Centre for Policy on Ageing

This is not a questionnaire. The questions included are for guidance and to act as a prompt. It is not necessary to answer all of the questions or even to use this form to submit your evidence if you find it more convenient not to do so.

The role of local authorities in preparing for the opportunities and challenges of an ageing society.

The Centre for Policy on Ageing has been commissioned by the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a call for evidence on the role for Local Government in respect of an ageing society. A cross-cutting Task and Finish group has been established by LGA to consider the opportunities and challenges that an ageing society presents and how local authorities might prepare themselves in the immediate and longer term to respond to these. The intention is for this programme to be completed and it's report published by March 2015.

We would welcome your views on the contribution that Local Government can offer, and the changes Local Government should make, to adjust to their local ageing communities and to maximize the opportunities for local citizens and communities to age better. It would be helpful if you can cite examples where you are aware of good or innovatory practice

Section A

Person answering the call for evidence

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Section B

The questions that follow are for guidance and to act as a prompt. It is not necessary to answer all of the questions or even to use this form if you find it more convenient not to do so. We are also happy to receive local reports and evaluations where appropriate.

The call is particularly interested in looking beyond traditional 'care and support' services to strategies that improve older-age quality of life, provide an age-friendly environment and include 'prevention' measures that promote healthy ageing in place.

We would like to hear of any innovative and groundbreaking work that you are doing, or planning to do. Examples may come from any area including strategic planning, commissioning, service design and delivery or activities developed in partnership with local networks of older people and communities.

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1. *What are the main benefits to your community with regard to an ageing society?*

Older people are often seen as a burden to society. They are often negatively portrayed whereas they are rarely seen as a great asset to Local Authorities. Older people contribute greatly to the economy through the hours of unpaid care they provide alongside the free child minding facilities that allow their children / relatives to work and contribute to society. Older people can be a huge community asset through volunteering and active participation in consultation opportunities. What is of particular importance is assisting older people to grow older with good physical and mental well being in order that they are able to be independent and actively participate in their communities for as long as possible.

In October 2012 a project was launched across Merthyr Tydfil and RCT to address the need to increase engaging with the public. The ESF funded Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board - Consultation and Engagement Project aimed to make engagement and consultation more meaningful and representative of the population, whilst at the same time ensure there was less duplication of work being undertaken across partners.

The project has worked alongside the Older People and Supporting People Coordinator to ensure that older people have had the opportunity to engage and are kept up to date on current activities that relate to their specific needs and requirements. This in turn allows for service design and delivery that reflects the older people's needs.

2. *What are the key issues for your community with regard to an ageing society?*

Our communities are not always Age Friendly. This isn't solely the responsibility of Local Authorities to address. There needs to be joint ownership between statutory and voluntary bodies but also the private sector in creating age friendly communities. To do so the following areas need to be addressed:

-   Outdoor spaces and buildings
-   Transportation
-   Housing
-   Social participation
-   Respect and social inclusion

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- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

Work is ongoing through the Ageing Well in Wales programme to define what is meant by age-friendly communities, support their implementation and establish Age-friendly champions in local communities. It is seeking to actively promote inclusion, facilitate development of shared public spaces and support and encourage communities to identify and realise the assets that contribute towards and Age-Friendly community. Finally it hopes for Age-friendly communities to feature in key strategic planning documents for the Local Service Boards, understanding and practice of Age-friendly approaches in strategic planning and implementation and to establish Age-friendly advocates within the local authority planning, housing, transport and education departments.

3. *In your opinion or from your perspective - are local authorities important as contributors to a society adjusting to an ageing population? In what ways can they contribute? What should they do?*

Phase Three of the Strategy for Older People (2013-2023), launched in May 2013, identifies the need to focus on 'creating age friendly places' as a key priority within the overall concept of improving the wellbeing of older people (defined as 50yrs+). The contribution made by reshaping social, environmental and financial resources to focus on this overall goal is a vital element to achieving success. Councils therefore are best placed to lead this action at local and national level. Active engagement with older people will allow local authorities to shape their services in the best way possible to meet to changing needs of the population with appropriate consideration given to decreasing financial settlements. Local authorities can encourage the development of community resources by supporting the voluntary sector and providing low cost no cost support such as help with funding bids and free room hire. It is important that all areas take ownership over the need to evolve to an ageing society and that joint working and collaboration is further explored between the Health Boards, Local Authorities and Voluntary Sector. An Example of this is the @home scheme which is looking to explore joined up services for older people both in the community and in health care settings.

One of the Consultation and Engagement Project's aims was to increase consultation and engagement by creating an online platform to allow for people to have their say in a quicker and simpler way (www.cwmtafhub.co.uk).

An issue has arisen with the number of people within Merthyr Tydfil that are digitally excluded. This has been a barrier to older people getting their views across. We have attempted to overcome this by providing paper based engagement literature as well as attending meetings and workshops.

4. *If you are not part of a local authority - How might local authorities complement and support your work and what might you envision or what are your particular hopes for local government to achieve?*

N/A – we are a local authority

5. *How do local authorities need to adapt to enable older people to achieve their full potential?*

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The Ageing Well in Wales programme sets out a number of key areas for development to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older for everyone. These priority areas are:

- Age Friendly Communities
- Falls Prevention
- Dementia Supportive Communities
- Opportunities for Learning and Employment
- Loneliness and Isolation

Collaboration and joint working are key to develop services to meet the changing needs of older people. Active and inclusive engagement with older people will ensure that services are created to best meet their needs.

6. *What are the key challenges facing local government in respect of health and social care as a result of population ageing? What needs to change (structurally, culturally or financially) to enable local government to tackle these challenges in cooperation with health and other partner organisations?*

The primary concern in relation to Adult Social care is the increased demand on services in a climate of ever decreasing budgets. Older People are living longer which should be celebrated. This does however have financial implications in terms of the care and support they require both to stay in the community and when this is no longer possible to move into residential and nursing care. There is a distinct lack of nursing care provision within Merthyr Tydfil which makes placements of its kind difficult and there is continued demand for Extra Care services with only one scheme at present able to meet these needs. Although we are developing robust and innovative services with an ageing population it is inevitable that demand will outstrip supply.

What is of equal concern is that a large proportion of Local Authority budgets are spent on services accessed by Older People. At times when efficiencies are needed it is often the case that Older People appear to be 'targeted' the most from any proposed cuts due to large proportion of the budget allocated to them.

7. *How is an 'ageing' strategy being developed in your area? What are the personnel, structures and processes necessary to support that strategy? What are the means by which 'buy-in' and engagement with the strategy are achieved? How is the strategy informed by the needs and aspirations of older people and how is integration achieved between officers and members and local authorities and partner organisations in the health and voluntary sectors?*

Locally the main strategic driver within the local authority is the Single Integrated Plan. A copy of information from the SIP can be found in Appendix A.

In terms of Older People's accommodation our primary driver is the Homes for Life Strategy for Older People. This strategy identified the need for increased provision of older people's services and led to the reconfiguration and development of the residential care homes, the development of the first, state of the art Extra Care scheme within Merthyr Tydfil and enhancements to community services to improve independence.

Current guidance from Welsh Government is to provide integrated health and social care services to improve outcomes for individuals. With that in mind we are working collaboratively with Cwm Taf, RCTCBC and the voluntary sector to develop a joint commissioning strategy for Older People focusing on areas of common endeavour factoring in the implications of the Social Service and Wellbeing Act and the Framework for Delivering Integrated Health and Social Care for Older People with Complex Needs. A statement of intent has been developed by the partners of this collaboration.

We have utilised the transformation grant to appoint a Lead for transformation services across the Cwm Taf region whose role will be to look at the implications of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. In the meantime the Local Authority has been tasked with creating a Well Being statement and plan to address the implications of the Act.

[If a strategy document exists please attach it].
Attachments include:

Third Phase of the Strategy for Older People in Wales
Ageing Well in Wales Programme
Homes for Life Strategy
Appendix A Extracts of the SIP
Appendix B Examples of good practice

8. *If you are within a local authority – What are the governance arrangements on ageing issues? Which officer leads on the implementation of your ageing strategy or leads on ageing issues (in the absence of a strategy). If possible please include contact details?   Which elected member or board or committee deals with ageing issues?*

The Older People and Supporting People coordinator is the lead officer on the Third Phase of the Strategy for Older People and its delivery mechanism the Ageing Well in Wales programme. The elected Older People's champion is Councillor Ernie Galsworthy.

9. *Which national policy levers and drivers assist you to prepare and respond for an ageing society locally? What has assisted you and what has been a hindrance? What would assist you to respond more actively or help you to undertake an appropriate role for your community?*

The main National strategic drivers for Older People are the Third Phase of the Strategy for Older People and the Ageing Well in Wales Programme. As an authority we are committed to Older People issues and have signed up to the Dublin Declaration. The Ageing Well in Wales Programme, of which local authorities are key strategic partners, is linking with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and European Networks to ensure that Wales has the opportunity to participate and collaborate at a local and national level.

10. *Do local authorities have a role in addressing digital exclusion or in helping their older populations deal with the national government's 'digital-by-default' strategy?*

The local authority is actively engaged in the digital inclusion agenda through the work of Communities

2.0 and 'Get Merthyr Online'.

Communities 2.0 is a Welsh Government (external website) programme which is delivered by four partner organisations – the Wales Co-operative Centre, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services, Carmarthenshire County Council and the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of South Wales. Much of the funding for Communities 2.0 has come from the European Regional Development Fund.

The programme initially worked in the Convergence area of Wales, breaking down barriers to engagement with technologies. Now it supports initiatives and projects across Wales. Communities 2.0 also supports new and existing enterprises to use ICT to improve performance, through training,

mentoring, technical support, ICT related business support, research and best practice.

Get Merthyr Online works with individuals and organisations to provide free computer sessions to people who want get online, learn how to use the web and realise its benefits. To help individuals get online 'Get Merthyr online' run open sessions across the borough that are free to attend. They can also support community groups by providing a consultation service around a group's Information Communication Technology (ICT) needs with their ICT review service. This process will enable them to deliver support that is tailored to the needs of the community. The project aims to support and help groups to understand ICT and support them to use technology.

By ensuring that the Local Authority support and develop the "Communities 2.0" project as well as the Consultation and Engagement Project, we can ensure that older people have the opportunity to get online and share their opinions on services so that their needs can be better met.

11. *How can or should local authorities support older workers and address the ageing of their own workforces?*

The Council has long been committed to Equalities in all its forms and has used the opportunity of the Equalities Bill to bring its objectives into one unified Strategic Equality Plan. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has now produced a new Equalities Policy which encompasses all of the equality schemes as previously produced by the council into Strategic equality plan.

The Council employs over 3,000 people and believes everyone should have the opportunity to work for the Council to ensure that we have a workforce which reflects the diverse nature of the communities which co-exist within Merthyr Tydfil Borough. We will introduce measures to identify and address the barriers and opportunities relating to equality and diversity in employment and to unlock the talents of people from all backgrounds the so that the Council can benefit from their skills, knowledge and experience to provide services which reflect the community it serves.

The purpose of the policy is to guide the council's approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion. It seeks to ensure equality for all, combating all forms of discrimination, both direct and indirect, on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion and belief, gender, sexual orientation or marital status and disability or age.

This applies to recruitment, training, pay, and conditions of service for employees, design and delivery of service for customers, and strategic planning and policy formation. The council will be active in ensuring it complies with the requirements of national legislation and standards, and seek to influence partners and contractors to meet their obligations through agreement and contractual arrangements it enters into.

The Council will work towards creating a workforce which reflects Merthyr's diverse population. It will ensure that no-one is unfairly discriminated against when applying for a job or during the course of their employment with the Council. All recruiting managers will be trained in the agreed recruitment and selection policy and equality and diversity issues will be a fundamental part of this process. Monitoring of the recruitment and selection process will be undertaken to ensure equality and diversity legislation is complied with. We have improved recruitment methods to promote the council as an inclusive employer.

An employee who has a concern regarding unfair discrimination or harassment at work may use one of the Council's formal procedures. We look to support our staff through the following Policies and Procedures:

- Grievance
- Code of Conduct
- Bullying & Harrassment

- Flexible Working
- Special Leave
- Health & Safety
- Sickness Absence

The above can be used in the event of a change of circumstances e.g. child care or caring responsibilities.

The focus for the Local Authority is to sustain business continuity and employ the best people with the right skills. We do not use age as an indicator, partly because it would be illegal, and partly because the skills of older people are often more advanced that those still developing their skills. As part of workforce planning we assess the age of the workforce to establish if we are likely to lose some of the older skilled worked to retirement. We then need to put plans in place to transfer these skills to others in the workforce so we are not relying on a small group of people to do the work. At recruitment we will employ older workers if they are the best for the job.

We have an Occupational Health service that will assist when any employee is unwell or in instances when adaptations are needed to assist individuals to remain at work. We also will look at ill health retirement if the worker can no longer carry on with their job due to their poor health. All employees are given equal support regardless of age.

12. *We would like to hear of any services, activities or initiatives which you believe are good practice and innovative with regard to an ageing society – please note – please provide a short description. If there are any reports or evaluation documents please attach.*

A copy of examples of innovative delivery of community services has been attached in appendix B.

The work undertaken by the Consultation and Engagement Project has been recommended by the Welsh Government as best practice and has had a case study placed upon their website to showcase this