

Consultation Response Form

Your name:	Dr Sandip Raha
Organisation (if applicable):	British Geriatrics Society Wales Council
Email Address:	Sandip.Raha@wales.nhs.uk
Your Address:	Marjory Warren House 31 St John's Square London EC1M 4DN

Question 1: The Strategy sets out the areas we will prioritise in planning for our ageing society and why. Have we prioritised the right areas?

Comments:

We believe the Strategy needs to better acknowledgement of the mental health needs of older people and ensure that mental health is considered with parity to physical health. Mental health and wellbeing in older people is often neglected and comes second to physical health needs. Mental health services for older people are too often focused on only dementia and related conditions. We need better acknowledgement that older people experience other forms of mental illness and services need to be planned specifically to address these. Services for older people's mental health must be integrated fully with physical health services to ensure that older people have a holistic experience of health services.

Question 2: Are there any issues that are not reflected in the Strategy that you think should be considered when planning for an ageing society?

Comments:

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increasing focus on providing services through digital methods and for many people, this has been beneficial. We have heard about many older people successfully using digital technology to access health services, keep in touch with friends and families and stay connected with their communities. However, older people tend to struggle more than other age groups to access the internet with 75% of men and 68% of women aged 65-74 in Wales able to access the internet, compared with 97% of 16-49 year olds.¹ The Strategy must include plans to help older people to access the internet in order to fully participate in society. When services are delivered digitally, this must be promoted through non-digital channels including TV, radio and community services. While many older people are confident in using digital methods to access services, they may be less confident searching out services online. These services must be promoted through more mainstream media to ensure that older people are aware of the services that they may be able to access digitally and feel included in community.

¹ <https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/digital-inclusion-in-health-and-care/>

Question 3: Have we identified the key policies and mechanisms that can deliver real change in the lives of older people today and future generations?

Comments:

Frailty is a condition which affects many older people but about which the majority of people are unaware. Frailty is defined as a 'state of increased vulnerability to poor resolution of homeostasis following a stress, which increases the risk of adverse outcomes including falls, delirium and disability'.² Frailty is common in older people but with early identification, it can be managed and reversed. We would like to see the Strategy include plans for a major campaign about frailty to help with identification and prevention. Increased understanding of frailty within the general population would help people to understand what their older friends and relatives are experiencing and better support them as well as access relevant services.

Question 4: Does the content amount to a sufficiently ambitious response to the major public policy issue of our ageing society?

Comments:

With the inclusion of services for mental health and dementia, this is an ambitious strategy which has the potential to help Wales become a desirable location in which to grow old.

Question 5: Will the Strategy help to maximise the potential of the growing numbers of older people in our communities?

Comments:

Yes, once older people are empowered to play a more active role in society, this Strategy will help to maximise the potential of Wales' ageing population.

Question 6: Do you agree with our ambition to work towards an age friendly Wales? If so, please state what you, as an individual or organisation, are doing to help us to create an age friendly Wales.

Comments:

The British Geriatrics Society is the membership association for healthcare professionals working with older people across the UK. We have over 4,000 members, including 175 in Wales. We can use our communication channels to help to raise awareness of this initiative among our members who support older people across Wales, particularly those living with frailty and other long term conditions. Our members will be able to promote aspects of this initiative to older people and their families to encourage them to play an active role in society.

² Clegg, A, 2013: 'Frailty in Older People', *The Lancet*, 381(9868): 752–762
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4098658/pdf/emss-59306.pdf>

Question 7: How has Covid-19 changed your ability to do things that matter to you, or the way you deliver services to older people?

Comments:

There has been a move during the pandemic to deliver health services digitally, where possible. While this has worked well for many older people and should be continued where appropriate, it will be important to return to face-to-face care in many situations. Where digital services become the norm, non-digital means must be used to promote them to ensure that older people are aware of services available to them and not get marginalised.

Question 8: How can we involve older people in the re building our communities following the pandemic?

Comments:

Once the vaccination programme is complete and the pressures of the pandemic are relieved, more older people will feel confident in engaging with their communities. Virtual and physical surgeries held by Community Health Councils and local councillors provide an ideal opportunity for older people to engage and influence services on a local level.

Welsh Government review of engagement
Questions for older people

Question 9: Are you a member of a 50+ group or forum? If yes, how successful do you think the forum is influencing local and national policy decisions?

Comments:

n/a

Question 10: Does the 50+ forum benefit your local area in other ways? (Eg. by reducing social isolation or building community resilience?)

Comments:

n/a

Question 11: How do you think local and national government can better engage with older people?

Comments:

n/a

Questions for local authorities

Question 12: Does a 50+ Forum still operate in your area? If yes, how successful is it in involving older people in local decision making?

Comments:

n/a

Question 13: Does your 50+ forum benefit your local area in other ways? (Eg. by reducing social isolation or building community resilience?)

Comments:

n/a

Question 14: If a 50+ forum is not active in your local area, how do you engage with older people?

Comments:

n/a

Question 15: We would like to know your views on the effects that the *Strategy for an Ageing Society* for would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Comments:

All Welsh Govt. documents and policies are bilingual and this should continue

Question 16: Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy *Strategy for an Ageing Society* could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Comments:

No comment

Question 17: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Comments:

Encourage and support older people to understand their mental health needs similar to physical health and seek help at an early stage through GP, family members, peers and even online.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: