



Rural Wisdom Policy Review

Older People and Rural Issues



Introduction

This review focuses on policies in Scotland and Wales that are relevant to older people and/or rural issues. It is intended to be a resource for Development Workers, older people, partners and stakeholders in Rural Wisdom sites so that local activities can take advantage of relevant policies and inform them through evidence and learning about 'what works'.

The review starts with 'people policies' (Equality and Human Rights, Older people, Health, Care and Support, Loneliness and isolation) and then moves to 'place policies' (Rural issues and communities (including Environment and Housing), Transport, and Communities leading Partnerships (including the Third Sector and Volunteering). Each of these is discussed through an older people's and rural issues lens.

In discussing the key policy areas, several common policy themes emerge which cut across and inform the specific policies. These are:

- Taking a rights-based approach
- Voice, engagement and coproduction
- Integration of health and social care
- Community led, person - centred services
- Role of the Third/voluntary sector
- Implications of Brexit on rural communities
- Challenges of and learning from Covid

This document summarises policy at March 2021; policy may be subject to change or superseded beyond this date.

Equality and Human Rights

Over the last 10 years policies on older people have been driven increasingly by a rights-based approach. Previously policies had been more concerned with addressing concerns of 'demographic time bomb' being caused by an ageing population.

This change echoed the provisions of UK Government equality legislation including the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [public sector equality duty](#) (or general duty), which came into force in 2011. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) promotes and upholds equality and human rights ideals and laws across England, Scotland and Wales.

Scottish and Welsh public authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination;**
- **advance equality of opportunity; and**
- **foster good relations.**

(Section 153 of the Act enables the Welsh and Scottish ministers to impose specific duties on certain Welsh and Scottish public bodies through secondary legislation. See [The Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#) and [Scottish Specific Duties](#).)

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from being discriminated by employers, banks and businesses, health and care providers, landlords, education providers and local authorities on a range of grounds, reflected through nine protected characteristics, including age and disability, sexual orientation and race. Older people may be protected by several of these.

One of the Act's requirements is the need for public bodies to produce an equality impact assessment on key policy or service changes which need to address any potential impact on any on any of the groups including older people. In Scotland, a further requirement for rural impact assessments has been introduced in some areas (see section on Rural issues below).

Both Wales and Scotland have put in place processes and responsibilities to ensure that human rights and equalities legislation is put into practice to promote and protect the rights of older people.

These responsibilities lie with the [Older People's Commissioner for Wales](#) and the [Scottish Government's Minister for Older People and Equalities](#), whose roles are discussed further under the section on 'Older people' below.

The National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership was established in Scotland in early 2019, in response to the recommendations made in December 2018 by the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights, and to prioritise actions that address the human rights and equality impacts of Brexit in Scotland. The Taskforce will work to establish a statutory framework for human rights that can bring internationally recognised human rights into domestic law and protect the human rights of every member of Scottish Society.

The [Scottish Human Rights Commission](#) is an independent public body, accountable to the people of Scotland through the Scottish Parliament. The Commission has a general duty to promote awareness, understanding and respect for all human rights – economic, social, cultural, civil and political – to everyone, everywhere in Scotland, and to encourage best practice in relation to human rights.

Older People

The Welsh Government's current policy on ageing and older people is published as [The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023](#).

Consistent with a rights-based approach, this phase of the strategy aims to improve quality of life for older people in ways that go beyond the traditional health and social care agenda; addressing discrimination, lack of opportunity for fulfilled lives, poverty and environments that create dependence and exclusion.

The vision behind the strategy is for all people in Wales feel valued and supported, whatever their age. And that all older people in Wales have the social, environmental and financial resources they need to deal with the opportunities and challenges they face.



Older People's Strategy - Wales

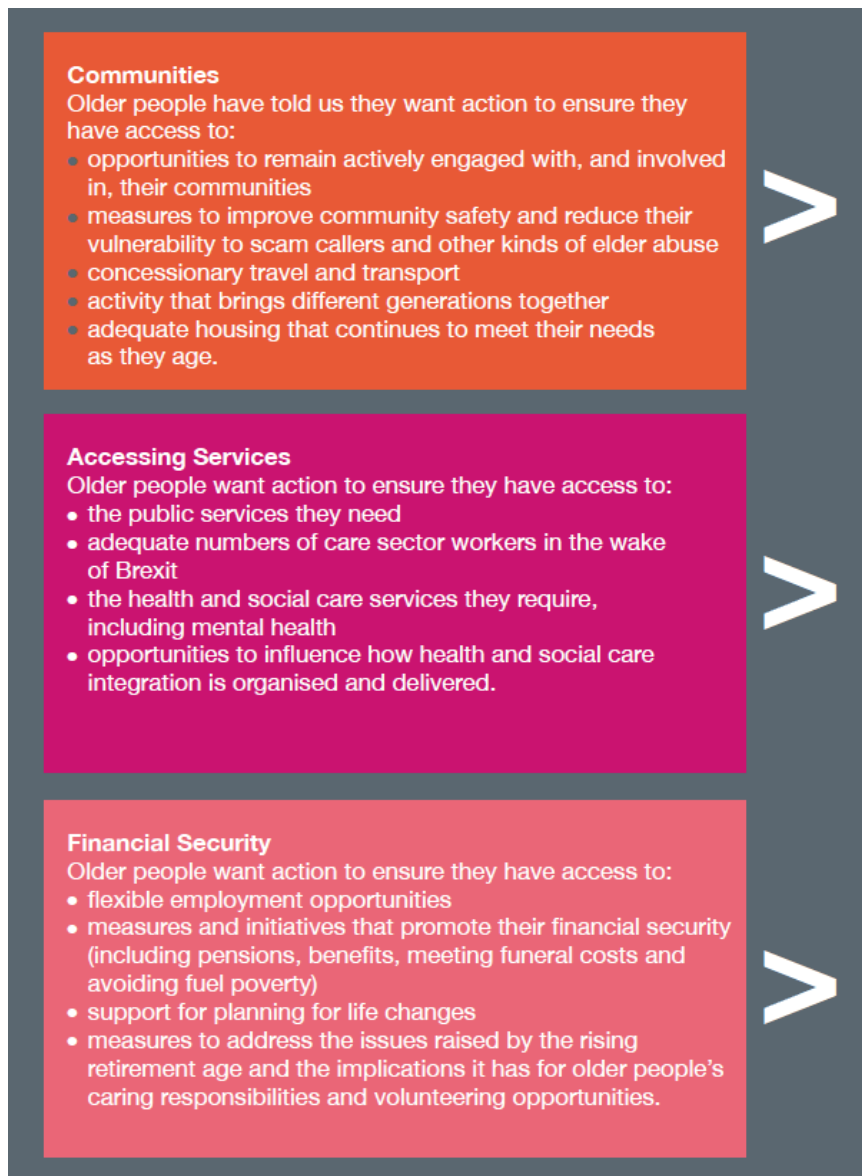
The Scottish Government published its older people's strategy [A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action](#) in April 2019. Challenging stigma and changing perceptions of older people remains a challenge in Scotland and is central to this policy. Again, consistent with a human rights approach, the framework has been developed to challenge the inequalities older people face as they age and to celebrate older people in Scotland.

It draws on the voices and experiences of older people in the Older People's Strategic Action Forum, which identified barriers to a positive older age and highlighted priority areas that should be addressed in the immediate term to deliver better outcomes for older people. These are covered in the three main sections of the strategy:

- Engaging with, and contributing to, communities

- Accessing public and other services
- Ensuring financial security

The strategy stresses that older people are a diverse group and may be ‘living in major cities, small towns or country villages, with family or friends, on their own, or in a care setting’. But the actions are mostly generic, so a challenge – and an opportunity - will be to use the framework to improve outcomes for older people in rural communities.



Older People’s Strategy - Scotland

The Scottish and Welsh Older People’s Strategies are similar in many ways. Although the three headings for each are slightly different (Social, Environmental, Financial in Wales; Communities, Accessing Services, Financial Security in Scotland) they each include the common themes of importance to older people:

- access to information and the services/social support they require;
- good relationships and active involvement in their communities;
- housing, transport and community space to meet their needs; and
- financial security.

These are all themes that have been identified in Rural Wisdom sites in Scotland and Wales and so can provide 'a hook for local activity' as well as opportunities to show how strategy can be implemented on the ground to improve the quality of life/wellbeing of older people.

The [Older People's Commissioner for Wales](#) promotes the rights of older people throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives. In relation to human rights and equalities, the Commissioner:

- Promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales.
- **Challenges discrimination against older people in Wales.**
- Encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales.
- Reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

The Commissioner's role is underpinned by a set of unique legal powers to support her in reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The Scottish Government's [Minister for Older People and Equalities](#) has specific, lead responsibilities for:

- mainstreaming equality
- human rights
- older people equality
- disability equality
- race equalities
- women and gender equality
- violence against women and girls
- LGBTI equality
- social isolation and loneliness

Older People Having A Voice

Involvement, Engagement and Coproduction

Both the Scottish and Welsh Older People's strategies stress the importance of older people having a voice and being empowered to influence change – both priorities which closely align to the outcomes of Rural Wisdom.

Making communities in Wales more age-friendly and empowering older people to effect change are two priorities under the [Ageing Well](#) Plan for 2019-20. This is part of the remit of the [Older People's Commissioner for Wales](#) who, in addition to her legal and human rights role, provides help and support directly to older people through her casework team and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon.

Volunteering Matters has shared the learning from Rural Wisdom with the Commissioner's Office and communities across Wales via Ageing Well events. They are also in regular contact with the Ageing Well network lead, whose work directly informs the Commissioner's overall activity.

This contact aims to help some of the Rural Wisdom communities (specifically, Leeswood and Pontblyddyn) on the path to becoming World Health Organisation (WHO) [Age-friendly Communities](#). (Wales doesn't have any WHO recognised Age-friendly Communities yet but all 22 local authorities have signed up to the Dublin Declaration showing real commitment at local levels to creating communities that are inclusive and supportive for all, regardless of their age. Glasgow City is the only WHO recognised Age-friendly community in Scotland).

These discussions have highlighted that rurality needs to be considered and that different approaches may be needed as a result for rural communities to achieve the status.

In Scotland the principle of older people making a key contribution to policy at both national and local level is embedded in a range of laws, policies and implementation groups which recognises the importance of hearing people's views to inform policy making.

There are a range of national working groups in Scotland that enable older people and their organisations to contribute and be involved in influencing

policy design and implementation. One example is the [Cross Party Group Older People, Age and Ageing](#) which is supported by Outside the Box.

[A Fairer Scotland for Older People: framework for action](#) is explicit about older people engaging with and contributing their communities so that they can influence a range of services and activities to improve their areas as places to live.

The [Scottish Co-Production Network](#) is open to all and free to join as a place for the sharing of learning and the exchange of coproduction practice.

Key to this approach is coproduction and real partnership when working with both individuals and communities either in terms of individual care and support, or to develop policy and (re)design services more widely.

Engaging with, and contributing to, communities

Hearing Older People's Voices

Older people have told us they want action to ensure they have access to:

- opportunities to remain actively engaged with, and involved in, their communities
- measures to improve community safety and reduce their vulnerability to scam callers and other kinds of elder abuse
- concessionary travel and transport
- activity that brings different generations together
- adequate housing that continues to meet their needs as they age.

The framework also includes the aim of "older people having 'opportunities to influence how health and social care is organised and delivered', which reinforces the Scottish Government's commitment to coproduction.

[Co-producing Reshaping Care in North Lanarkshire](#) illustrates how coproduction approaches can be used at a Partnership level to empower people to make decisions on projects and services that help them maintain

A similar commitment to coproduction is expressed by the Welsh Government within their policies for [A Healthier Wales](#) (see below) and the [Third Sector Scheme](#) which describes coproduction as "building services around the person and the community and unlocking potential resources of time, money and expertise to combine with, not replace state support. It makes resources go

much further by using them in different and new ways which strengthen individuals and communities”.

In addition to government channels such as the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales and the Cross-party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing in Scotland, there are third sector organisations in Scotland and Wales, often run by older people themselves, who campaign for better rights and are active at both national and local level – setting up local groups or contributing to national policy forums/ working groups. Two national organisations, which the Scottish and Welsh Governments work with closely, are [Age Scotland](#) and [Age Cymru](#).

Health and social care are important for older people, wherever they live. By the nature of the ageing process, they generally rely more on additional support, often due to an increase in long term conditions such as arthritis, dementia, diabetes and hypertension.

A key challenge for national and local government in Scotland and Wales is the ability to provide, and enable access to, health and social care services to increasing numbers of older people from diminishing budgets; and provide consistency of support across Scotland or Wales, especially between urban and rural areas.

Governments in both nations have seen integration of health and social care as a driver to improving services in these circumstances.

Integration in Wales

The [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) came into force on 6 April 2016. It provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. The fundamental principles of the Act

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – Key principles

Voice and control – putting the individual and their needs, at the centre of their care, and giving them a voice in, and control over reaching the outcomes that help them achieve well-being.

Prevention and early intervention – increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need.

Well-being – supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.

Co-production – encouraging individuals to become more involved in the design and delivery of services.

Multi-agency working - local authorities and health boards coming together in new statutory partnerships to drive integration, innovation and service change.

echo the themes of 'voice and control' and 'co-production' that have been discussed above.

The [Integrated Care Fund](#) was also introduced in 2016 to drive and enable integrated working between social services, health, housing and the third sector and independent providers to develop sustainable services.

In June 2018 the Welsh Government published [A healthier Wales: long term plan for health and social care](#), which set out a national programme for the ongoing transformation of health and social care. The Plan addressed key findings from the [Parliamentary Review of Health and Care in Wales](#). At the same time, £100 million was made available across Wales via a [Health and social services transformation fund](#) to support changes at national, regional and local level.

A mid-term evaluation of Transformation Fund projects commissioned by the Welsh Government found that most were potentially transformative although some were experiencing significant delays due to technical and /or structural challenges. The research showed how public services and the third sector could work more closely together, for example through community connectors type approaches and that 'hospital to home' type projects appear to have progressed well. The research noted that there had been 'limited involvement of citizens in the coproduction of project concepts or delivery to date and more focus is needed on this aspect over the remaining duration of delivery'. This may be an area Rural Wisdom could contribute to.

Both funds have been extended for a year until April 2022 with funding of £89m revenue and £40m capital for the Integrated Care Fund and together with £50m revenue for the Transformation Fund.

Integration in Scotland

In 2016 legislation (The Public Bodies (Joint Working) Scotland Act 2014) was introduced In to bring together health and social care into a single integrated system with clear outcomes agreed with the Scottish Government who invested more than £700 million over 2019 to 2020 in [health and social care integration](#). This is overseen by the [Ministerial Strategic Group for Health and Community Care](#) who meet to direct transformational change in health and community care.

A total of 31 Integration Joint Boards (IJB's) were established across Scotland bringing together Local Authorities, Health Boards, third sector representatives

with an agreed Joint budget based largely on local authority boundaries. Each Health and Social Care partnership has produced a local strategic plan which sets out the local outcomes, budget commitments and commissioning intentions based on the related [statutory guidance on health and social care integration](#).

Key is the involvement of the people at locality level /community representatives, representatives of the third sector, and people with lived experience and carers as part of a strategic planning group to inform the strategic plan. This is designed to ensure that older people and people in rural areas are involved in the process of planning for services and spending resources in their area.

National outcomes for integration state that by working with individuals and local communities, integration authorities will support people to achieve the following outcomes:

- people are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer
- people, including those with disabilities or long term conditions, or who are frail, are able to live, as far as reasonably practicable, independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community
- people who use health and social care services have positive experiences of those services, and have their dignity respected
- health and social care services are centred on helping to maintain or improve the quality of life of people who use those services
- health and social care services contribute to reducing health inequalities
- people who provide unpaid care are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, including to reduce any negative impact of their caring role on their own health and wellbeing
- people using health and social care services are safe from harm
- people who work in health and social care services feel engaged with the work they do and are supported to continuously improve the information, support, care and treatment they provide
- resources are used effectively and efficiently in the provision of health and social care

For older people and their families, one of the areas which causes considerable difficulty is delayed discharges (from hospital). The impact of long hospital stays is well documented for older people and can lead to a sense of disconnection from family, friends, loss of confidence, risk of healthcare

associated infection, and delirium and distress for family and carers who have to spend time and money on regular visits to a hospital that may be some distance from home. This can be particularly acute for people in rural areas.

New discharge pathways and services such as reablement, intermediate care and hospital at home services have been set up by some IJB's to address some of these local challenges.

Description	Service example
Reablement	
<p>A time-limited episode of enabling / restorative support at home, where care workers work with an individual and their family to build their confidence and encourage independence after an illness or decline in function</p>	<p>Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership introduced the Short Term Assessment Reablement Service to maximise service user knowledge, capacity and confidence to live independently at home by learning or relearning skills necessary for daily living, including exposure to valued social and community experiences.</p> <p>The service receives between 80 and 90 referrals per month, with on average 63% achieving independence as defined by their personal goals, resulting in no reliance on formal care with an estimated cost avoidance of over £3m in terms of social care and a little under £150k in terms of acute inpatient costs.</p>
Hospital at Home or hospital in the home	
<p>A time-limited (days to a few weeks) episode of enhanced intermediate care at home as an alternative to being treated in an acute hospital and where the care is overseen by a specialist consultant / equivalent (e.g. primary care physician with an interest).</p>	<p>Lanarkshire has the largest Hospital at Home service in Scotland, in operation since 2011. It provides acute-level care in the patient's own home. With 64 virtual beds across three geographical hubs, the service received over 2,000 referrals during 2018, with 79% managed entirely at home.</p>

Recent reviews of the integration arrangements including the Audit Scotland report (2018) which recommended the speeding up of strategic planning and financial arrangements to deliver improved outcomes for people requiring support. [https://www.audit-](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/reports-and-publications/2018-01-2018-02-2018-03-2018-04-2018-05-2018-06-2018-07-2018-08-2018-09-2018-10-2018-11-2018-12-2019-01-2019-02-2019-03-2019-04-2019-05-2019-06-2019-07-2019-08-2019-09-2019-10-2019-11-2019-12-2020-01-2020-02-2020-03-2020-04-2020-05-2020-06-2020-07-2020-08-2020-09-2020-10-2020-11-2020-12-2021-01-2021-02-2021-03-2021-04-2021-05-2021-06-2021-07-2021-08-2021-09-2021-10-2021-11-2021-12)

scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2018/nr_181115_health_socialcare_update.pdf

The Scottish Government and COSLA published a further report on progress in February 19 [joint progress report with COSLA on the integration of health and social care](#) in with a series of recommendations to speed up the pace of change and improved leadership.

The 'Exploring Rural Social Work' [website](#), hosted by Iriss, features articles and insight from a range of social work professional across Scotland, and profiles the unique challenges and perspective of rural social work.

Community-led, person-centred support

There has been a focus over recent years promoted by the Scottish Government and Health Improvement Scotland on community led, person-centred approaches including [Community Led Support](#) which have emphasised the benefits of early intervention and prevention, closer working with communities and the third sector, reducing bureaucracy, and adopting a strength based approach focusing on people's strengths and abilities rather than a deficit approach and relying on traditional service responses.

Community Led Support (CLS) takes this approach through starting from 'What Matters (to the individual) and has resulted in a more mixed economy of support to older people, including through third sector and community provision. This links to Rural Wisdom' aims of older people leading change and having a voice'.

Community led solutions have proved to be effective in both urban and rural areas by providing many people with innovative solutions connected into their own communities as evidenced in the NDTi [CLS Paper 5 CLS in Scotland MAY 2020](#).

The rurality of much of Scotland has been a challenge for CLS – and also an opportunity to test CLS as a way of working with communities to enable people to access support in very rural areas. These include large, sparsely populated areas, such as Scottish Borders, and island communities.

The island CLS sites - Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles – all face specific challenges around tackling social isolation and improving connectivity, as well as economies of scale and access to comprehensive services. In these areas CLS is seen as a way of enabling all services to respond to the needs, aspirations and ideas of local communities.

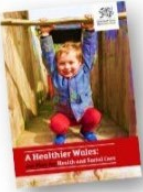
The Scottish Government along with COSLA and other partners have announced a national programme [Reforming adult social care](#) to better support people whether they live in a home, in a community setting, in a care home or in palliative care. This aims to help people to live independently, be active citizens who participate in and contribute to society, and maintain their dignity and human rights.

The principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act underpin the delivery of the [National Service Framework for Older People in Wales](#), through the setting of national, evidence-based standards, aims to improve health and social care services and equity of access for older people across Wales.

The Code of Practice (section 4) for the Act stresses that 'local application of the determination of eligibility [for care and support] must support a move away from the deficit model of care ('what is wrong?') to an emphasis on strengths, capacity and capabilities ('what can I do? /how can I get help?').

This strength-based approach is consistent with the principles and 'What Matters?' approach of Community Led Support (CLS). As found by CLS sites it requires a commitment to partnership working and leadership at all levels.

Health and Social Care Wales Leadership Principles – The Context



A Healthier Wales: Our plan for Health and Social Care:
“Dynamic leadership will be needed to instigate change, empower others and lead by example, as well as to create the conditions for continuous innovation and improvement to drive up the quality and value of services.”

The Ambition for the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy (Draft) 2019 is that by 2030, leadership will be distributed. The strategy outlines a shared vision that everyone across health and social care in Wales will model and practise compassionate and collective leadership in order to ensure high quality, continually improving and compassionate care for the people of Wales. These leadership principles along with a framework for delivery will provide a blueprint to help us deliver this vision.

Compassionate Leadership provides an evidence-based framework that can help ensure our staff are engaged and empowered and as a result provide high quality, continually improving care for our communities.

Self-Directed Support (in Scotland) and Direct Payments (in Wales) enable a wider range of person-centred support.

In 2013 the Scottish Government passed legislation - the [Social Care \(Self-directed Support\) Act 2013](#) which introduced a new approach that gives all adults, children and carers who need social care support more choice and

control. This approach is available to all older people and requires local authorities to offer a range of options including a direct payment (option 1) where a person can take control over their allocated budget and employ their own staff. To support this work [health and social care standards](#) were published in (June 2017) setting out what people should expect when accessing care and support.

In 2019 Scottish Government published the [self-directed support implementation plan](#) guiding local social care planning and delivery. To support this plan Draft Standards for SDS have recently been developed and there is a call for comments on these prior to final publication in Spring 2021. <https://socialworkscotland.org/projects/self-directed-support/>

A report in October 2019 My Support, My Choice published by the Alliance/ Social Work Scotland <https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/mysupportmychoice/> summarising the views of SDS users and made recommendations to improve practice including by quicker and easier access to social work, improved information about SDS options, changing the conversation/ relationships with social workers and ensuring that the budget allocated meets the needs.

The development of standards for SDS are due to be published before April 2021 reflecting the same themes reflected in the Adult Social Care report (see below) such as early intervention. More details are available on the [Social Work Scotland](#) website.

SDS has highlighted the need for a change in approach to commissioning support with a particular emphasis on more bespoke, individual solutions. Enabling people in local communities to come together to provide unique solutions requires local authorities to adopt a more flexible approach to commissioning and regulation. This has proved very effective in rural areas where statutory support has proved difficult to provide due to challenges with geography and economies of scale including Perth and Highland areas resulting in the development of micro providers.

The Care and Wellbeing Coop

The Care and Wellbeing Co-op are a group of micro providers providing care and support to people in rural Perthshire and are helping to shape *care* and wellbeing in rural *Perthshire*.



Whilst not specific about older people or rural areas but with implications for both, an [Independent Review of Adult Care in Scotland](#) was published in early February 2021 with human rights and quality of access informing the 53 recommendations. These include promoting working with communities, early intervention and support, and strength-based conversations. The report advocates for change the way services are commissioned with a move away from competitive tendering to trust based collaborative commissioning. There is also a call to move towards a National Care Service with an overview of standards, quality and consistency of access along with new powers for Integration Joint Boards. The report is currently being considered by the Scottish Government.

In Wales, Direct Payments can be provided for any identified need for care and support a local authority in Wales is to meet. Unlike in England (through Personal Health Budgets) and Scotland (through SDS) they cannot cover the provision of community-based healthcare.

The code of practice stresses that 'Local authorities must promote self-management and aim to increase independence by enabling people to become actively involved in shaping their care and support. In the development of, and provision of a direct payment, a local authority must encourage and support people to determine their own personal outcomes and the care and support they require to achieve these taking into account their existing support networks. People must be encouraged to find creative, flexible and innovative ways to maximise their personal outcomes'.

Dementia and mental health

An increasing number of older people across the UK are living with dementia which affects them and their families and carers.

In Scotland, the [National Dementia Strategy 2017-2020](#) sets out 21 recommendations including the creation of dementia friendly communities.

Projects to improve the lives of people affected by dementia have been supported by the [Life Changes Trust, including on transport, housing and dementia friendly communities.](#)

Legislation to safeguard and support [adults with incapacity](#) is currently being reviewed as part of the [Scottish Mental Health Law Review](#) to improve practice

Motherwell was the first dementia-friendly community in Scotland, when its town centre was declared dementia-friendly in 2012. As well as awareness training for key staff, this also involved installing clear and concise signage, ease of navigation, lighting, seating areas and types of flooring.

Aberfeldy is one of the latest communities to become dementia-friendly where one in 14 people over 65 has dementia and that rises to one in six for people over 80. From cafes and bookshops to the post office and the cinema, the whole community is involved. For instance, members of the Aberfeldy Rotary club learned that a simple change of colour can improve safety and effectiveness.

The Welsh Government have adopted the [Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018 – 2022](#) with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, stating in November 2019 that “Our vision is for Wales to be a dementia friendly nation that recognises the rights of people with dementia to feel valued and to live as independently as possible in their communities.” The document addresses:

- Risk reduction and delaying onset
- Raising awareness and understanding
- Recognition and identification
- Assessment and diagnosis
- Living as well as possible, for as long as possible with dementia
- The need for increased support
- Supporting the implementation
- Meeting the needs of specific groups

- Detailed action plan

Community Led Support in Denbighshire

Charles has early onset dementia which has affected his confidence and impacted on Hilda's on mental health. Hilda was desperate for some respite support and wanted to arrange for a sit-in service for Charles. Through Denbighshire CLS, they were referred to a Community Navigator who visited the couple at home, and asked Charles about all the things he had enjoyed in the past, his hobbies and interests. Together they discussed a variety of local opportunities which he might like to try, and now Charles is attending two local community groups every week, adapted to his needs. Charles' confidence has improved, arguably more than it would have done with a sit-in service at home, and Hilda has a much-needed break and her mental wellbeing has improved. (from [Paper 4: Community Led Support: Learning from Stories of Change](#))

Physical activity

Increasing physical activity is known to improve people's physical and mental health. The Welsh and Scottish Governments' strategies for Older People's and for Health and Wellbeing encourage this, while related funding streams recognise that older people made need more support to participate in physical activity.

The Active Scotland Delivery Plan aims to cut physical inactivity in all people by 15% by 2030, using wide-ranging approaches that include active travel funding, support for formal sports and informal physical activity, and partnership-working across the transport, education, health and planning sectors.

As with other community-based activities, these policies tend to be made real though third sector and voluntary organisations. Walking Friends Wales is one example.

Walking Friends Wales is a 3 year project set up to help older adults start walking in their communities, make new connections and be a voice for what needs to change in their local walking environment. Small groups of people meet weekly, initially led by a volunteer, to explore their local communities by foot and get to know each other.

This project is led by Living Streets, started in 2019 and was awarded £220k for three years through the Welsh Government's Healthy Active Fund and Sport Wales. The aim of the project is to reduce loneliness and isolation for those joining the walks as well for people to gain the physical wellbeing benefits that come with walking. The project is recruiting 60 volunteers who will receive walk leader training and then support groups for 12 weeks with the aim of the groups becoming self-sustaining.

Carers

Supporting informal carers of older people (who are often older people themselves) is key and there has been legislation over the last seven years in Scotland and Wales to improve the support for all carers including young carers.

The [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) places a duty on local authorities to provide an informal carer with a carer support plan and support, to ensure clear eligibility criteria are published by local authorities and for each local authority and health board to produce a carer strategy.

Data shows that the majority of caring falls to women, and to people aged 50 – 65, so the need to provide financial support through the state is important to address equality issues.

There are a range of organisations working on [improving support for unpaid carers](#) including [Care Information Scotland](#) (CIS) which is a phone, webchat and website service.

In Wales, the refreshed Carers Strategy was published in June 2013. It set out key actions for the Welsh Government and provides a framework within which agencies across Wales can work together to deliver services and support to carers. <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/130613strategyen.pdf>.

The five priority areas in the Carers Strategy are:

- Health, social care and well-being
- Identification, information and consultation
- Support for young carers and young adult carers
- Support and a life outside of the caring role
- Carers and employment

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act in 2014 was seen as ground-breaking in creating a legal duty on local authorities to carry out needs assessments for carers and to meet their eligible needs.

However, research by Carers Wales (<https://www.carersuk.org/wales>) found that only 15% of carers have had a needs assessment in the year up to March 2020. In addition: 41% had not heard of a carer's needs assessment before doing the survey; 62% say they are caring alone; and only 10% of carers have received information or advice services from local authorities over the period.

In response to these findings, Carers Wales are calling on the Ministerial Advisory Group on Carers to focus on its strategic role in moving carers rights forward and planning support services for unpaid carers. The organisation has recommended specific ways of doing this.

Impact of Covid 19 on older people's health and social care

The impact of Covid-19 on older people's health and social care has been well documented particularly in relation to the impact on social isolation and the number of deaths of older people in care homes.

In Scotland, some key policy areas legislative changes and guidance revised was produced to assist in the delivery of care during the lock down period particularly in relation to mental health. This has prompted concerns raised about the potential of this impact of this on human rights. For example Health Protection Scotland [guidance on COVID-19 for social or community care and residential settings](#) was published on 12 March 2020 which limited visitors in care homes and hospitals.

To keep people safe in their own home further [clinical guidance for nursing home and residential care residents](#) (26 March 2020) was also published along with [clinical guidance for the management of clients accessing care at home, housing support and sheltered housing](#) (26 March 2020).

Isolation and Loneliness

Isolation and loneliness can affect anyone, anywhere but has been shown to be a particular problem for older people living in rural areas. Both the Welsh and Scottish Governments have recently published strategies to combat social isolation and loneliness.

In February 2020, the Welsh Government published [Connected communities: a strategy for tackling loneliness and social isolation and building stronger social connections.](#) The strategy sets out the vision for a connected Wales and has four priority areas:

- Increasing opportunities for people to connect. This priority sets out how the Welsh Government will work with others to increase the range of opportunities, to ensure awareness of them and encourage and support people to use them.
- Improving community infrastructure that supports connected communities. This includes planning, housing and transport, to support people to come together.
- Cohesive and supportive communities. This aim sets out some of the areas where the Welsh Government is taking action already and how, working in partnership, it can go further.
- Build awareness and promote positive attitudes. This sets out how the Welsh Government will raise the profile of loneliness and social isolation and reduce stigma.

The strategy covers rural and urban areas of Wales. It highlights connectivity as a particular issue affecting rural communities – both through digital access and transport provision.

In line with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, this strategy focuses on approaches that reduce the risk of, or prevent, loneliness and social isolation or that intervene early, before these become more entrenched. It also recognises the need to ensure support is available for those who are already lonely and socially isolated.

The strategy focuses on the role Government can play – particularly in fostering environments where community links and connections can be made - and how it can support local authorities, wider public services, the third sector and the private sector. It describes the important role individuals can play in supporting and looking out for each other and their communities.

Older people in Rural Wisdom sites in Wales fed into the consultation to develop the strategy and should be able to use it to guide their activities to build community connections.

Examples include the ['Sunshine Café' in Leeswood](#) - a volunteer run community café which opens every Thursday morning for local residents of all ages to get together and have a chat over a tea or coffee. In response to a survey about



the café, one resident commented ***"It has made a big difference to the community and for people that live alone."***

The café is an example of how listening to what local communities would like and working with them to achieve it, not only meets this need and utilises local knowledge and skills, but also creates a space for support and services to meet with people and work with them in an asset-based way.

The Scottish Government published [A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections](#) in December 2018.

This highlights the distinctive nature of isolation for older people and in rural areas and sets out four key priorities to tackle social isolation and loneliness:

- Empower communities and build shared ownership
- Promote positive attitudes and tackle stigma
- Create opportunities for people to connect
- Support an infrastructure that fosters connections

An Implementation Group for the strategy is jointly chaired by the Scottish Government (Minister for Older People and Equalities), and COSLA, with a membership drawn mainly from Two national organisations, which the Scottish and Welsh Governments work with closely, are third sector organisations.

Details on <https://news.gov.scot/news/new-group-to-tackle-loneliness>

There is some frustration that the Implementation Group has not yet developed an Action Plan nor agreed any criteria for the £1 million fund the Scottish Government has allocated to support the strategy. This is partly due to Covid-19 putting plans for implementing the strategy on hold. As an immediate response, the Scottish Government made funding available to support people shielding and tackle isolation during the pandemic through, for example, Age Scotland phone lines. Longer term plans should be reported on shortly.

The Campaign to End Loneliness has recently produced [‘Promising Approaches Revisited: Effective action on loneliness in later life’](#), a framework and guidance for tackling loneliness and isolation. This includes more than 50 examples from across the UK, including some in Scotland and Wales that were started during the first phase of Rural Wisdom.

Loneliness and isolation among older people have increased dramatically during the Covid pandemic. The community response however to provide support to older people and other vulnerable people during this time has been outstanding in many areas and there have been many examples of how communities themselves have provided support and assistance with meals, shopping and prescription collection along with keeping in touch with people who live alone supporting the importance of adopting a community led approach into the future.

The [‘Promising Approaches Revisited: Effective action on loneliness in later life’](#) guidance includes a section on how many communities’ and voluntary groups’ responses in Scotland and Wales to tackling loneliness and isolation have adapted during this time.

Further discussion on the impact of Covid on policy areas – and the role of the third sector and local communities working in partnership with statutory agencies can be found at the end of the review.

Rural issues and communities

Rural policy

In Wales, [The Rural Health Plan](#) published by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2009, stated that “ageing population is increasing faster in rural authorities

than in urban areas, compounded by the outward migration of young people and inward migration of older people. This will have a significant impact on local service needs and support systems across health and social care”.

Two particular features distinguish the rural from the urban scene in Wales and both have an impact on health conditions. They are:

- The problem of access to services for those living in the remoter communities
- Difficulties with integrating services provided for the individual when some are NHS based with others coming from local government and the voluntary sector.

The Plan was concerned with improving integrated service delivery across Wales to ensure that the future health needs of rural communities are met in ways which reflect the particular conditions and characteristics of rural Wales.

These principles have now been incorporated into more recent legislation, particularly the [National Service Framework for Older People in Wales](#) and [A healthier Wales: long term plan for health and social care](#) and the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) (below).

The [Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development](#) Programme (2014-20) has been funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union (EU) through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The Wales-wide Programme has supported a wide range of activities designed to increase the sustainability and resilience of Wales natural environment, land-based sector, food businesses and rural communities.

The new National Development Framework 2020-2040 (NDF) seeks to create vibrant rural places with access to homes, jobs and services. It recognises the challenges facing the rural economy and that the planning system should respond by supporting rural communities and appropriate new development and diversification. It notes that Brexit will affect both agricultural and regeneration programmes that have been shaped by LEADER and other wider European programmes. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-01/ndf-explanatory-paper-rural-areas.pdf>

Although neither the Environment Act (Wales) Act nor the Rural Development Programme mentions older people living in rural areas specifically, the NDF is clear that ‘the futures for rural areas are best planned at the regional and local level’. This means that older people trying to lead change through Rural

Wisdom need to engage with Public Service Boards (see below) to influence the development and use of Strategic and Local Development Plans.

The Scottish Government has long been committed to a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive economy and in 2018 commissioned a report [Bringing rural policy into the mainstream](#), which made three recommendations, listed below, on how this could be achieved by the National Council of Rural Advisors (NCRA):

- Ensuring rural policy is embedded in all policy making and decision-making processes and ensuring national economic plans and industry-led strategies are joined up to promote the rural economy to become “the way things are done”.
- Developing an interim Rural Economic Framework (REF), aligned to the National Performance Framework to provide a structure to enable transition, including the development and implementation of a new approach and delivery model for rural policy, development support and investment
- Creating a [Rural Economy Action Group](#) (REAG), which has the clout to get things done and set the tone for change - established in 2019.

The [Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) introduced duties to consider the impact of any new national policy on island communities. The legislation contains an obligation for public bodies to carry out an impact assessment to determine whether or not any policy or any change to service will adversely affect an island community. This ‘island proofing’ ensures that anything that:

“in the authority’s opinion, is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in the area in which the authority exercises its functions.” Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, section 8(1)

This has been followed by a consultation process on introducing new legislation to consider the impact of policy changes on mainland rural communities:

[Safeguarding Scotland's remote rural communities](#).

However, several local authorities with rural populations have already introduced local requirements for consideration of the impact of policy or service changes on rural communities including Scottish Borders which aims to highlight any potential negative impact on issues such as accessibility to services, transport and economic impact.

The Scottish Rural Development Programme provides money and support for projects run by businesses, individuals and groups to help create vibrant rural communities, protect and enhance the environment and support rural businesses.

A range of funding streams for rural areas is available in Scotland, some of which are European Funding streams and, as in Wales, there are concerns about the potential impact of Brexit on future funding arrangements. The Scottish LEADER Programme invested more than £63 million from 2014 to 2020, while benefiting 1,034 projects and aiding over 2.25 million people. LEADER ends in April 2021 and there is considerable uncertainty about a pilot programme which the UK government is said to be developing as a replacement.

[Scottish Rural Action](#) is a third sector organisation whose purpose is to ensure that all people living and working in rural Scotland have the power to enact change in their communities and can actively engage with peer groups, government and policy makers in order to do so.

It works with members and partners at national, regional and community levels to:

- build a grassroots-led rural movement in Scotland that connects rural communities with each other and with politicians and decision-makers;
- collaborate with groups that may face additional barriers to having their views heard to create platforms that better enable their participation in the rural movement;
- collectively develop a cross-sectoral, locally-informed understanding of rural Scotland's economy, society and culture that shapes local practice and national policy;
- deliver the biennial Scottish Rural Parliament and a Rural Manifesto for Scotland.

There are a number of examples of resources and support available and examples of this on the website including the work in Ettrick and Yarrow valley community council.

Environment, energy, and sustainability

[The Environment \(Wales\) Act](#) recognises that demands on the country's natural resources - nature, land, water and air - are increasing. The Act outlines

a way to secure healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems for the future whilst still meeting the challenges of creating jobs, housing and infrastructure.

Specifically, the Act provides an iterative framework that ensures that managing our natural resources sustainably will be a core consideration in decision-making. This includes:

- [Natural Resources Wales](#) producing a State of Natural Resources Report that gives an assessment of natural resources and how well Wales is doing to manage them in a sustainable way
- A National Natural Resources Policy produced by the Welsh Government that sets out the priorities, risks and opportunities for managing natural resources sustainably
- Area statements – NRW will produce a local evidence base, which helps to implement the priorities, risks and opportunities identified in the National Policy and how NRW intends to address these.

A new biodiversity duty included in the Act helps to reverse the decline and secure the long-term resilience of biodiversity in Wales.

The Scottish Government is committed to a greener, more sustainable approach to energy production and has invested heavily in alternative sources of power including wind power. Today, it is estimated that renewable energy produces 90 per cent of the electricity used in Scotland and more of it includes ownership by communities. This has had a positive spin off for some rural areas as community funding opportunities have been provided in partnership with some energy development companies.

The [Community and Renewable Energy Scheme \(CARES\)](#) encourages the local or community ownership of renewable energy across Scotland. The programme aims to contribute to meeting the Scottish Government target of 1GW of community and locally owned renewable energy by the end of the 2020 calendar year, and 2GW by 2030.

Energy costs are a big concern for most older people. This is particularly concerning as there is serious risk to health if older people are not heating their homes sufficiently.

The [Scottish House Condition Survey: 2018](#) shows that one in four Scottish households was living in fuel poverty (619,000), up from 583,000 in 2017. Older households are more than twice as likely to live in “extreme fuel poverty” than

families, with 13 per cent affected compared to six per cent. Previous figures show that more than half of single pensioners live in fuel poverty, and four in ten pensioner couples.

Older people tend to be more affected since they are more likely to live on a fixed income, in a rural community, or have an older, hard-to-heat home. They are also less likely to have a smart meter or use the internet to shop around for a cheaper energy tariff.

The Fairer Scotland report indicates the need for greater investment in and awareness campaigns around Scottish Government energy efficiency programmes, such as Home Energy Scotland, which could make a tangible difference to people's quality of life.

Housing

Good quality, accessible and affordable housing, coupled with support when required, is essential for older people to continue to live in rural areas rather than moving away into more populated areas away from their own communities or families.

In many areas of Scotland and Wales, there is a significant affordable housing challenge with private new build housing often prioritised above affordable smaller, accessible housing which is important for older people to remain in their own communities particularly in rural areas. In addition, in rural areas many private homes have been brought for second homes or for private holiday lets. As discussed above, fuel poverty has major impacts on the quality of many older people's housing.

The Scottish Government has encouraged a broader range of housing with support for older people through new models of care including extra care housing and promoting the use of [intermediate care](#) so that people can live in their own homes.

[Age, Home and Community: a strategy for housing Scotland's older people 2012-2021](#), monitored through the [Age, Home and Community Monitoring and Advisory Group](#), sets out the vision that older people in Scotland are valued as an asset, their voices are heard and they are supported to enjoy full and positive lives in their own home or in a homely setting.

This policy focuses on approaches to maintain people's ability to live independently in their own home, including increasing adaptations, and digital

technology driven housing support where appropriate, including telecare and telehealth.

Key to this is delivering flexibility in new affordable supply of suitable housing for older people – and 91% of houses built by housing associations and councils in 2016-17 met Housing for Varying needs standards and older people have been able to access to Shared Equity schemes. As part of the aim to provide greater help for people living with dementia, a dementia and housing design guide has been produced.

A review of the policy was published in 2017 and a refresh of the policy [Age, Home and Community: the next phase](#) was published in August 2018. This was informed by older people themselves - a recognition that it is important to listen to what older people themselves have to say.

Housing Options is an information and advice process that councils use when someone approaches them with a housing problem and was initially focused on reducing homelessness. ([Housing Options](#)). More recently this approach has been broadened out to make sure older and disabled people receive appropriate advice and information.

The ability to access equipment or adapt a home to enable older people to remain in their own homes if their health or mobility deteriorates is very important and there is guidance for councils and other organisations on [equipment and adaptations](#).

Often housing support is linked with the accommodation such as sheltered housing schemes or private retirement developments. There is guidance available to promote good practice in [housing support services](#) and in managing owner-occupied sheltered/retirement housing.

In Wales, the focus of Welsh Government guidance on the provision of affordable housing in rural areas is on encouraging local planning authorities to work proactively with local communities and local delivery partners, particularly Registered Social Landlords, to identify suitable sites and a broad range of delivery options.

To support this policy guidance and enabling role, the Welsh Government also takes fiscal measures to discourage the balance of second home ownership and affordable housing, particularly relevant in rural areas.

In December 2020, the Welsh Government announced increases in land transaction tax the Welsh version of stamp duty tax hike on second homes in Wales) to help raise £13m for social housing. The move is part of the Welsh Government's budget for 2021-22 - and came into force immediately. It will see second home-owners paying a 4% levy when they buy properties up to £180,000, rising to 16% for homes worth at least £1.6m.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) explains that a key part of the local authority strategic housing role is planning for and facilitating the provision of affordable housing in the area to meet housing need. This involves a range of different approaches:

- rigorous assessment of local housing markets, housing need and housing demand
- the use of planning powers to ensure that housing developers assist with the provision of affordable private housing
- partnerships with housing associations to ensure that social housing grant, and other resources, are invested to develop new social housing and low-cost home ownership schemes
- empty homes strategies to ensure that existing homes can be brought into use
- supporting the improvement of private housing stock with loans, equity release schemes and grants

The Wales Centre for Public Policy published [What Works in Tackling Rural Poverty](#) in 2018. This evidence review of interventions to improve rural transport noted that the Welsh Government had supported a wide range of programmes to address rural poverty but recent estimates suggested that almost a quarter of the rural population of Wales is living in poverty. The causes of rural poverty are complex and multi-faceted, but transport in rural areas is known to be an important contributory factor.

Through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020, which is funded by the Welsh Government and European Union (above), the project is seeking to develop a sustainable Community Transport network through building the resilience and capacity of the Community Transport sector in Wales. In 2017, CTA secured £1.1 million to deliver the [Connecting Communities in Wales](#) project to build and support a demand responsive transport network in all communities across Wales.

Since December 2017, the project has had significant achievements, from creating new partnerships and services, hosting Transport Innovation Networks across Wales, delivering a range of training to community transport providers,

Bus Buddies is one of several services delivered by Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO), an organisation that brings together the very small rural community transport operators across the county. Bus Buddies could be described as 'befriending on wheels'. It provides support and companionship for people who need additional support to be able to use community or public transport to get out and about.

and securing almost £1.8 million worth of funding for the community transport sector across Wales.

The Connecting Communities in Wales project will be ending in December 2020 and so has recently released a suite of resources looking at how community

Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport (LWCT) is a not-for-profit Social Enterprise providing services for residents in the mid-Powys area of Wales. This area, adjacent to what some call the 'Green Desert of Wales', is very rural and sparsely populated. There is very little public transport so getting to the shops, hospitals or other services can mean a long journey.

LWCT run a Community Car, Shopping Bus and Outings for local, mainly older, residents. Few grants are available so to make costs affordable, LWCT subsidise the service through an Events Recycling Service and contracts with Powys County Council to manage and operate some of the Council's most rural school transportation routes.

transport providers can undertake effective fundraising to develop initiatives such as 'Bus Buddies'.

As for Wales, Scotland's transport system must work for older people if it is to be fit for purpose and feedback from older people themselves – including through Rural Wisdom - has demonstrated that good transport systems are a crucial tool for access to services, and tackling loneliness and isolation, both of which are a particular challenge in rural areas.

Age Scotland has produced a [summary report](#) of their findings. From major process of consultation with hundreds of Scotland's older people on their transport needs.

This ensured that older people's voices were heard in the process of shaping the new [National Transport Strategy \(NTS2\)](#) which was laid before the Scottish Parliament on 5 February 2020 and emphasises the commitment to a transport system that reduces inequality, is accessible to all and affordable.

Onward aimed to design and develop a financially sustainable service for Scottish people with dementia to support the transition of retiring from driving, keeping them both mobile and connected to their communities. In parallel, Go Upstream put people with dementia together with travel service staff, in order to help them share experiences and expertise, improve travel services and build a better understanding of dementia by designing solutions together.

These projects have enabled people living with dementia to co-design practical solutions for people who had to retire from driving, drawing on their own direct

Specific transport initiatives have been undertaken for older people, for example people with dementia, to improve transport planning and staff understanding.

However, whilst there has been some progress made in some cities with the provision of a broader range of accessible transport, challenges remain to provide regular, accessible transport in rural areas.

At local level many third sector organisations provide accessible transport in the form of minibuses or volunteer driver schemes which help older people and those with disabilities to access health appointments or trips to shops or attend local activities. One example is Berwickshire Wheels in Scottish Borders



Berwickshire Wheels is a Community Transport Service that:

- Provides affordable and accessible transport
- Is available to anyone struggling to access transport
- Allows people to keep their independence longer
- Has a dedicated team of volunteer drivers
- Can be hired by community groups
- Offers free registration to anyone for life

Berwickshire Wheels has a COVID-19 delivery service and COVID-19 transport to healthcare for anyone during these difficult times. [Click here](#) for more information.

Another example of local people coming together to improve local transport is



the [Upper Tay Transport Group](#), based in the Aberfeldy area of Highland Perthshire and initially supported through Rural

Wisdom. The group has used the Perth and Kinross Council's Community Transport Fund to employ a part time development worker to help them extend sustainable community transport initiatives including lift sharing and bicycle hire.

Planning for Community Wellbeing

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) established Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. Each board must carry out a well-being assessment and publish an annual local well-being plan. The plan sets out how they will meet their responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and improve joint working across all public services in each local authority area in Wales.

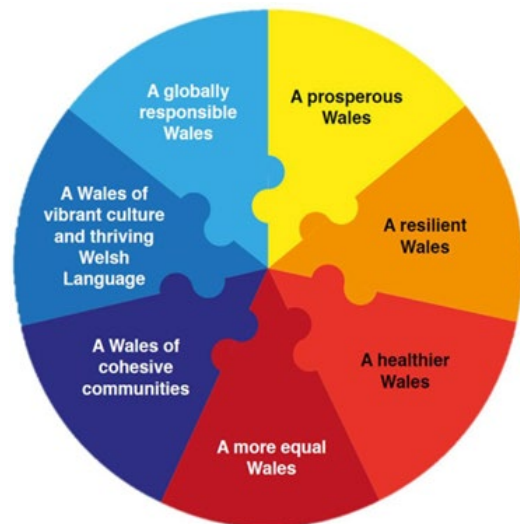
The diagram below shows the seven goals of the Act – which bring together key policies.

The statutory members of each PSB must include:

- The Local Authority
- The Local Health Board
- The Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority
- Natural Resources Wales

In addition, the following are invited to participate:

- Welsh Ministers
- Chief Constables
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Probation Services
- Voluntary Organisations



Community planning in Scotland is also about how public bodies work together, and with local communities, to design and deliver services that make a real difference to people's lives. The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) which helps to empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings (see below), and by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services.

The Act drives public service reform by bringing together local public services with the communities they serve and provides a focus for partnership working that targets specific local circumstances through a Community Planning

Partnership (CPP). There are 32 CPPs across Scotland, one for each council area. Each CPP focuses on where partners' collective efforts and resources can add the most value to their local communities and to reduce inequalities. Each local authority/CPP has a duty to produce a local improvement outcome plan with more specific plans for each identified locality within the authority.

Community participation lies at the heart of community planning, and applies in the development, design and delivery of plans as well as in their review, revision and reporting. Consultation is no longer enough - CPPs and community planning partners must act to secure the participation of communities throughout. www.cpsupport.scot

Community Trusts - Land reform and asset transfer

The [Land reform: Community right to buy](#) legislation allows communities in Scotland to apply to register an interest in land and the opportunity to buy that land when it comes up for sale. This was extended to premises with the Asset



The Galson Estate is a community-owned estate of 56,000 acres of coast, agricultural land and moor in the North West of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The estate comprises 22 villages with a population of nearly 2,000 people. In addition to being landlords for the estate and managing all estate business in-house, the Trust undertakes a large range of projects on behalf of the community. Current projects range from renewables and energy efficiency projects to tourism and youth projects. Funding gained from the Wind Turbines at Ballantrushal is distributed through the Trust's Community Investment Fund which provides grants to community led projects.

transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and this has been used in rural communities to protect essential services such as shops which may not be commercially viable. An example of a Community Trust which has used these powers is the [Galson Estate Trust](#) on Lewis.

More widely, [Foundation Scotland](#) is involved in administering approximately £4million each year in community benefit funds from wind farms across Scotland. This is an example of how communities can use [Community benefit clauses in public procurement in Scotland](#) - clauses that feature in public sector

contracts in Scotland and are a way for the public sector to ask the suppliers they buy from to give something back to the community the goods or services are being bought for.

Scottish legislation on land transfer has a long history rooted in communities wanting greater control over where they lived and worked as tenants on large private estates. The interest in community trusts in Wales is probably more recent but is growing rapidly.

[Community land trusts](#) (CLTs) in Wales are community-owned organisations run by their members with a primary purpose of developing affordable homes. The National CLT Network lists some 225 existing CLTs across England and Wales, about 60 of which have developed 700 homes between them.

[Cynefin Community Land Trust](#) is a new community land trust set up to cover the area of mid and south Wales, to support projects which deliver affordable and sustainable homes with land, with opportunities for occupants to develop land-based businesses. The objective is to help regenerate rural Wales, giving young people the opportunity to live there.

Third sector and volunteering

The third sector is crucially important to putting policy into practice in Wales and Scotland. Examples of its contribution have been referred to in sections above including on Health and Social Care, Rural Issues, and Transport among others.

Both national governments have policies that formally recognise and support the third sector in its role in local partnership working and its contribution to service delivery.

The [Third Sector Scheme](#) (TSS) is unique to Wales and is a statutory requirement of the Government of Wales Act 2006. The scheme requires the Welsh Government to set out how it will promote the interests of third sector organisations and describes how Government and the third sector will work together and communicate with one another.

At the heart of the scheme, updated in 2014, is the idea of a new approach to public services through coproduction. The Welsh Government describes this as “building services around the person and the community and unlocking potential resources of time, money and expertise to combine with, not replace

state support. It makes resources go much further by using them in different and new ways which strengthen individuals and communities”.

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales. It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, [Wales Council for Voluntary Action](#) (WCVA). The network works with citizens, volunteers and Third sector groups to identify and address what matters to them. Core activities are to strengthen the third sector and volunteering through: Enabling and supporting; Being a catalyst; and Engaging and influencing.

During the pandemic WCVA has been producing regular [COVID-19 updates and guidance](#) for the third sector in Wales.

Local authority and volunteer partnerships

A [New Welsh Government report](#) (December 2020) commends local authority and volunteer partnership for rapid response to COVID-19. Ruth Marks, CEO of Wales Council for Voluntary Action, said:

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, the voluntary sector has stepped up its services to provide vital support to those most vulnerable. 22,528 people have registered to volunteer this year on Volunteering Wales and WCVA, County Voluntary Councils and Local Authorities have worked in collaboration to ensure these volunteers were able to support people in need”.

In March 2020 the Welsh Government launched a £24 million fund to help the voluntary sector respond to the coronavirus. The Voluntary Services Recovery Fund (VSRF) focuses on reducing inequalities across society as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The funding will also provide the resources for the voluntary sector to embed safe practises to carry on delivering essential services across Wales. Grants will support not for profit organisations working at a community scale up to a national level in Wales and can be between £10,000 – £100,000.

The [Third sector resilience fund for Wales](#) to provide survival and recovery support for voluntary organisations in Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will involve a blend of 75% grant and 25% initially interest free loan to be available to voluntary sector organisations towards the costs of ongoing

revenue expenditure, including salaries. Organisations can apply for up to £100,000. The fund is split into three strands; Survive, Improve and Diversify.

In Wales, [Volunteering Matters](#), a Rural Wisdom partner, has been co-ordinating volunteering by individuals during the pandemic. These roles range from reducing loneliness and isolation to improving health and wellbeing, in local communities throughout Wales. This builds on Volunteering Matters' role in supporting and encouraging individuals they work with to have a voice on matters that directly affect them. They also share learning from people and communities they invest in widely, including to the Welsh Government.

There is also a thriving third sector in Scotland which includes charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups who deliver essential services, help to improve people's wellbeing and contribute to economic growth. It plays a vital role in supporting communities and relies heavily on volunteers. The Scottish Government provide funding for [third sector interfaces](#) to support collaboration between third sector organisations and local authorities and who provide a single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within local areas. There is a TSI in each local authority area in Scotland.

In 2019 the Scottish Government published [Volunteering for All: national framework](#), which recognises the importance of volunteering to Scotland and sets out the framework and strategic outcomes to promote volunteering.

There are numerous funding opportunities for the Third sector in Scotland including the Lottery and [funding to help voluntary organisations to develop social care services and promote social welfare \(section 10 funding\)](#)

Despite positive policies and funding streams being made available, there is still often a difficulty in finding younger volunteers in rural areas. To address this, Rural Wisdom produced [Tips for Getting People Involved](#) to encourage formal and informal volunteering in rural areas.

Covid-19 and digital inclusion

During the current pandemic when traditional services were unable to operate resilient communities have been a key feature of support right across Scotland and Wales, where local people have come together to provide support for those people in need or self-isolating including providing meals, shopping, prescription collection and regular contact and support to reduce isolation.

Earlier sections of this review have described the funding that has been made available by Welsh and Scottish Governments to local communities and the third Sector to provide support to older people and help increase community and organisational resilience.

[Digital Communities Wales](#) is a Welsh Government project which is delivered by the Wales Co-operative Centre. It supports third sector and other organisations that are working with digitally excluded people. This includes delivering digital inclusion activities during the pandemic so they can make a bigger impact.

In Scotland, a key way of combatting the impact of social isolation due to the pandemic has been [TEC Scotland](#), the Technology enabled care programme which aims to ensure greater digital inclusion led by the Scottish Government

Digital connections in care homes

One of the challenges has been for older people in care homes who have not been able to have family visitors for many months. To address this the Scottish Government has produced [Adult social care – winter preparedness plan: 2020 to 2021](#) and the [Digital Approaches in Care Homes Action Plan](#) and has committed funding to ensure that all of Scotland's care homes have access to digital devices, connectivity and support to help their residents enjoy the benefits of online access.

The purpose of this funding is to provide residents in care homes with a package solution that enables them to use digital devices to support their health, wellbeing and connection with family and friends.

and delivered with [Connecting Scotland](#).

Concluding Reflections

This review has covered a wealth of Welsh and Scottish Government policies that relate to older people living in rural areas.

These **policies generally take a rights-based, strength-based approach** to older people's wellbeing and **recognise the importance of coproduction and local communities' contribution** to decision making and service provision.

Although there is a wealth of policies and strategies, **there is relatively little about older people in rural communities specifically**. Much of the rural legislation is **concerned with the economy, planning and the physical environment**, rather than local communities.

Approaches to supporting and sustaining rural communities in Wales and Scotland have often been led by the availability of EU funding programmes, notably LEADER. Brexit now presents a challenge to these and it will be important to monitor alternative sources of funding from the UK Government.

Recent progress in Scottish Government policy affecting people in rural communities includes **the introduction of rural impact assessments** – currently for the islands but likely to be broadened. Longer-standing Community Empowerment legislation enables land and asset transfer to Community Trusts, which has helped communities to provide affordable housing as well as run local shops and services.

There are starting to be opportunities for **asset transfer to communities** Wales too, **but it is important that this – wherever it takes place - is really for community benefit and not local authorities transferring services and facilities they can't afford to run in a time of austerity**. This financial climate will worsen as a result of Covid and if communities are not to be 'set up to fail', there must be efforts to create real partnerships between public bodies to co-produce and co-design services and sustain rural communities.

This partnership approach is also vital to translate policy into practice so it can have a positive effect on older people living in rural areas. Otherwise, as Rural Wisdom and other programmes have found there is likely to be a 'policy - on the ground divide'. The review highlights this in relation to Carers legislation in Wales and the strategy to tackle Loneliness and Isolation in Scotland.

Successful implementation of policies will rely on local organisations and people taking the initiative and working together to use policies as hooks to make change happen. This has been shown through the Community Led Support Programme (CLS) and Rural Wisdom activities in relation to, for example, support and transport that meets people's needs.

The Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted this approach with local communities and third sector organisations coming to the fore with flexible, person centred support. **Where local authorities and partners have worked with communities to do this in a non-siloed, joined up way, it has been effective** in providing support and increasing community connections and resilience.