

Why are we still waiting?

Delays in social care in Wales - July 2023

Executive summary

About the research

This is Age Cymru's second annual report on delays in access to social care in Wales for people aged 55 and over. Last year our dementia advocacy project, HOPE (Helping others to participate and engage) advocacy project and Age Cymru Advice were all reporting worrying delays in older people being assessed by social care for their needs, as well as delays in sourcing care packages once an assessment had been completed.

A year on we wanted to know if the changes local authorities told us about last year were making improvements to older people's access to social care.

Conclusions

1. A picture is emerging of a less healthy population in Wales after the main pandemic period, as can be seen in the large increase in the number of older people approaching social care for help and the urgency of their needs.
2. Efforts on social care recovery have continued this year, but their impact has been reduced as a result of a less healthy population that now has a higher need for care and support.
3. Communication with older people waiting and the information they receive continues to need improvement.
4. Data collection systems are still not able to effectively monitor and report on the levels of delays in access to assessment and care.
5. Because of the change in population health, it's more important than ever to focus resourcing into earlier intervention and prevention areas to improve health and wellbeing.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should work with local authorities to ensure that reporting mechanisms are capturing information consistently across Wales.

Recommendation 2

Local authorities should assess whether their current processes for providing initial advice and information and ongoing access to advice and information are meeting the needs of older people, particularly those that are digitally excluded.

Recommendation 3

Local authorities should provide an additional focus on those individuals who are currently experiencing a wait longer than 30 days for a care needs assessment or implementation of a care package.

Recommendation 4

Regional Partnership Boards, local authorities and third sector services need to work together to improve the availability of earlier intervention and prevention support for older people.

Recommendation 5

Welsh Government, regional partnership boards, health boards and local authorities should ensure that third sector funding is provided on a sustainable basis.

Recommendation 6

There needs to be an emphasis on learning between local authorities and good practice sharing. This will reduce the volume of work that local authorities need to undertake, and help them avoid pitfalls that other local authorities have faced.

Recommendation 7

Welsh Government, Regional partnership boards and local authorities should promote the importance of adhering to the Charter for Unpaid Carers. This is an additional recommendation for this year due to the increase in volume of unpaid care being delivered. Whilst some LAs are working hard to involve unpaid carers in service changes to meet their needs, change is not fast enough.