

Older people

Introduction

Older people are a diverse group with a diverse range of needs and circumstances. According to Age Concern Cymru¹ people over the age of 60 in Wales account for 22.7 per cent of the population, higher than any other part of the UK.

- ◆ 1 in 4 actual voters are older people.
- ◆ There has been a fourfold increase between 1961 and 2001 in the number of people aged 85 and over.
- ◆ Older people who look after grandchildren in Wales provide childcare estimated at a value of £259 million per year.
- ◆ 23 per cent of older people in Wales use Welsh as their first language.
- ◆ 15 per cent of people over 65 have access to the internet.
- ◆ 89 per cent of people of all ages in Wales believe that people should all be able to continue working for as long as they want to.
- ◆ Life expectancy is growing, but healthy life expectancy is not improving at the same rate. 55 per cent of people aged 65 and over in Wales report suffering from a limiting long term illness.

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

"Older people" is not a field in itself within the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. However, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers through Legislative Competence Orders in the following fields which will impact on older people. These include:

- ◆ Field 9 – health and health services.
- ◆ Field 11 – housing.
- ◆ Field 12 – local government.
- ◆ Field 15 – social welfare.

The following secondary legislation responsibilities will transfer to Welsh Ministers in the Third Assembly:

- ◆ Cross cutting responsibility for health improvement and older people and carers.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- ◆ *The Pensions Bill* was introduced in the House of Commons in November 2006 and has completed its passage there. It contains measures to reform the State Pension and other benefits payable in connection with bereavement and pensionable age. It received its first reading in the House of Lords on 19 April 2007.ⁱⁱ

EU policy

The Member States of the European Union have agreed to tackle the challenges of ageing, as part of the EU's core strategy for growth and jobs. Their strategies are based on increasing employment, sustainable pensions systems, health and caring, and policies to promote economic participation and social cohesion.ⁱⁱⁱ

- ◆ The *Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC* means that from December 2006 it is illegal to discriminate against anyone because of their age when they apply for a job, vocational training, or courses in further or higher education.
- ◆ The European Commission published a Green paper on Demographic Change in the EU in March 2005 followed by its conclusions on addressing the challenges in its Communication in October 2006. The first Forum on Europe's Demographic Future was held in January 2007.
- ◆ The Commission's stocktaking exercise this year of Europe's Social Reality will also consider the challenges of the ageing society as they prepare to review the EU's social agenda.

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

- ◆ *The Strategy for Older People in Wales Annual Report 2005-2006* and reports on the progress made was published in March 2007.^{iv}
- ◆ The *Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006*^v received Royal Assent on 25 July 2006. A Commissioner is expected to be appointed by autumn 2007.
- ◆ *The National Service Framework for Older People* was launched in March 2006 and aims to improve health and social care services to older people in Wales.^{vi}
- ◆ In July 2003 the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee conducted a review of housing for older people.^{vii}
- ◆ *The Strategy for Older People in Wales* was published in January 2003 and reflects the findings of the report of the Advisory Group 'When I'm 64....and more'. It is the Welsh Assembly Government's ten-year action plan and aims to deal with the things that matter most in the lives of older people in Wales. Local authorities, the voluntary sector, and older people themselves are all involved in the strategy.^{viii}
- ◆ *When I'm 64....and more: The Report from the Advisory Group on a Strategy for Older People in Wales* was published in May 2002 and makes over 100 recommendations covering all of the National Assembly's responsibilities.^{ix}

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Health and Social Services Committee's legacy paper highlighted the following issue relating to older people:

- ◆ Strategic issues to successor – protecting most vulnerable i.e. children, disabled and elderly adults.

Useful links

1. The section of the Welsh Assembly Government web-site covering older people: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/olderpeople/?lang=en>
2. Age Concern Cymru: <http://www.accymru.org.uk/en/1.htm>
3. Help the Aged: <http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb>
4. DirectGov information for people aged 50 and over: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Over50s/index.htm>
5. Age Alliance Wales is an alliance of national voluntary organisations working with and for older people in Wales: <http://www.agealliancewales.org.uk/>
6. The Beth Johnson Foundation aims to develop, influence and challenge the role and status of older people in society: <http://www.bjf.org.uk/>

Further information

For further information on any aspect of older people, please contact:

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ⁱ Age Concern Cymru, *Age Concern in Wales' Manifesto for the National Assembly*, January 2007:

[http://www.accymru.org.uk/files/Manifesto%20\(Eng\).pdf](http://www.accymru.org.uk/files/Manifesto%20(Eng).pdf)

ⁱⁱ United Kingdom Parliament, Public Bills Before Parliament, Pensions Bill, April 2007:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/pensions.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ European Commission, Demographic Changes and Ageing: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_situation/demography_en.htm

^{iv} Welsh Assembly Government, Living Longer Living Better The Strategy for Older People in Wales Annual Report 2005-2006:

[http://assembly.aegis/printunit/publications/hsc%20\(12\)/strategy%20for%20older%20people%20annual%20report.pdf](http://assembly.aegis/printunit/publications/hsc%20(12)/strategy%20for%20older%20people%20annual%20report.pdf)

^v Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/20060030.htm>

^{vi} Welsh Assembly Government, *National Service Framework for Older People*, March 2006:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=439>

^{vii} Social Justice and Regeneration Committee, Housing for Older People: <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemssocjustregen/content/hnop-e.htm>

^{viii} Welsh Assembly Government, *The Strategy for Older People in Wales*, January 2003:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/olderpeople/publications/strategy?lang=en>

^{ix} Welsh Assembly Government, *When I'm 64...and More: The Report from the Advisory Group on a Strategy for People in Wales*, May 2002:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/olderpeople/publications/whenim64/?lang=en>