



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Scrutinising Changes to Community Services

Guidance for Local Authorities

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people across Wales. The Commissioner and her team work to ensure that older people have a voice that is heard, that they have choice and control, that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against and that they receive the support and services that they need.

The Commissioner and her team work to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

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Section 12 Guidance

This Guidance is issued under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006.

Bodies subject to this Guidance issued under this section must have regard to the Guidance in discharging their functions.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/30/contents>

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Foreword

One of my priorities as Commissioner, as set out in my Framework for Action 2013-17¹, is to protect and improve community services – non-statutory services such as day centres, public toilets, libraries and transport that are often described as ‘lifelines’ by older people.

Despite the fact that they are as important to older people’s health, independence and wellbeing as statutory health and social care services, community services across Wales are at risk due to reductions in public spending, something of great concern for many older people.

Furthermore, older people often feel that they have few opportunities to voice their concerns over changes to community services, or that their needs are not fully considered when decisions are made.

Within a challenging financial climate, I understand the difficult decisions facing Local Authorities. However, I expect Local Authorities and other key service providers to fully consider and review the implications upon older people of closing a key community service and that every effort has been made to mitigate any impact.

That is why I have published this Guidance, which is issued under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006². It is designed to ensure that robust scrutiny is undertaken when changes to community services are proposed, essential to ensure that there is not a disproportionate impact upon older people and that alternative approaches are considered.

This Guidance is delivered in two parts:

- Part 1 examines the importance of current Equality Impact Assessments and promotes the need to use Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIs) when changes to community services are being considered. Part 1 applies to all public service bodies responsible for delivering community services for older people.
- Part 2 examines the crucial role of scrutiny around changes to community services and is targeted towards elected members and officers in local government. The aim is to improve the quality of scrutiny and ensure that the impact of closing down or reducing the provision of a community service on older people is thoroughly and rigorously analysed and

¹ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/Framework_for_Action.sflb.ashx

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/30/contents>

considered.

This Guidance was produced in collaboration with the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association, whose advice and expertise has been invaluable and I am very grateful for their contribution. I would also like to thank colleagues in the Wales Audit Office, Scottish Human Rights Commission and Welsh Local Authorities, in particular Pembrokeshire County Council and Cardiff Council, for their support in developing this Guidance.

At a time of real change for local government, this Guidance is designed to be a useful, practical document that will lead to better, high quality impact assessments. It should be embedded within working practices to ensure that high quality and thorough EHRIAs underpin future proposals on community services.

As I have consistently emphasised, protecting and improving community services will lead to cost savings for Local Authorities and other public services providers in the medium to longer term by supporting people to maintain their independence, reducing the need for costly formal support delivered through statutory health and social care services.

An innovative approach to service delivery, underpinned by effective EHRIAs can make a huge difference to our communities and, ultimately, to older people's lives.



Sarah Rochira
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Context

The loss of key community services, such as public buses, toilets, community and day centres, libraries and lifelong learning continues to be a matter of great concern for older people. The closure or reduced provision of these services is already having an impact on their lives as a result of decisions made by Local Authorities and other public service deliverers across Wales.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act³ is, potentially, a groundbreaking and transformative piece of legislation, which should ensure that public bodies take a longer-term, sustainable view on service delivery, with the focus on prevention and outcomes for the individual.

However, the financial outlook for Local Authorities for the coming years remains considerably challenging. Since 2010, Local Authorities have had to reduce funding by £720m, and can expect to face a further £941m budget shortfall by 2019^{4,5}. It is expected that funding will not return to 2010-11 levels until 2022-23 at the earliest, meaning the continued retrenchment of public service spending⁶.

With further budgetary reductions expected, further difficult decisions will be made on the future of community services across Wales. It is therefore imperative that Local Authorities and others fully consider the implications of these decisions on older people, an age group that often rely on these services to maintain their health, independence and wellbeing.

Whilst the Commissioner recognises the budgetary pressures placed on Local Authorities, older people must be able to continue to access community services in one form or another. Community services must not be seen not as optional costs or non-essential luxuries, but as the vital community assets that they are for individuals. It is therefore essential to take an asset-based approach and see community services as integral to delivering key policy priorities and containing the costs of statutory services.

Local government reform in Wales is also likely to have a significant impact on the structures and services provided by Local Authorities over the coming months and years. There has been a great deal of debate since the Welsh Government published its proposed local government map in the Summer of

3 <http://gov.wales/legislation/programme/assemblybills/future-generations/?lang=en>

4 <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/councils-and-unions-to-lobby-parliament-over-fair-funding-for-wales>

5 <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/latest-wao-report-issues-warning-on-cuts-to-council-services>

6 <http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications?item=11641&offset=0>

2015 and whilst a decision on the debate on the number, size and structure of Local Authorities is yet to be made, it is crucial that the emphasis on the quality of services provided for older people and others is not lost.

This two part Guidance complements the following priorities within the Commissioner's Framework for Action 2013-17⁷:

- Embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services;
- Protecting and improving community services, facilities and infrastructure; and
- Tackling prejudice, inequality and discrimination.

This Guidance also follows on from the Commissioner's previous publications on community services:

- The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales (February 2014)⁸;
- Effective Engagement with Local Authorities: Toolkit for Older People (July 2014)⁹; and
- Best Practice Guidance for Engagement and Consultation with Older People on Changes to Community Services in Wales (July 2014)¹⁰.

This Guidance is published under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006¹¹. The purpose of the Guidance is to ensure that high quality EHRIAs and scrutiny on changes to community services exist across local government and other public service bodies in Wales. When changes are proposed this Guidance should help Local Authorities and other bodies to fully consider the implications on older people. Tighter and more impactful assessments and scrutiny from the outset should lead to Local Authorities and other service deliverers taking a longer-term view within current financial parameters.

7 http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/13-05-23/Framework_for_Action.aspx#.VWwfyGctAdU

8 http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/14-02-25/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.aspx

9 http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/14-07-01/Effective_Engagement_with_Local_Authorities_Toolkit_for_Older_People.aspx

10 http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/14-07-01/Canllawiau_ymarfer_gorau_ar_gyfer_ymgysylltu_ac_ymgynghori_%c3%a2_phobl_h%c5%b7n_ar_newidiadau_i_wasanaethau_cymunedol_yng_Nghymru.aspx

11 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/30/section/12>

Previous research and evidence in this area suggests that scrutiny in Wales could be improved. For example:

- The ‘Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery’ (2014) concluded that the fundamental importance of scrutiny in driving improvement was not recognised, that scrutiny is often under-developed and that organisations must regard scrutiny as an investment to deliver improvements and future savings¹².
- The Wales Audit Office ‘Good Scrutiny? Good Question!’ improvement study (2014) found that whilst local government scrutiny in Wales is improving, councils need to do more to develop consistently rigorous scrutiny to increase public accountability in decision-making¹³.
- The Welsh Government’s ‘Evaluation of Welsh Local Government Executive and Scrutiny Arrangements’ (2015) concluded that there is considerable variation in the ways that the cabinet system has impacted upon local decision making processes, that scrutiny of partnerships and joint scrutiny is currently poorly developed, and that there is limited public engagement and participation in decision-making processes¹⁴.
- The Wales Audit Office study ‘Supporting the Independence of Older People: Are Councils Doing Enough?’ (2015) found that a lack of data is making it difficult for councils to demonstrate the impact of their services in supporting the independence of older people and that this weakens their decision making and scrutiny when setting future priorities. Measures should be established to judge inputs, outputs and impact in order to better understand the effect of budget reductions and provide support for oversight and scrutiny¹⁵.

The voices of older people are heard throughout the Commissioner’s work and their views, concerns and priorities are reflected in the Guidance. A series of discussions were held with older people’s networks and groups in Autumn 2015, and the Commissioner’s office met with older people at the following venues: Bridgend, Gwalchmai (Anglesey), Haverfordwest (Pembrokeshire), Blaenavon (Torfaen), Llandudno (Conwy), Abergavenny (Monmouthshire), Cardiff, Carmarthen (Carmarthenshire), Wrexham, Connah’s Quay (Flintshire).

12 <http://gov.wales/docs/dpsp/publications/psgd/140120-psgd-full-report-env2.pdf>

13 <http://audit.wales/publication/good-scrutiny-good-question-auditor-general-wales-improvement-study-scrutiny-local>

14 <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/150108-welsh-local-government-executive-scrutiny-arrangements-en.pdf>

15 <http://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/Independence-Older-People-2015-English.pdf>

As listed bodies under the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act, all Local Authorities and other relevant bodies must have due regard to this Guidance.

Future changes to community services must not proceed without a full and robust analysis of the impact that these will have on the health, independence, wellbeing and rights of older people.

Scrutiny: What is it?

Robust scrutiny and challenge can help Local Authorities to promote equality of opportunity and demonstrate engagement with stakeholders such as older people. Effective scrutiny takes on-board EHRIA recommendations and fully considers the likely impact on different protected groups. It can provide a neutral forum on debates around community services, bridging local people, communities and decision-makers. The key question is: how does scrutiny add value?

The Welsh Government Statutory Guidance from the Local Government Measure 2011 recognised that scrutiny “needs to be independent, well-resourced and effective in order to identify any weaknesses in service delivery and then to propose improvements...it is vital that all councillors play a full and vigorous role in scrutiny¹⁶”, whilst the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery concluded that “public scrutiny is a particular and essential form of accountability in the public sector...the independence of scrutiny must be strongly asserted and protected...to be effective in holding to account and constructively identifying opportunities for improvement, scrutiny must be well resourced to support robust and challenging questioning¹⁷.”

“Most equality impact assessments never see the light of day, most reports to the Council board never go through scrutiny...the cuts to services always affect the most vulnerable in society...I can’t go to the shops because there’s no public toilet.” (Wrexham Over Fifties Forum & ‘Wrexham Include’ Group members)

Taking into consideration demographic changes and the need to take an asset-based approach to maintain the independence of older people, **it is crucial that scrutiny focuses on longer term outcomes as much as possible in the current financial climate¹⁸.**

Scrutiny should review policy priorities and outcomes and challenge the executive about its actions to deliver stated policy goals. Scrutiny also has the right to ‘call in’ key decisions and ask the decision-maker to think again, or to refer the decision to full council for consideration. Scrutiny should be seen as the ‘last line of defence’, and elected members should make sure the right questions are asked around community service proposals and answered before agreeing to any service delivery changes that may affect older people.

¹⁶ <http://gov.wales/topics/localgovernment/publications/statguide/?lang=en>

¹⁷ <http://gov.wales/topics/improvingervices/public-service-governance-and-delivery/?lang=en>

¹⁸ <http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications?item=11641&offset=0>

Good Practice

Pembrokeshire County Council has a dedicated scrutiny committee to address older people's issues. The role of the Older Persons, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review or scrutinise issues and services relevant to health and wellbeing, particularly those relating to older persons¹⁹.

One example of how the Committee can influence decisions was the recent 'Learning Pembrokeshire – Managing the Welsh Government Funding Reduction for Adult and Community Learning' proposal. Committee members expressed concerns regarding how the cabinet decision had been reached without public consultation and without sufficient consideration of how closing down Community Learning Centres will impact on older people and others²⁰. As a result, the cabinet decided to undertake a public consultation exercise to examine the issue further, with a final report to cabinet by November 2015²¹.

Scrutiny can help elected members to challenge levels and quality of delivery, conduct detailed investigations into the progress of specific objectives or projects, and add value to impact assessments to ensure they are robust. The WLGA report 'The use of EIAs in the Public Sector' found that scrutiny of EIAs needs to be strengthened, with a greater role for equality leads and to ensure that scrutiny panels, e.g. boards and committees, have the necessary equalities skills and knowledge to fulfil their role²². Another key issue is the support provided to scrutiny. Practitioners often have to deal with 'crowded' Forward Work Programmes, hectic schedules and often have to ensure that discussions over crucial community services are given sufficient time and attention and do not fall behind other priorities.

“Across Pembrokeshire, only 7 of 83 earmarked public toilets were actually closed (following consultation)... This is good, although no one asks if these are up to the standard they were before.” (50+ Central member, Pembrokeshire)

19 http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=101,2159,2170&parent_directory_id=646

20 <http://mgenglish.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=283&MID=3305#A122904&LLL=0>

21 [http://mgenglish.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/Published/C00000281/M00003161/\\$\\$\\$Minutes.doc.pdf?LLL=0](http://mgenglish.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/Published/C00000281/M00003161/$$$Minutes.doc.pdf?LLL=0)

22 <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/equalities-publications/report-l-review-of-the-use-of-equality-impact-assessments-in-the-public-sector/>

Looking ahead, the reform of local government and the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (WFG) (Wales) Act with statutory Public Services Boards mean that scrutiny in Wales will undergo some radical changes in the coming years. The development of effective joint scrutiny arrangements for new and emerging collaborations is also likely to be a key focus for public services over the next few years²³.

Who scrutinises and how to scrutinise?

Scrutiny applies to all Local Authority elected members, particularly the following:

- **Cabinet/Executive:** The cabinet or executive is responsible for proposing key strategies, the policy and budget framework. It has power to take all executive decisions within the policy and budget framework agreed by the Local Authority.
- **Scrutiny Chair:** Good chairing can enhance the effectiveness of scrutiny by providing leadership, ensuring that scrutiny works efficiently and making best use of resources, and by promoting scrutiny both within the organisation and externally.
- **Scrutiny councillors:** Their role is to review policies and proposals and challenge whether the executive has made the correct decisions to deliver policy goals. These councillors examine the impact and implementation of cabinet decisions, hold the Leader and cabinet to account, and scrutinise external organisations who provide services to residents.
- **Scrutiny panels:** When scrutiny boards or committees are discussing community service proposals they should request information about the EHRIAs that have been conducted. EHRIAs help to inform their discussions and comment on proposals. Scrutiny panels can explore these EHRIAs in greater detail to ensure that they are based on strong evidence and engagement.

²³ http://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/WAO_Scrutiny_Report_English_2014.pdf

According to the Four Principles of Good Public Scrutiny²⁴, published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, effective scrutiny should:

- Be a ‘critical friend’ to executives, external authorities and agencies;
- Reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public; and
- Make an impact on the delivery of public services.

The Centre has also identified characteristics of good scrutiny, including the following (further details may be found in Annex A)²⁵:

Better Outcomes	Ensure democratic accountability succeeds in driving improvement in public services. Scrutiny should have a clearly defined and valued role in the council’s improvement and governance arrangements. It has dedicated support from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provide councillors with high-quality analysis, advice and training.
Better Decisions	Ensure democratic decision-making is accountable, inclusive and robust. Local Authorities should ensure that scrutiny councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively, and that scrutiny is councillor-led and meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to them.
Better Engagement	Ensure the public is meaningfully engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services. Scrutiny should be recognised as an important council mechanism for community engagement, and facilitating greater citizen involvement in governance. It should enable the ‘voice’ of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes

24 <http://www.cfps.org.uk/mission-and-purpose>

25 <http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications?item=11641&offset=0>

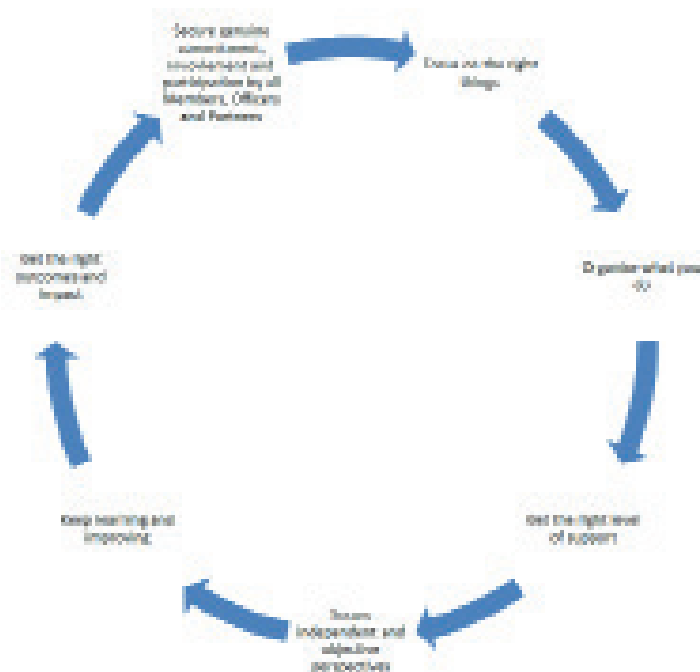
Good Practice

In 2011/12, Anglesey County Council's Environment and Technical Services Scrutiny Committee produced a report on the 'Future Provision of Public Toilets on Anglesey'²⁶. The report acknowledged that public toilets are "often seen as a lifeline to the elderly community" and that it was therefore vital that older people were consulted with "in relation to any proposed shortlist for closure at an early stage".

Following consultation with older people it was found that awareness about alternative provision was low, and therefore it was recommended that "officers work with existing organisations offering the Public Toilet Grant Scheme to improve signage and promotion of these facilities".

"They may do some consultation...but if they do this in the evening, then that's too late for older people, not to mention transport...everything is moving online now and not everyone can use it or afford it." (Blaenavon Older People's Forum member, Torfaen)

The WLGA's 'Role of Overview and Scrutiny in Assessing Equality Performance' guide refers to the Welsh Government's 'Seven Success Factors' model (2008) to ensure effective scrutiny²⁷:



²⁶ <http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/Journals/2011/12/08/scrutiny-review-public-toilets-review.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/equalities-publications/wlga-publication-the-role-of-overview-and-scrutiny-in-assessing-equality-performance/>

Useful recommendations

- Secure genuine commitment, involvement and participation by all Members, Officers and Partners: Have the Older People's Champions and Equality Champions, for example, been consulted on the proposal? Is the cabinet/executive open to concerns raised through scrutiny about inequalities?
- Focus on the right things: Does scrutiny take into account the Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality objectives²⁸? Is it clear how older people's needs, concerns and rights make it onto the scrutiny agenda?
- Organise what you do: Read information in advance and ask relevant and timely questions. Does scrutiny review community service proposals alongside an EIA/EHRIA? Remember that elected members have a legitimate right to challenge Local Authority finances and how these are used
- Get the right level of support: Are scrutiny councillors trained in equality issues? Is there sufficient access to equalities officers?
- Secure independent and objective perspectives: Do scrutiny committees make provisions to hear from community groups or older people's forums when a community service proposal is put forward?
- Keep learning and improving: Are there any training or skills gaps that need to be addressed? Are lessons learnt from previous scrutiny reviews?
- Get the right outcomes and impact: Is scrutiny helping to ensure that the Local Authority is achieving the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between people, foster good relations between people) and Human Rights Act 1998?

²⁸ <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity-local-government>

Scrutiny Questions for Elected Members

<p>The effective use of EHRIAs (see Part 1 of the Guidance for further information)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an EHRIA been carried out? If so, can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers provide members with copies and a detailed explanation of the EHRIA conducted in respect of these proposals? Have specific actions been identified to mitigate the impact on older people? • What engagement and consultation work with older people was conducted with older people as part of the EHRIA of these proposals? Have the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales been applied²⁹? • Does the Local Authority's EHRIA process adequately capture the needs and views of older people? What steps have been taken to ensure that older people have been given every opportunity to voice their needs and concerns? Are these fully reflected in the EHRIA?
<p>Compliance with the Equality and Human Rights Legal Framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the Leader and Cabinet/ Senior Officers assure members that these proposals comply with Equality and Human Rights legislation in respect of older people? Do the proposals comply with the Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan? • What steps has the Local Authority taken to ensure these proposals meet statutory commitments to older people under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998? • Is there any danger these proposals may represent a breach of older people's human rights? Are older people with multiple protected characteristics affected? Have the UN Principles for Older Persons and Declaration of Rights for Older People in Wales been fully considered and applied? Has the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities been considered?

<p>Compliance with the Equality and Human Rights Legal Framework (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the National Welsh Characteristics of Good Scrutiny been applied (see Annex A)?
<p>Mitigating the effects of austerity measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the anticipated impact on older people? Can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers provide members with details of the plans to mitigate the impact of these proposals on older people? • If...These proposals clearly have a disproportionate impact on older people. How will the Local Authority manage this? Have alternative arrangements and provision been put in place? Have innovative cost-saving approaches e.g. Community Asset Transfer been explored³⁰? • How much will maintaining the community service cost? Is this cost for this financial year or is it on-going? What happens if this is not funded? Is there any external funding available? Could a charge be made for this? Can the proposal be deferred? Will the impact on older people be monitored and reviewed? • How does the proposal contribute to the Local Authority's medium to long-term savings plan? How were decisions arrived at in order to decide between options? Were groups of older people, including the local 50+ Forum, consulted with? • Taking the asset-based approach to community services, how do the decisions contribute to the 'older people as assets' model and help increase their £1bn annual contribution to the Welsh economy, helping individuals, communities and local economies in the process?

³⁰ <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/community-asset-transfer/?lang=en>

<p>Mitigating the effects of austerity measures (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the decisions contribute to the Older People’s Commissioner’ ‘Quality of Life’ model for older people i.e. ‘I feel safe and listened to, valued and respected’; ‘I can do the things that matter to me’; ‘I can get the help that I need’; ‘I live in a place that suits me and my life’³¹? • The Local Authority is committed to establishing age-friendly communities via the Dublin Declaration, a commitment as part of the Ageing Well in Wales Programme³². How do these proposals contribute to the establishment of age-friendly communities and the Local Authority’s commitment to empower older people and maintain their health and independence?
<p>Specific questions on community services</p>	<p>Public buses</p> <p>Public transport is vital to reduce physical and mental health problems amongst older people. It is also crucial to connect older people with their friends and family, GPs and hospitals, shops and key services, and does much to tackle social isolation. A free bus pass for older people is worth little without a bus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the Local Authority fully considered the potentially devastating impact of removing this ‘lifeline’ service on older people • Is there alternative provision e.g. a community transport scheme in place to mitigate the impact?

31 http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/Framework_for_Action.sflb.ashx

32 <http://agefriendlyworld.org/en/the-dublin-declaration-on-age-friendly-cities-and-communities-in-europe-2013/>

Specific questions on community services (cont.)

Public toilets

Public toilets are crucial in maintaining the health and independence of older people. Without the provision of public conveniences, older people and others will not leave their homes, and as a result are exposed to a wide range of physical and mental health problems. Everyone needs a public toilet, and removing these facilities can make our villages/towns/cities ‘no go’ areas:

- Has the Local Authority fully explored the impact of closing down this public toilet not only on older people but others in society (including the impact on tourism)?
- Have alternative arrangements been explored or put in place e.g. local businesses offering their toilet facilities to the public, or community asset transfer plans?

Public libraries

Libraries play a significant role in the lives of older people. The importance of libraries goes far beyond books, they are places where older people develop digital skills, socialise and undertake a range of activities that helps to keep them physically and mentally active:

- Has the Local Authority fully considered the impact of closing down this library on older people?
- What alternative arrangements are in place to ensure that older people can continue to access books, digital learning and other social activities?

Specific questions on community services (cont.)

- Does the Local Authority have another community hub in place for older people? Is the Local Authority committed to tackling loneliness and isolation amongst older people by proposing other venues where older people can meet, socialise and contribute to their local communities (these questions also apply to proposals around community and day centres)?

Lifelong learning

Learning for older people has a range of benefits. For some, it is an important way of helping them to keep physically and mentally active in retirement. For others, it is a crucial way of remaining in or re-entering employment. Learning helps to tackle social isolation, contributes to the development of personal skillsets and increases efficiency as workers or volunteers:

- Has the Local Authority fully explored the impact of closing down this lifelong learning provision on older people and others?
- Has the Local Authority provided alternative arrangements so that older people can continue to access much needed learning opportunities?

The ongoing role of scrutiny

Remember that scrutiny is an ongoing process; **scrutiny does not end when a decision is made on a community service proposal, nor does it end when a report is sent to Cabinet.** It is crucial that any changes to community services are monitored and that the impact on older people and others are taken into consideration. The closure or reduced provision of a key community service, a service that might be described as a 'lifeline' by older people, may significantly impact on the health and wellbeing of older people, and therefore scrutinising the proposal at a later stage may therefore be needed (see Part 1 of the Guidance for further information on EHRIA Transparency and Review (Annex A)).

Consider the following questions within a year of the decision:

- Was any mitigation applied or was the community service proposal delivered as originally proposed before the EHRIA was undertaken?
- Were the intended outcomes of the proposal achieved or were there other results? Has it proved to be an effective cost-saving proposal for the Local Authority? Is there any evidence that health and social care needs for older people have increased as an indirect consequence?
- Were the impacts confined to the group you initially thought would be affected i.e. older people, or were others affected e.g. people with disabilities, parents with young children?

Annex A: National Welsh Characteristics of Good Scrutiny³³

Democratic accountability drives improvement in public services: Better Outcomes

Overview and scrutiny:

- Has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement and governance
- Has the dedicated officer support it needs from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provides councillors with high-quality analysis, advice and training
- Inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives
- Regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers and service providers
- Provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems

Democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive and robust: Better Decisions

- Overview and scrutiny councillors have the training opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively
- The process receives effective support from the council's corporate management team who ensure that information provided to overview and scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner
- Overview and scrutiny is councillor-led, takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, and balances the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance
- Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to it
- Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities

³³ <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Councillors-and-meetings/Scrutiny/Documents/Guidelines%20for%20effective%20Scrutiny%20in%20Wales.pdf>

The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services: Better Engagement

- Overview and scrutiny is recognised by the executive and corporate management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement, and facilitates greater citizen involvement in governance
- Overview and scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability
- Scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict
- Overview and scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders
- Overview and scrutiny enables the ‘voice’ of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes

