Link-Age in Wales – joining up services for older people

A new "one-stop" approach to the way older people will access public services was unveiled today by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Welsh Assembly Government.

The initiative called Link-Age in Wales, published in a consultation document today (July 4), joins up services across and beyond government and will simplify how people are able to access the services and help they need.

Welcoming the new initiative, Assembly Deputy Minister for Older People, Mr John Griffiths said: "This is all about providing better joined up services for older people in Wales. We are determined to improve the way central and local government link up – so that older people do not have to navigate their way around complex systems and be given the same information over and over again. We need to restructure local services around the needs of older people."

The proposals outlined in the Link-Age in Wales consultation document have been successfully piloted across the South West of England and in London and have been tailored to the needs of Wales through a Working Group which included, DWP, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Voluntary Sector Better Government for Older People and older people representatives. The main features are:

**Joint Teams and Joint Working.** Teams made up of the Pension Service Local Service staff and local authority financial assessments and benefits visiting staff who operate as a single team, undertaking single visits, taking claims across the range of benefits and, at the same time, undertaking financial assessments for services

**Alternative Office.** This involves partner organisations and voluntary organisations taking claims for DWP benefits and entitlements and verifying supporting documents.

**Partnership Fund.** This is a new DWP (The Pension Service) Fund for not-for-profit organisations to produce innovative projects to maximise benefits and entitlements for hard to reach groups.

John Griffiths said: "Development of Link-Age in Wales provides for substantive action on our Strategy for Older People in Wales commitment to tackle poverty amongst older people. It builds on an existing and productive joint working relationship between DWP, the Assembly Government and local authorities. Councils are well placed to lead joint working and co-ordinated service provision in their local community. They also play a key role in enabling older people to get involved in designing services and encouraging them to become active citizens for their own benefit and that of the community as a whole. We are also exploring how the Communities First programme can contribute to taking forward Link-Age since the two initiatives share similar objectives and working principles."

"This new initiative is an important step towards providing easy access to local help and advice that will enable older people to live healthy, fulfilling, independent lives. I would encourage all with an interest to read this consultation and to respond"

**Notes**

- The Strategy for Older People in Wales was launched on 30 January 2003 and provides
a structured basis for the Assembly and other bodies in Wales to develop future policies and plans, which better reflect the needs of older people and recognise the implications of an Ageing Society. Implementation of the Strategy is supported by £10m funding over the 4 years to March 2007.

- Copies of the Consultation Document ‘Link-Age in Wales can be obtained from DWP ken.jones2@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk. The UK Government publication ‘Link-Age: developing networks of services for older people’, can be accessed at: www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2004/linkage/

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