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# Why are we waiting? Delays in care assessments in Wales



## Executive summary

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### **About the research**

Age Cymru's dementia advocacy project, HOPE (Helping others to participate and engage) advocacy project and Age Cymru Advice all reported 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. These delays have a significant detrimental impact on those individuals waiting, their carers, family and their wider support network.

Through our research we wanted to understand:

- The scale of the issue of waiting for care for older people across Wales
- The local authority plans for care service recovery
- The help available for older people who are currently waiting for care
- What Age Cymru and the third sector could do to support local authorities in recovery.

To gather the necessary information, we submitted an FOI request to all 22 local authorities in Wales and requested a meeting with social care leads.

### **Conclusions**

- 1) Efforts are being made across Wales to recover from the pandemic and improve social care for older people, and support carers.
- 2) Communication with older people waiting needs improvement.
- 3) Data collection across many local authorities in Wales is not set up to effectively monitor and report on those waiting for a care assessment or care package to be implemented.
- 4) The numbers of people currently waiting for care and support and the adverse effects this has on them, their carers, wider family and community mean that immediate support for those individuals, as well as long term change in the system is needed urgently.
- 5) More resource needs to be focused on supporting people to wait well within social care.

# Recommendations

## Recommendation 1

Local authorities should use the same case management system and ensure data captured is consistent across all of Wales. This will also assist with those who move counties being provided with a service in a timely manner. Data Wales may be able to support local authorities to provide clarity and consistency on recording at different stages of the care assessment process.

## Recommendation 2

Local authorities should assess their current procedures for first contact and ongoing communication for people needing care and make improvements where identified. This should include:

## Recommendation 3

Local authorities should specifically resource addressing 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

Welsh Government should provide a national focus, examining what help is needed whilst people wait and how this will be provided, in parity to the work on waiting well within the healthcare sector.

## Recommendation 5

Welsh government, regional partnership boards, health boards and local authorities should ensure that third sector funding is provided on a sustainable basis. Funding for third sector support services is often provided on a short-term basis, making it difficult to develop good quality services quickly, and have the resilience to be able to adapt quickly in times of crisis. Short term funding often means that recruitment is ongoing, as staff leave for improved certainty of employment.

## 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 addressed.

## Recommendation 7

Regional Partnership Boards should ensure that Population Needs Assessments include an additional focus on social prescribing and what is needed to help people maintain wellbeing. Design of such services should include engagement with older people at every level. Commissioning of such services should be provided on a sustainable basis.