details are required in order to properly understand how the well-being goals and sustainable development principle will be achieved by public bodies in practice.
6. As I outline in my Framework for Action, the concept of well-being is not yet sufficiently understood and reflected in the planning, development and everyday delivery of public services. Well-being is synonymous with quality of life for older people, ensuring their lives have value, meaning and purpose. With over a million people over the age of 60 in Wales in the next twenty years, it is important to understand that the needs of older people are not confined to health and social care. Public bodies and services need to strengthen significantly the use of well-being indicators within their work and see the concept of well-being as fundamental to the success of public services.
7. The Bill should therefore help to ensure that well-being sits at the heart of public service plans and that the well-being of older people will be increasingly used to drive the development of services and support, as well as the evaluation of their impact. Getting public services right for older people means getting it right for others in society, e.g. people with disabilities or families with young children. At its core, and to ensure that the Bill dovetails with the Declaration of Rights for Older People in Wales⁵, should be a rights-based approach to the provision of public services that both upholds older people’s basic rights and supports the delivery of better public services.

Improving Well-being and Indicators of ‘success’

8. The six well-being goals are broad and ambitious and all resonate with older people. As previously outlined, further details are required on the goals to better understand how they apply to older people, supported by indicators of ‘success’ that are outcome focused. A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised via ‘a healthier Wales’ is particularly important

⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/consultation/121203asusdevwhitepaperen.pdf>

⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/140716olderen.pdf>

for older people, as is a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances via ‘a more equal Wales’.

9. I welcome the Explanatory Memorandum’s reference to ensuring that the equality goal will shift the balance away from ‘expensive services’ and towards opportunities for participation and personal development⁶. My recent report ‘The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales’⁷ emphasises that retaining community services is crucial to statutory services cost containment and tackling inequality through better engagement.
10. All six well-being goals should contribute to the achievement of the national Ageing Well in Wales Programme priorities^{8,9}. I chair the Programme, a national partnership to improve the general well-being of people aged 50+. The Programme includes the Welsh Government as a key partner and complements the Strategy for Older People 2013-2023.
11. Establishing attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities via ‘a Wales of cohesive communities’ complements the age friendly communities strand of the programme, whilst addressing the needs of those who live with dementia could be a ‘success’ indicator that contributes towards the cohesive communities goal. Providing employment opportunities for a skilled and well-educated population via ‘a prosperous Wales’ is also crucial as an increasing number of older people cannot afford retirement at State Pension age and require skills and employment opportunities to remain in or re-enter the labour market. Ensuring that older people benefit from maximised opportunities to increase their income could be another ‘success’ indicator in this regard.
12. My community services report emphasises that older people require sufficient outdoor spaces and public buildings to carry out a range of activities that contribute to their general health and well-being. Regarding the goal to establish ‘a Wales of vibrant culture

⁶ <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs/pri-ld9831-em-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=PRI-LD9831-EM%20-%20Well-being%20of%20Future%20Generations%20%28Wales%29%20Bill%20-%20EXPLANATORY%20MEMORANDUM>

⁷ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/14-02-25/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.aspx

⁸ <http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Ageingwell/The-programme.aspx>

⁹ Ageing Well in Wales Programme Priorities: Age Friendly Communities, Dementia Supportive Communities, Falls Prevention, Loneliness and Isolation, Opportunities for Learning and Employment

and thriving Welsh language’, I welcome all efforts to encourage older people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation, and I support all opportunities for older people to engage in lifelong learning, including Welsh language provision.

13. The duty on public bodies to set and publish well-being objectives that contribute to the achievement of the aforementioned well-being goals is welcomed. These objectives should fully take into account the needs, concerns and priorities of older people, and should encourage collaboration between public services bodies, working together to achieve common goals.
14. The duty on Welsh Ministers to also set and publish well-being objectives, supported by national indicators, annual well-being reports and a future trends report to measure progress, is welcomed. During the first half of 2014 I have met with nearly all Welsh Government Ministers and Deputy Ministers to drive forward the message that the needs of older people are relevant to all Ministerial portfolios and, provided that the well-being goals fully address the key issues for older people, this duty should significantly help ensure that the well-being of older people is recognised across portfolios.

Needs Assessment

15. I have some concerns that the Bill does not adequately reflect the needs of older people: it is regrettable that there are very few references to older people, with almost 800,000 people aged 60 and over in Wales, in the Interim Report of ‘The Wales We Want’ pilot National Conversation¹⁰. Considering that there is generally insufficient information and data on older people compared with children and younger adults (particularly at the sub-national and local level^{11,12}), it is essential that the Bill has provisions that fully capture the needs and circumstances of older people in order to ensure that the national well-being goals are fully relevant to future generations of older people in Wales. Strengthening the needs assessment process to fully address the breadth of issues that matter to older people is therefore crucial.

¹⁰ <http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Interim%20Report-July2014%20ENG.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.ageinternational.org.uk/what-we-do/Policy-where-we-stand-/Position-statement-on-the-post-2015-goals-for-development/>

¹² http://www.cpc.ac.uk/resources/downloads/JRF_report_Falkingham_2010.pdf

16. In an international context, efforts are being made to ensure that the UN Sustainable Development Goals for the post-2015 agenda are applicable to all people of all ages, i.e. the proposed goal to promote well-being for all at all ages¹³, and that data systems are fit for purpose in today's ageing world. In Wales and beyond, the new sustainable development agenda must ensure accountability to both children and young people and older people, and that no one is 'left behind'¹⁴.
17. Focusing on more inclusive methods of demographic projection and data will lead to more accurate projections of the particular needs of older people and a better understanding of their requirements, leading to better needs assessment and more sustainable well-being goals and public services across Wales¹⁵.

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

18. I welcome the establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and I am fully committed to working with the new Commissioner, as well as the other Commissioners in Wales, to achieve the well-being goals that address the needs of older people. I expect that the new Commissioner will build upon the excellent work and collaborative links already achieved by Wales' Commissioner for Sustainable Futures.
19. The Commissioner will have a key role to play in promoting the sustainable development principle and, more importantly, will provide advice or assistance to ensure that the well-being objectives set by public bodies are being met. This will be essential in ensuring that the well-being objectives set by public bodies are not 'lost' or seen as a 'tick-box exercise'.
20. As previously indicated to the Communities and Tackling Poverty Minister, I look forward to working with the new Commissioner on the exercise of his/her functions as a member of the Advisory Panel. The Advisory Panel should be a valuable platform to bring together Commissioners and other key partners and I view the panel as an opportunity to ensure that the new Commissioner fully understands the well-being of older people.

¹³ <http://www.helpage.org/silo/files/owg-outcome-document-july-2014.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.helpage.org/silo/files/transformational-human-development-background-paper.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/supporting-older-people-summary.pdf>

21. The establishment of an Advisory Panel is also important to ensure that the preparation of the Future Generations report complements my reports on progress made to improve the lives of older people across Wales. In this regard, I welcome the references to joint working and the new Commissioner and I working closely together on any subject matter that relates to a review carried out under my legislative competence i.e. section 3 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006¹⁶.

Public Services Boards

22. I welcome the proposal to establish Public Services Boards (PSBs) on a statutory footing. The current Local Service Boards (LSBs) should be seen as key platforms to bring together all partners and deliver integrated services that respond to the needs of older people at a local level. In my work to embed the well-being of older people at the heart of public services and address another of my Framework for Action priorities – protecting and improving community services, facilities and infrastructure – I have examined the role of LSBs and will attend LSB meetings across Wales in the coming months to drive forward the integration agenda and ensure that key partners are working together to better understand and react to the needs of older people.
23. Through my work examining the role of LSBs, it is clear that their role is not very well understood and performance, relevance and effectiveness are seen as ‘patchy’. Strengthening the legislative base of the successor PSBs and retaining their focus on improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas via an integrated approach should help to improve performance and relevance to older people at a local level.
24. A partnership that includes such a broad and diverse range of partners, including Local Authorities, Health Boards, Police, Fire and Rescue Services, the Higher and Further Education sector, the voluntary sector, national parks, town and community councils and sports and cultural institutions, can only encourage joined-up, integrated working that focuses on common well-being objectives for the benefit of older people.

¹⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/30/section/3>

25. My work on examining the role of LSBs has also involved their Single Integrated Plans (SIPs). There are real variations in how the SIPs address the well-being of older people and I therefore welcome the proposal to re-focus SIPs as local well-being plans. I expect that the well-being objectives included in the new plans will not only adhere to the sustainable development principle, but also fully address the needs, concerns and priorities of older people.
26. I note that the local well-being plans produced by PSBs must be sent to Welsh Ministers, the Future Generations Commissioner, the Auditor General for Wales, and the Local Authority's overview and scrutiny committee. I will also be taking a keen interest in these plans and am committed to helping with the preparation of these plans in the interests of older people across Wales.

Closing remarks

27. I look forward to working with the Welsh Government and key partners on this potentially transformational and highly influential piece of legislation. I expect the Bill to complement and drive forward the four components of 'quality of life' for older people as outlined in my Framework for Action¹⁷. The Bill builds on references to the concept of well-being within existing and proposed Welsh legislation, such as the Public Health Bill¹⁸ and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act¹⁹, and can do much to improve the health, independence and well-being of older people across the broad range of public services.
28. The Bill should help my work to ensure that older people's priorities and issues are recognised and reflected across the breadth of Welsh and Local Government portfolios. As ever, the 'devil lies in the detail' and whilst I welcome the broad aims and principles of the Bill, further detail is required to outline how the legislation will 'play out' in practical terms for public service bodies.
29. The well-being of current generations, and particularly the older generation, continues to drive forward my work and I propose that

¹⁷ Older people's lives have value, meaning and purpose when they: Feel safe and are listened to, valued and respected; Are able to get the help they need, when they need it, in the way they want it; Live in a place which suits them and their lives; Are able to do the things that matter to them

¹⁸ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/phhs/consultation/140402consultationen.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=5664>

the 'Well-being of Wales' Bill would be a better and more inclusive title, reflecting the concept of inter-generational solidarity that sits at the heart of the approach to ageing in Wales. I will work to ensure that the potential positive impacts for older people, as identified in the impact assessment on the Bill, are realised²⁰.

30. Finally, and as already indicated, my office will accept the Committee's invitation to provide oral evidence in October.

²⁰ <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs/pri-ld9831-em-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=PRI-LD9831-EM%20-%20Well-being%20of%20Future%20Generations%20%28Wales%29%20Bill%20-%20EXPLANATORY%20MEMORANDUM>