



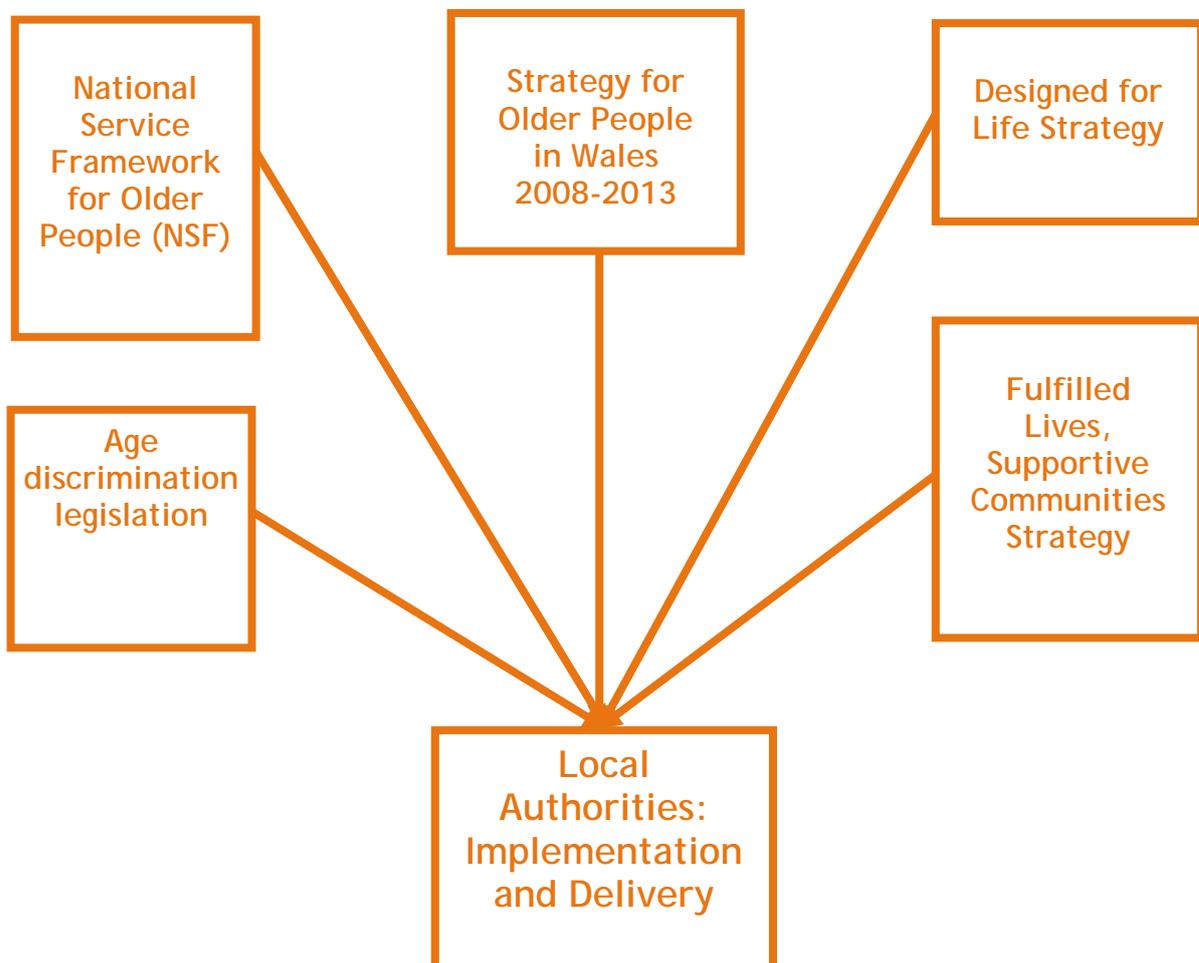
Briefing for Elected Members on Older People

Introduction and Strategic Context

The overall proportion of older people is increasing across the United Kingdom, however, this demographic trend is even more pronounced in Wales. People over 50 in Wales currently account for 35.9% of the total population, whilst those over 60 constitute 22.7%.

Local government delivers many services specifically to older people and will need to adjust all of its activities to take account of the needs of older people and the effects of an ageing population.

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide you with a brief introduction to the context and work on older people in Wales.





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The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2008-2013

What is the Strategy for Older People?

The Strategy is the main policy driver for work on older people in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government published the ten-year action plan in 2003, 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 to improve quality of life.

In the first five years (2003-2008), the primary aims of the Strategy were to increase awareness of older people's concerns and to establish processes and structures that

will help to sustain long term action. This was directed towards changing images of older people and engaging them in the development of initiatives with respect to social inclusion, strong communities and material well being so that they influence local and national policy and service development. In all these ways, the Strategy contributes to the health, well being and independence of older people.

The second phase of the Strategy was launched by the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM in March 2008. This phase will focus on a range of key

strategic areas including continuing to improve the health and well-being of older people and ways of enabling them to stay independent and active for longer.

The Strategy is focused around four themes:



1. Valuing Older People - Maintaining and Development Engagement

Strategic Aim: Promote positive images of ageing and ensure that the over 50s are able to participate as fully as they wish in their communities, giving them a stronger sense of engagement and influence.

Examples: Local authorities have established 50+ fora which have enhanced the participation and engagement of older people in local government and promoted social inclusion. Many have also established intergenerational initiatives which bring younger and older people together to generate understanding and respect between the generations.



2. Changing Society - The Economic Status and Contribution of Older People

Strategic Aim: Develop policies to increase the capacity of the over 50s to continue to work, learn, volunteer and care, making an active contribution for as long as they wish, and ensure that older people do not live in poverty.

Examples: Many local authorities have examined their recruitment practices to ensure that older people are supported in recruitment and retention. Local authorities have also worked with partners to ensure an integrated approach to tackling poverty by making comprehensive benefit advice available to older people.

3. Well Being and Independence

Strategic Aim: Improve the health and well being of older people through initiatives to promote health, as well as high quality, responsive and appropriately regulated health, social care and housing services. These will enable older people to live as actively and independently as possible in a suitable and safe environment of their choice.

Examples: Many local authorities have supported national campaigns around health issues such as Ageing Well and Keep Well This Winter and tailoring these to local areas and needs. Local authorities have also forged strong partnerships with the NHS, the voluntary sector and a range of other partners to ensure that older people's issues are reflected strategically in local plans and strategies.

4. Making it Happen - The Implementation of the Strategy

Strategic Aim: Implement the Strategy for Older People in Wales with support funding to ensure that it continues to be a catalyst for change and innovation across all sectors, improving services for older people, providing the basis for effective planning for an ageing population and reflecting the concerns of older people.

Examples: Local authorities have Strategy for Older People Coordinators who develop and implement the Strategy at the local level. Elected member champions also play a crucial role in representing the concerns of older people across authorities.



Local Government and Older People

What does it mean for local government in Wales?

In Wales, local government has been identified as the key agent for change, is the main deliverer of the Strategy and plays the leading role in taking it forward.

The emphasis of the second phase of the Strategy is on **mainstreaming** which means the consideration of older people's issues across all areas of an authority's work

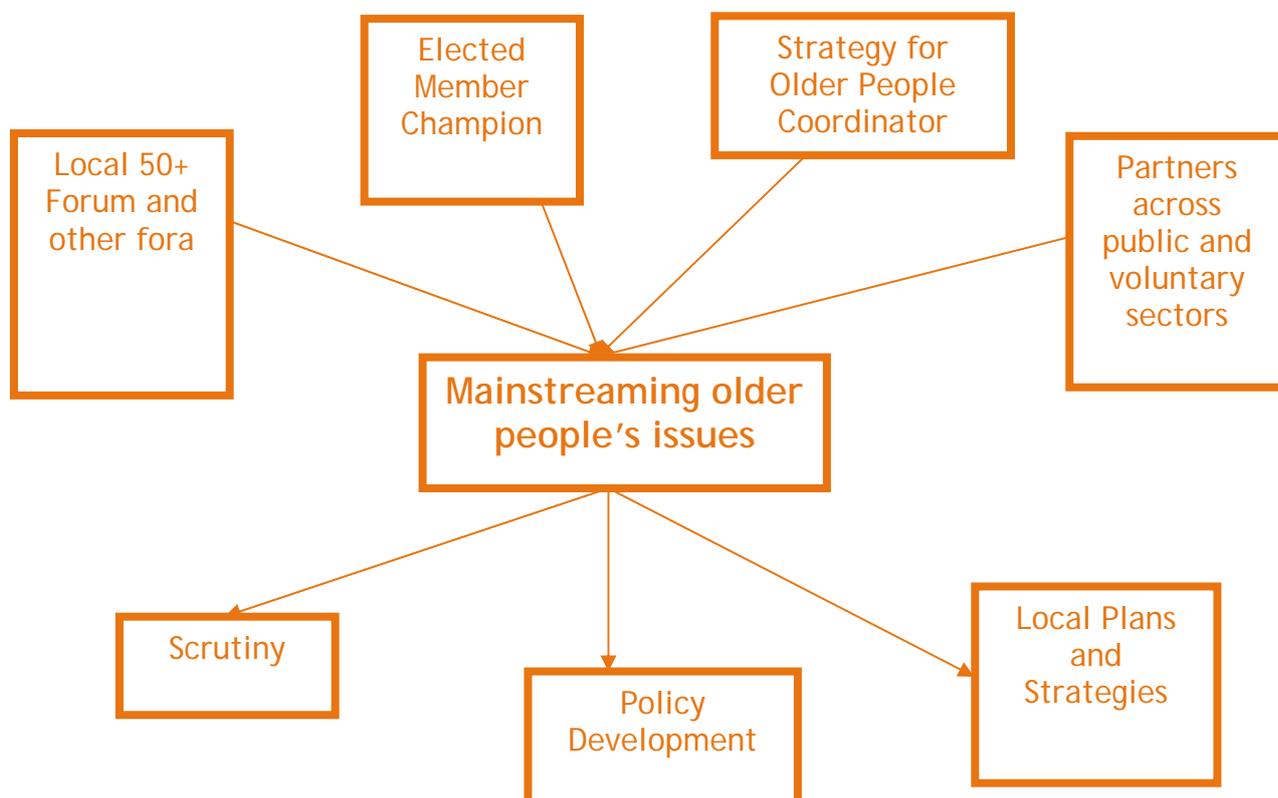
broadening the focus beyond health and social care. There is also continued emphasis on the **participation and engagement** of older people and ensuring that the diverse communities of older people have opportunities to make their voices heard.

What funding is attached to this?

The Welsh Assembly Government has provided funding to pursue this agenda. In 2008-09, local authorities

will receive £2.4m and £1.7m in funding in 2009-10. Thereafter, funds will transfer into the Revenue Support Grant and local government will receive £1m in 2010-11. This amount assumes that when the Strategy is mainstreamed across all local authority departments, the costs will be absorbed by those areas which may benefit from efficiency savings.

How does local government respond to this?





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Each local authority has appointed an **Older People Champion** who has a role to ensure the issues of older people are kept at the forefront of policy and service development. There is also a **Strategy for Older People Coordinator** in each authority whose role is to develop new approaches to the development of policy and service development in conjunction with other departments and agencies, including, Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts, local voluntary organisations and with older people. In each area a local action plan is

developed which feeds into the local Community Plan and the local Health, Social Care and Well-Being Plan.

What is an Elected Member Champion for Older People?

The definition of a champion in the Oxford English Dictionary is 'a defender of a cause or person'. The role of Champion therefore is to ensure that older people's voices do not go unheard. In addition to what has been identified previously, the role of an elected member champion is to keep the issues

of older people at the forefront of policy, scrutiny and service development. The Champion will also usually engage with older people through the various fora that exist and can, as a consequence, speak for older people's concerns across a range of issues.

One of the implementation actions in the Strategy for Older People is to prepare guidance for elected member champions on their role and this currently being developed.

Working with Our Partners

The Strategy for Older People like many other initiatives and strategies, produced by the **Welsh Assembly Government**, places significant emphasis on collaboration. It requires local authorities to work with health partners to mainstream older peoples' concerns within plans and strategies. More broadly the Strategy calls for 'meaningful partnership' between local government and the voluntary sector, private sector, older people's groups and older people themselves.

has also set up **Local 50+ Forums** which were established to expand consultation and involvement with the growing number of older people in Wales, as well as providing a focus for the broad range of issues concerning them. The fora aim to ensure that the voices of people aged 50+ are heard on the issues that matter to them. All of this work reflects the importance of engagement and the opening of channels of communication leading to a strengthened collaborative role.

However it is also important to recognise that there are a range of **other fora** that exist in local areas which have not been set up by the local authority. These include **independent older people's forums** and **pensioner groups**. These groups offer a high level of experience in terms of working with older people and in many cases have been very longstanding. All of these groups in all of their varieties reflect a mixed picture of engagement across Wales tailored to local area needs.

In terms of working with older people, each local authority



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There are also a range of other bodies which assist and challenge the different tiers of Government in Wales. The **National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales**, which has WLGA representation, provides advice on the priority issues affecting older people. **Age Alliance Wales** is an alliance of voluntary organisations in Wales who disseminate information to the voluntary sector. **Help the Aged** and **Age Concern** also work closely with local authorities

raising awareness across a variety of issues and working with them to deliver better services for older people. The **Wales Centre for Intergenerational Practice** promotes greater understanding and respect across the generations. **Better Government for Older People (BGOP)** works on the basis of partnership between all level of government, different sectors and older people. They aim to ensure older people's engagement and citizenship in all aspects of service delivery. **Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG)** is an integral part of BGOP, is made up of two representatives of older people from each local authority area, as well as representatives of national pensioner organisations, and advises government through BGOP Cymru.

The **Commissioner for Older People in Wales** which was created earlier this year, has

a mandate to scrutinise the performance of national and local government and act as an advocate for older people representing their interests.

Direct support to local government is provided by the **Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)**. A Policy Officer for Older People and Ageing based within the Equalities and Social Justice Team of the WLGA has been appointed and is working closely with local authority Strategy Coordinators on the implementation of the Strategy.

For more information, please contact David Warren, Policy Officer - Older People and Ageing, Welsh Local Government Association, Drake Walk, Cardiff, CF10 4LG / 029 2046 8611 / david.warren@wlga.gov.uk



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Finding out more

Welsh Local Government Association

<http://www.wlga.gov.uk>

Welsh Assembly Government

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

The Commissioner for Older People in Wales

<http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/>

National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales

<http://www.accymru.org.uk/en/2292>

Age Alliance Wales

<http://www.agealliancewales.org.uk/en/home.htm>

Help the Aged in Wales

<http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-cy/WhatWeDo/AboutUs/AcrossTheUK/>

Age Concern Cymru

<http://www.accymru.org.uk/en/1.htm>

Wales Centre for Intergenerational Practice

<http://www.ccip.org.uk/>