

Health and Social Care Committee

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Inquiry into residential care for older people - Evidence from Pensioners Forum Wales

Pensioners Forum Wales

National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales

Civil Service Pensioners Alliance

Unite Retired Members Association

Unison Retired Members Wales

PCS Retired Members Group

PROSPECT

National Association of Retired Firefighters

National Association Of Retired Police Officers

National Federation Of Occupational Pensioners

NUT Retired Members Section

National Pensioners Convention Wales

A forum of independent national pensioner and retired member organisations working together for the benefit of all pensioners in Wales

Supported by Age Cymru

Pensioners Forum Wales is pleased to respond to the National Assembly for Wales's inquiry into Residential Care for Older People. We are very pleased to see this important issue being addressed by the National Assembly for Wales.

Pensioners Forum Wales is a forum bringing together representatives of national pensioner organisations in Wales, which includes the following organisations:

- Civil Service Pensioners Alliance
- National Association of Retired Firefighters
- National Association of Retired Police Officers
- National Federation of Occupational Pensioners
- National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales
- National Union of Teachers Retired Members Section
- PROSPECT
- Public & Commercial Services Retired Members Group
- Unison Retired Members Wales
- Unite Retired Members Association
- National Pensioners Convention Wales

Inquiry into Residential Care for Older People.

Shown below are what we believe are the key issues and concerns that the inquiry should consider in their deliberations. Pensioners Forum Wales would also like to be given the opportunity to give oral evidence to the inquiry, as we feel older people's views and experiences need to be heard before important decisions are made on the future residential care of older people in Wales.

1. Places may not be readily available in residential care homes if reports of "bed blocking" in hospitals are accurate. There have also been reports of private sector homes having to close because local authorities will not fund residents at a level which makes the homes viable. As demand increases, which it is likely to do, the pressure on places will grow.
2. A member of one organisation went to live in a care home in Llanishen some years ago. The home was run by a local authority/housing association partnership. The lady was given her own very comfortable room and at first spent her time in a small day room with four or five ladies. This seemed an excellent

arrangement. Later, as she became more frail and less able to communicate, she spent the day in a much larger day room where there was very little interplay between the residents. The staff appeared to be very kind to her and she appeared to be quite contented.

At this home the fitter residents were escorted on shopping trips and had a Christmas lunch at a local hotel. What other stimulation was provided is not known, but when she was visited in the large day room, it was a case of a large number of older people

sitting around the room ignoring the television and either asleep or gazing into space. One plus point was a large dog, which was allowed to wander around the day room and appeared popular with the residents. The quality of the food provided at this home seemed good and when the lady was extremely frail, she was allowed to stay in the dining room, on her own, to eat her meal at leisure, which she was able to do and given enough time.

3. We have been told of one gentleman who was in a local authority home in Cardiff. When the home closed he was moved to a private care home. His experience was that his quality of care in a private home was not as good as he had experienced in the local authority home.
4. Another member of our organisation spoke of an acquaintance that had been in a private sector home for many years. Over the years she had paid nearly £100K for her care. At that point her resources were exhausted. The local authority was not prepared to pay the fees the home demanded, so she had to be moved to a cheaper residence. Frail old people very often die as a result of having to move to an unfamiliar environment at such a late stage in their lives.
5. For some years now local authorities have been reducing their provision of residential homes. We understand the reason for this is to reduce their costs. This results in an inevitable deterioration in staff pay and conditions. The private care home has to make a profit. It is hard not to draw the conclusion from this, that the quality of care provided will suffer as a result of the transfer of homes to the private sector.
6. The ever rising number of older people in Wales has been grossly exaggerated by identifying those aged 50+ as older people. Only a small percentage of older people will need residential care, approximately 4.5%.
7. If as Lord Taylor claims (BBC1 21.11.11), we spend £45K each year on Wandsworth prisoners and £33K each year on young offenders; we should find a way to look after the diminishing generation, we celebrate so lavishly in the Royal Albert Hall and in Whitehall each November. As we now make special provision for older prisoners in Bridgend, it would seem that there is an equality issue to consider.
8. There is a great need to monitor the cost of fuel and taxes levied on it. Those people, who cannot afford to heat their homes in winter, may begin to stay in bed in order to keep warm. They could become bedbound and thereby create a greater, avoidable need for residential care.

Listed below are the recommendations Pensioners Forum Wales would like the inquiry to consider:

- 1.** Social services should provide information about the residential care system and homes in the area, to both local authority funded and self-funding older people entering care.
- 2.** More dedication needs to be given to eliminating age discrimination, as this is the only way to tackle elder abuse effectively.
- 3.** A proportion of National Insurance contributions should be dedicated solely to care services. It is unfair that some of those unfortunate enough to require care, bear the whole cost, whilst others pay nothing.
- 4.** The local authority network of homes should be expanded, as they are more concerned with care than profit. Care homes need better regulation and staff deserve better training and remuneration for their vital and important work.
- 5.** The Welsh Government needs to prepare a National Care Prevention Plan. Pensioners Forum Wales submitted a basic framework for a collaborative plan in May 2010 and received a response from Ms Sarah Austin, of the Independent Commission for Social Services, in June 2010.
- 6.** Older people need to be supported to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
- 7.** Older people, staff and relatives need better public information on residential service provision throughout Wales.
- 8.** Provision of adequate numbers of quality trained staff throughout the residential care sector across Wales.
- 9.** Better planning to ensure older people are not traumatised at the prospect of entering residential care.
- 10.** Inspection of residential homes to include all aspects of food hygiene and the feeding of clients.
- 11.** Unannounced inspections to residential care settings should be increased.
- 12.** The number of warden controlled sheltered housing schemes across Wales should be increased.
- 13.** Private residential care home fees should be regulated and monitored by the Care Standard Inspectorate in Wales. A full breakdown of charges should be made public and include food, accommodation and laundry costs. However government chooses

to do it, it is important to monitor properly and safeguard private care home providers, without whose services, local authorities would be hard pressed to cope with care provision in their areas.

- 14.** Staff employed in the residential care sector should earn more than the minimum wage and be rewarded on an increasing scale depending on the skills and qualifications attained.
- 15.** Married couples should be housed in the same residential care setting should the need arise.
- 16.** Adequate entertainment and stimulation to be provided by all residential care homes with some funding provided by the Welsh Government. 'Live Music Now' is a scheme that might be used for this purpose, along with singing sessions.

Pensioners Forum Wales would like to be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry and look forward to receiving a copy of its findings.

Signed - Mrs. Nancy Davies

Chair of Pensioners Forum Wales

Date – 07.12.11

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