

## **CPA-LGA ‘Call for Evidence’ on what local authorities are, and should be, doing to prepare for an ageing population and society – Supplementary analysis – Older People’s strategies.**

The CPA-LGA call for evidence has been a useful exercise that has allowed the views of local authorities and others, on how local authorities should approach the benefits and challenges of an ageing population, to be explored in depth.<sup>1</sup>

The flexible response format of the call for evidence has however meant that local authorities that have responded to the call may have chosen to emphasise particular projects and programmes being pursued by the authority and not necessarily have explored the overall strategic framework for older people within which the council is operating.

In addition, those who have responded are a self-selecting group who may vary in function and interests within the authority and are likely to have an enhanced awareness of older age issues. The local authorities that have responded, and their strategies and projects, cannot therefore be seen as representative of the degree of preparedness in local authorities as a whole.

To get a more balanced picture, a random sample of local authorities in England and Wales was selected and a supplementary analysis carried out to see which of them had identifiable strategies on ageing and older age issues.

A sample of just over fifty authorities, around one in seven, was chosen as the largest number that could be processed in the time available.

Within a local authority, an older people’s strategy may be developed in a number of different ways.

A local authority may have its own dedicated Older People’s Strategy [OP Strategy] or Older People may be covered, to a greater or lesser extent, by other strategies drawn up by the authority [Other].

For second tier authorities, including District Councils, the authority may have its own strategy or may be covered by the strategy developed by the associated first tier authority [Umbrella]. Alternatively, or as well, older people may get a mention in other strategies developed for the first tier authority [Umbrella – Other].

Some local authorities may develop an older persons’ strategy jointly with a neighbouring local or health authority [Joint] while older people may be covered, to a greater or lesser extent, by other strategies that are jointly derived [Joint – Other].

Current and recent strategies are included in this analysis but Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) are excluded.

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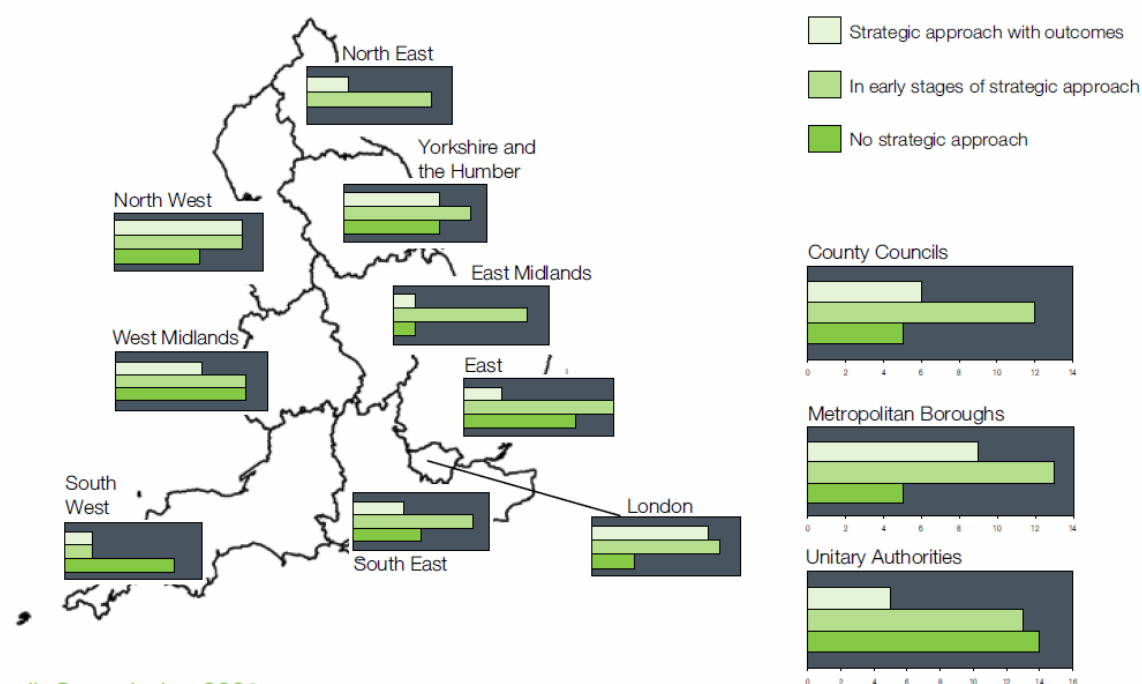
<sup>1</sup> Centre for Policy on Ageing (2015), *Submissions to the CPA-LGA ‘Call for Evidence’ on what local authorities are, and should be, doing to prepare for an ageing population and society*

## Older People's strategies in England

Previous work by the Audit Commission, reporting in 2008, found that the majority of local authorities in England either had no older people's strategy or were at the early stage of implementing that strategy.<sup>2</sup>

### Variation in preparedness for an ageing population

Preparedness varies by council type and location



Audit Commission 2008

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As can be seen from the table below, in England, in the current 2015 sample, fewer than one third of local authorities have their own strategy exclusively for older people but more than three quarters include older people to a greater or lesser extent in other strategies.

Eighteen percent (18%) of local authorities in England do not include older people or ageing issues at all in their own strategies but all include older people in one way or another when joint and 'umbrella' strategies are included.

Top tier and single tier local authorities are much more likely to have a dedicated older people's strategy than second tier authorities (48% compared with 21%) but there is great variation depending on the type of first (or single) tier authority.

Three out of the four county councils in the sample had a dedicated strategy for older people while only one out of the five London Boroughs had such a strategy. Half of all unitary authorities had a dedicated strategy.

<sup>2</sup> Audit Commission (2008), *Don't stop me now; Preparing for an ageing population*

Overall 28% of local authorities in England do not have a dedicated older people’s strategy either on their own, with a neighbouring authority or through an ‘umbrella’ authority.

**Percentage of Local Authorities with an older people’s strategy.**

	<b>OP Strategy</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Umbrella</b>	<b>Umbrella - Other</b>	<b>Joint</b>	<b>Joint - Other</b>
<b>England</b>	32%	76%	--	--	24%	64%
<b>All Tier 1 [inc London Boroughs &amp; Unitary Authorities](21)</b>	48%	86%	--	--	33%	71%
<b>County Councils (4)</b>	75%	75%	--	--	50%	75%
<b>London Boroughs (5)</b>	20%	100%	--	--	40%	80%
<b>Unitary [inc Metropolitan Boroughs &amp; Metropolitan Districts] (12)</b>	50%	83%	--	--	25%	67%
<b>Tier 2 (29)</b>	21%	69%	62%	93%	17%	59%
<b>Wales (3)</b>	67%	100%	100%	100%	33%	0%

**Wales**

The devolution of powers to The Assembly in Wales has meant that local authorities in Wales occupy a very different position to those in England. For example, evidence submitted to the CPA-LGA Call for Evidence from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council indicated that all 22 local authorities in Wales have signed up to the Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities with a commitment at local level to create communities that are inclusive and supportive for all regardless of age.

‘Ageing Well in Wales 2014-19’ and ‘The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023’ , from the devolved assembly, are ‘national’ strategies for Wales but, in their impact on local administrations, are not exactly equivalent to either an older people’s strategy at national level in England or one from a first tier local authority. The Welsh Assembly strategies provide a close ‘umbrella’ framework on older people’s issues within which local authorities in Wales can operate however some authorities in Wales have also developed separate ‘implementation’ programmes for the Welsh Assembly strategies.

Both the evidence submitted and results from the sample of local authorities indicate a high level of commitment to older people in Wales.

**Local Authority approaches to ageing**

It might be thought that the philosophy, attitudes and approach of a local authority will affect the likelihood that it will produce a comprehensive, dedicated, older persons’ strategy. For example

authorities that appoint an 'older people's champion' might be more likely to also produce an overall strategy for older people.

For the reasons outlined above, it is not possible to determine this from the submissions to the CPA-LGA call for evidence. It is also very difficult to make any definitive analytical statement from the random sample of authorities but a scan of the sample authorities does provide some insights.

The majority of Local Authorities have a cabinet structure with cabinet posts allocated to 'portfolios'. These cabinet portfolios are usually a mixture of *process*, for example 'Finance' or 'Communications', and *product* or *outcome*, for example 'Adults and Health' or 'Environment and Communities'.

On rare occasions these portfolios can be all 'process' and no 'product' but usually there is a balance between the two. That balance and the choice of portfolios may reflect the philosophy and approach of the council.

While it is difficult to produce statistical evidence to back it up, there is a perception, on scanning through the sample of authorities, that authorities with cabinet portfolios that are more oriented towards 'product' or 'outcome', are the ones more likely to have produced an older persons' strategy.

### **Where are we now?**

While some progress may have been made since the Audit Commission report in 2008 it is disappointing to find that, in England, in the current sample, 28% of local authorities still do not have a dedicated older people's strategy either on their own, jointly with a neighbouring authority, or under the umbrella of an upper tier authority.

The strategies produced by the devolved assembly help make the situation in Wales much more encouraging.

Although the propensity to develop an older people's strategy may vary with the structures and attitudes within a local authority, it is difficult to pin down reliably the factors within an individual local authority that may help or hinder the development of these strategies.

Centre for Policy on Ageing  
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