

13th September 2021

1. Do you agree with our approach to incorporate our anti discriminatory work in our corporate plan, but highlight the five areas we will be focusing on in our strategic equality plan?

Age Cymru fully supports the inclusion of anti-discriminatory work in the corporate plan. However, we would welcome further detail on how this can be achieved.

We support plans to improve qualitative and quantitative data and evidence collection so that levels of inequality in the workforce are understood in greater detail and also to identify areas where people with protected characteristics are over and underrepresented. In doing so it is important that the form of qualitative and quantitative data and evidence gathering considers intersectionality. This provides better opportunities to direct attention to areas where the need for change and improvement is greatest, and so can have a larger impact on equality objectives.

We welcome the inclusion of tackling discrimination on “family and domestic responsibilities” and “any other individual characteristic that may limit a person’s opportunity to achieve what matters to them” as this is an area where the issues of unpaid carers that also work within social care will need full consideration. Some survey respondents for the above report were older people working in health and social care and of these, a few held unpaid caring responsibilities. More detailed data not fully seen in our report shows that a considerably higher percentage (43%) of people from Black and Ethnic Minority communities took on additional care responsibilities during the pandemic. We know that people from some minority communities are overrepresented in lower income health and social care occupations and that many not employed directly by public services have less supportive terms and conditions of employment.

Our recent report “For the Moment”¹ of survey responses from older carers showed that 12% had given up paid employment to be a carer and 18% said that their caring responsibilities made it more difficult to do their job. 60% were feeling stressed and 63% were more tired. Retaining the existing social care workforce is a high priority: it retains staff that have built up the knowledge and experience with which to provide high quality care; it improves continuity of care for vulnerable people; and it reduces the resource burden of recruitment and training, therefore freeing up resources that can contribute to service improvement. Several survey respondents told us of concerns about the availability of care post-pandemic and whether they would be

¹ [For the Moment Summary of findings from older carers | Age Cymru \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#)

able to continue working. Welsh Government's commitment to additional funding for respite care to support unpaid carers will assist with immediate pandemic recovery if resources are allocated quickly and used well. In the longer term it is important that longer term solutions are developed to support carers to continue their role based on what matters most to the cared for and the carer.

The third area focused on in the use of digital technologies inequalities is an important area. Some aspects of the speedy move to online interaction have been beneficial and these positive aspects should be built upon. However, there are some issues in ensuring improvements through the use of digital technologies that require a degree of caution. Resourcing the social care workforce with digital technology in an effective way will require capital and revenue investment to provide digital technology and upskill the workforce to make the best use of resources. The availability of reliable connections (both sufficient broadband connections for all social care settings and wider community hubs, as well as good quality signal strength for areas of community social work) varies across Wales so different areas will require different approaches. Changes to traditional forms of interaction that have happened through necessity through the pandemic should be looked at to evaluate which areas have proved beneficial and which have not.

Those needing access to social care services can lack the digital skills or equipment necessary to access services through digital technologies, but this is a larger concern for many older people. In Wales 52% of people over 75 do not have broadband access and many older people do not use computers and smart phones² so for some, digital technology is a major barrier. As older people make up a large proportion of those needing social care, it is important that they are not left behind with technological changes. Our survey highlighted that access to care through digital technologies was an issue for many older people in our first survey undertaken during Summer 2020. By the time of our second survey there was some indications through qualitative analysis that though there were still many specific issues for many people, more respondents talked of improvements to access to care through the use of digital technologies. Opportunities for older people to become more digitally literate should be made available to be able to access services for those that would benefit from this.

2. Do you think our five equality objectives are achievable for the next five years? Or should we be bolder or less ambitious?

Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5 are largely achievable within the next 5 years and great improvements in objective 2 can be realised.

We recognize the importance of additional financial resources to achieve equality at work there will also be some aspects of cultural change that may take longer to fully embed across the entire workforce, especially considering contractual arrangements (current contract length, changes in contract details etc.) with providers of services

² [National Survey for Wales, 2018-19: Internet use and digital skills \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/national-survey-for-wales-2018-19-internet-use-and-digital-skills)

and the exhaustion of the social care workforce following the pandemic. The availability of appropriate training and development opportunities for all social care staff need to be resourced through additional skills training.

In order to support those working with older people to achieve their potential it is important that staff have received human rights, dignified care and dementia training. Training and development opportunities should include respectful communication, protecting privacy, promoting autonomy and addressing essential needs such as nutrition, hydration and personal hygiene in a sensitive manner. This wider range of training will assist with improving quality of care and so improve staff wellbeing. Ensuring essential needs are met will assist with improving health of those needing care and so assist with earlier intervention before people are in crisis.

3. Do you have any comments about any of our objectives?

The 5 objectives are appropriate to improving equalities. The detail of how each is achieved and which areas require additional attention require careful consideration. The consultation details specifics around digital inclusion and rates of poverty in children but does not include a focus on older people in each of these areas.

Whilst it is important that the very high levels of childhood poverty included in the consultation document is focused upon and given urgent attention, 18% of older people also live in poverty¹⁰ and their age makes it much harder for them to get out of poverty. Whilst it is difficult to include each aspect of every protected characteristic, we feel that older people are at risk of being overlooked in the plan unless more detailed consideration is given to them.

4. Do you have any suggestions about how we should measure our impact in the five areas we will be focusing on?

We have highlighted previously the importance of an intersectional approach in data collection. When changes in service delivery it is vital that people with lived experience of protected characteristics are fully involved.

Age Cymru is a registered charity 1128436. Company limited by guarantee and registered in Wales and England 6837284. Registered office address Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD. © Age Cymru 2021.