

## **Public Policy Statement – Summary**

### **Social Care Funding**

### **September 2023**

This public policy statement covers:

1. Need for social care.
2. Current arrangements for paying for care.
3. Debate about social care funding.
4. Welsh policy developments.
5. Age Cymru approach.

Social care has historically suffered as a consequence of under-funding and this situation has been further aggravated in recent years as a result of widespread reductions in public sector budgets. The question of funding social care can be broken down into two parts: funding provided by government for statutory social care services; and the financial contribution that individuals are required to make for the social care they receive.

There is a fundamental debate over the basic fairness of charging people for the care and support they have been assessed as needing. Future arrangements for funding social care should ensure fairness on the “who pays” and “how we pay” for social care, including between the generations, and should aspire over time towards universal access to personal care that is free at the point of delivery.

The contributions that older people are required to make in Wales are covered in detail in our Social Care policy statement under ‘Paying for Care’.

Age Cymru’s longstanding view is that a far more equitable system would be to ensure that care services are provided free at the point of use in the same way as NHS services. This would ensure that care is available to everyone at their time of need and spread the cost of care services across the generations, instead of the cost simply falling on those people unfortunate enough to develop care needs, which is also a barrier to accessing the help needed.

A new, fair and sustainable mechanism for funding social care in the future needs considerable thought and extensive public debate, which we are keen to be part of. This statement sets out the principles on which Age Cymru believes any new payment mechanism should be based and provides a starting point for Age Cymru to influence policy and develop more detailed positions on an iterative basis as the terms of the debate become clearer.

## **Age Cymru's principles**

### Social care:

- A collective societal responsibility for funding social care, with responsibility for funding shifting from the individual to society.
- A new and sustainable model of funding that is fair, equitable and transparent, which supports planning for future care costs.
- Sustainable services that achieve personal and wellbeing outcomes in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014.
- Wellbeing as the foundation of the service, maintained through prevention, reablement and early intervention wherever possible, whatever the setting, and delivered to a high quality so that independence can be promoted and maintained.
- Where care and support are needed, they are provided without rationing, meet holistically assessed needs, in response to what matters to the individual.
- An expanded, well supported, knowledgeable and valued social care workforce, with worth and standing in society, with shared values, enjoying an attractive and fairly employed career, and with flexibility and capacity to meet changing needs.
- A high quality social care system that is available at the right time in the right place for service users who know where to go to access it, how to navigate it and locate services locally and with ease, and who are involved in future planning.
- A coordinated and balanced, cross-sector approach to service delivery, with multiple agencies bringing together their knowledge and experience of the local community at easily located and accessed entry points and provide clear pathways.
- All older people are effectively safeguarded and protected.

### Social care funding

- A shared risk across society.
- A long term, sustainable solution.
- Arrangements founded on key principles of equity and fairness, regardless of conditions of assessment.
- Arrangements that are transparent and simple to understand and implement.
- A scope of services founded on wellbeing, encompassing health, housing and social care.

## **Age Cymru's broad outcome measures are:**

- There is enough money in the system to ensure high quality and appropriate prevention, early intervention, reablement and care.

- All components of the care and support system are adequately funded to produce high quality outcomes.
- Quality of life in care homes and through care at home is supported by sustainable levels of funding.
- Older people and their representatives co-produce models of care from the earliest stage.
- People are able to plan for long-term care in later life.
- Services are person centred.

Age Cymru expects a number of features of the current system to disappear as a result of any new funding system, including:

- cliff edges due to different eligibility criteria.
- self-funders in care homes cross-subsidising council funded residents.

## **Summary of public policy proposals**

- Social care should be free at the point of need, in line with health care.
- Older people should be an integral partner in decision making on the National Care Service. This should include a range of opportunities in different ways over time and not as a 'one off' later in service design considerations.
- All older people should be supported to make informed choices about maintaining and improving their health and independence.
- Opportunities for healthy living should be increased and barriers removed, particularly for disadvantaged older people.
- Public health messages must target older audiences in the most appropriate way and through the most relevant channels.
- Sufficient community infrastructure, good, affordable housing design and assistive technology must be available to enable older people to live independently for as long as they wish.
- The approach of health and social care services must be to facilitate, encourage and support the adoption of better lifestyles and self-care of those who might otherwise need additional care and support. This has implications for the training and education of staff across health and social care, and an expanded role for social prescribing.
- Regional partnership boards must urgently assess how unmet need can be resourced in the short term and plan service development for emerging needs in the longer term.
- As long as the current arrangements persist, the Statutory Code of Practice on Top-up Fees for Care Homes must be strengthened so that families are not unfairly asked to pay significant sums for their relative's care.
- The Code of Practice must be followed by all Councils consistently and fairly.
- In light of the changes expected with moves towards a National Care Service for Wales, it is vital that Welsh Government and regional partnership boards examine current arrangements and identify how barriers in paying for care are removed.

- While the Deferred Payments scheme is in place, awareness of this facility and its conditions should be improved, and all Councils and other interested bodies should promote it when people are considering moving into a care home.

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