



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

National Service Framework for Older People in Wales

Summary

March 2006



Y Strategaeth ar gyfer Pobl Hŷn yng Nghymru
The Strategy for Older People in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to supporting older people in Wales to live long, healthy and independent lives.

However healthy or independent you may be, there may be times when you will need to access health or social care services. You should expect those services to be of a high quality, and for the staff to treat you with equality, dignity and respect.

The National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People in Wales, published in March 2006, sets out the standards required of health and social care services for older people in Wales, and an action plan for achieving these standards.

This leaflet summarises the content of the full NSF document. A copy of the full NSF, the Executive summary and further information can be accessed on the internet on: **www.wales.nhs.uk/nsf**

or from:

Older People & Long Term Care Policy,
Welsh Assembly Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff, CF10 3NQ
Tel: 029 20823454
Email: **olderpeoplensf@wales.gsi.gov.uk**

The NSF is based on 10 standards:

Rooting out Age Discrimination

Health and social care services should be provided regardless of age on the basis of a person's clinical and social need. As an older person you should not feel discriminated against because of your age.

You are encouraged to comment on your experiences, whether good or bad, in accessing and receiving health or social care services, to help the services improve their approach to older people's care.

If you want to become more involved in representing older people's views to local health and social care services, you should contact your local Older People Strategy co-ordinator who can advise you about local arrangements for involving older people, including your local Older People's Forum. You can contact them through your local authority.

Person Centred Care

Any health or social care or services that you receive should meet your individual needs. This means that:

- you are given the opportunity to express your views which are listened to and respected;
- you receive the care you need when you need it, regardless of organisational boundaries;
- you understand the reasons if services may not be provided;
- you know where and how to access ongoing support and information.

To ensure that health and social care professionals get the full picture about your needs, and work together to help meet those needs, a new process called the Unified Assessment Process has been introduced.

This should help to avoid duplication and gaps in assessment or services, and lead to better outcomes for older people.

Promoting Health and Well Being

The Strategy for Older People in Wales addresses the various social, economic and environmental factors that influence our health and well being.

But there is also much that we can do to protect our own health and enhance our chances of a long, active and independent life:



- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle** – take regular exercise, maintain a healthy diet and adequate water intake, maintain social contacts and activity, avoid smoking and excessive alcohol intake;
- **Keep safe** – remove hazards that increase the risk of falling (see page 6), get appliances checked and keep warm in winter months;
- **Make use of preventive services** – take up offers of: annual flu vaccination and a pneumococcal disease vaccination; cancer screening; smoking cessation programmes; exercise referral schemes

The NSF requires each local area to deliver health promotion programmes for older people, which will address the above issues, based on evidence of what works. Older people are therefore encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities, and to make suggestions to their Local Health Board about other types of health promotion activity they would like to see available.

- **Get regular health checks** – from your GP and other primary care services, to check your blood pressure, cholesterol level, vision, hearing, dental health etc. Always consult the relevant health professional if you have any health queries, in order to get good information or appropriate treatment at an early stage, or peace of mind if there is nothing wrong. And remember that you can also get information and advice from your community pharmacist or NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/

Challenging Dependency

As we grow older, we may become less mobile and may struggle to do things that we have always been able to do for ourselves, such as gardening, shopping, dressing or bathing. We therefore may need help with these tasks, but will still want to retain our independence and control.

Many people rely on their partner, other family members or friends to act as carers, and it is important that anyone undertaking a caring role is supported and receives any benefits to which they are entitled.

Other help may be provided by voluntary agencies, local authorities and health services. Such help could include:

- community based **health or social care**;
- **equipment** such as walking or hearing aids;
- **housing adaptations** such as ramps, hand rails, stair lifts, showers, alarms and other technological aids

Certain health conditions which are more common as we grow older, such as foot problems, malnutrition and incontinence, can seriously hinder our independence but can often be treated. They should not therefore be accepted as an inevitable part of the ageing process, but should be discussed with and addressed by local health services.



People who have been assessed as needing certain services, or those who act as carers, may be eligible for **Direct Payments**. This enables the person to buy the services that the council would otherwise provide, thereby giving the person more choice and control.

Further advice on these issues is available from your local authority - you will find their contact details in the telephone directory, the internet or from your local library.

- **Support for carers** - contact your local authority or Carers Wales 029 20811370 www.carerswales.org.uk. They will also be able to signpost to you other sources of carer support.

Intermediate Care

If you fall ill it may be necessary for you to go to hospital. However if appropriate, there should be services available to care for you in your own home or in another community setting, thus avoiding an unnecessary hospital admission.

If you are admitted to hospital, you should not have to stay there any longer than is necessary, but should be helped to return home or transfer to a more appropriate care setting, with full support. You should be helped to regain your health and independence as quickly and fully as possible.

These services are described as 'Intermediate Care', which all local NHS and local authority partners are required to develop and deliver by 2008.

Hospital Care

Obviously there will be times when hospital is the best place to be, and when you do need hospital care you should be able to access it promptly. When in hospital, you should expect the staff to understand and respect your needs as an individual, and as an older person.



As well as receiving high quality clinical treatment, your safety and well being should be protected and promoted to minimise your recovery time and the risk of any complications which may prolong your hospital stay.

Your transfer of care from hospital back home or to another care setting should be well planned and co-ordinated between all the different health or social care professionals involved. This includes effective communication about any change of medication.

Stroke

Strokes can have a devastating effect on people's lives, and the chances of having a stroke increase as we get older. People of African Caribbean and South Asian origin are at highest risk.

But many strokes could be prevented. 40% of all strokes in the UK are caused by high blood pressure. You can therefore decrease your chances of having a stroke by having regular blood pressure checks and avoiding things that cause high blood pressure including smoking, binge drinking, high salt intake, poor diet, stress and lack of exercise.

When people do have a stroke, the earliest possible diagnosis and treatment will lessen the risk of dying and increase the chance of making a better recovery. You should therefore be aware of the signs of a stroke or TIA ('mini stroke'):

Facial weakness

Arm or leg weakness

Speech problems

and dial 999 should you suspect a stroke or TIA.

Stroke patients are more likely to survive and make a better recovery if they are admitted to a specialist stroke unit. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to improving access to specialist stroke care across Wales.

Rehabilitation following a stroke can continue for months or even years, and ongoing support for stroke patients and their families is very important.

The voluntary sector plays a significant role in providing such support, particularly the Stroke Association which has a strong presence in Wales. They have a website: www.stroke.org.uk and a telephone helpline: 0845 3033 100.



Falls and Fractures

1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men over 50 will experience a fracture and the vast majority of fractures and other injuries in older people are caused by falls.

Hip fractures are the most common serious injury related to falls in older people, and severely affect the person's independence. Even if you fall but are not seriously injured, it may affect your confidence and mobility.

The *Keep Well This Winter* campaign advises older people to help prevent falls by:

- arranging for small repairs or adaptations to the home to be undertaken, eg additional stair rails, grab or hand rails
- removing or repairing frayed carpet edges to avoid tripping
- improving the lighting in dark areas
- avoiding hazards or obstacles on the stairs and in walking areas
- rearranging furniture so that it's not in the way
- wearing appropriate footwear, ie thin soled or flat shoes with an inbuilt heel
- considering asking their GP about hip protector underwear, if they are prone to falling
- taking regular, weight bearing exercise

If you do fall, even if you are not injured, you should tell your GP so that any possible causes can be identified. This may include checking your blood pressure, hearing, balance, vision, nutritional status, medication and other factors that may be causing you to fall.

Osteoporosis increases the chance of a serious fracture, and must be effectively treated. You can help to reduce your risk of osteoporosis by having adequate dietary calcium and sunlight exposure, regular weight bearing exercise, avoiding smoking and alcohol.

Mental Health in Older Age

Some mental health problems are more common as we grow older, including depression and dementia.

Depression can be triggered by life changes, loneliness, bereavement, undertaking a caring role, illness or disability and can be a side effect of some medication or of alcohol abuse. In extreme cases it can lead to suicide.

Depression can be treated by medication, social support, therapy and guided self help, so if you feel that you or someone you know is depressed, you should contact your GP. Physical activity has also been shown to reduce depression.

Dementia is a devastating disease that leads to progressive loss of mental function, including memory, language and non-verbal skills, and behavioural change. Alzheimer's disease accounts for up to 60% of cases, and vascular dementia, caused by a stroke, is the second most common type.

There is little conclusive evidence about how dementia can be prevented, but it is thought that maintaining a healthy, mentally and physically active lifestyle may help to reduce the risks.

If you are worried that you or someone you know may be developing dementia, the earlier you contact your GP the better. Early diagnosis can help the individual and their families to understand the condition and consequent changes in memory, behaviour and personality, and to access treatment and support.

As well as drug therapy, other therapy, care and support for people with dementia and their families is provided by local health and social care services, and the voluntary sector.

The Alzheimer's Society is active across Wales and can be contacted on:

- 01248 353608 (North Wales)
- 029 2043 1990 (South Wales)

Medicines and Older People

As we grow older, our use of medicines tends to increase, with 36% of people over the age of 75 taking 4 or more medicines.

Medicines should help us to maintain our quality and duration of life. However, the more medicines we take the more important it is to ensure that they are carefully managed, to ensure that they are taken as intended and do not cause adverse reactions.

Those who prescribe, dispense and administer medicines have a major responsibility in ensuring that older people gain maximum benefit from their medication, by avoiding errors and keeping people's medication under review. Each older person's medication should be reviewed at least on an annual basis, and on discharge from hospital.

If you take medicines, or care for an older person on medication, it is very important to ensure:

- the medicine is taken as directed - at the right time, with food or on an empty stomach etc
- that you ask advice from a pharmacist if buying any over-the-counter medicine, which may react with medicine already being taken
- that you are aware of any food or drink to avoid
- that you alert your doctor to any worries you may have about medicines being taken.



Implementing the NSF

The Welsh Assembly Government will work in partnership with those commissioning and providing health and social care services to older people, to ensure that services improve as required.

Progress with implementing the NSF will be closely monitored and formally reviewed every 3 years. The views of older people will be sought as part of this process, and progress reports will be made public.