

eForum

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Radical reform is history in making

"If we together seize the opportunity to focus our efforts this could be a historic achievement"

Mario Kreft MBE
Chair, Care Forum Wales

A historic opportunity to reform social care could be squandered unless councils are prepared to work in partnership with independent care providers.

Care Forum Wales believes the new legislation has the potential to end the post code lottery that has plagued social care services.

According to Chair Mario Kreft MBE, it is significant the Welsh Government's chose the Social Services (Wales) Bill as their first piece of legislation under the Assembly's new powers.



The Bill includes the introduction of national eligibility criteria so that people receive the care they need regardless of where they live. Other key elements are the creation of portable assessments so that people's needs don't need to be re-assessed if they move to live in different area and a new national framework contract.

Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services and Children, has launched a three-month public consultation on the legislation. Mrs Thomas says the legislation is designed to give people greater freedom to decide which services they need while offering consistent, high quality services across Wales.

The proposed Bill has been warmly welcomed by Mr Kreft who said: "We would like to commend the Deputy Minister, Gwenda Thomas AM, for the leadership she has shown and her commitment to transforming social care.

"We have been campaigning for many of these initiatives since Care Forum Wales was established 19 years ago.

"We certainly welcome this radical Bill and if we together seize the opportunity to focus our efforts this could be a historic achievement.

"Radical reform of the planning and delivery of services is long overdue and we need to create a culture where the independent sector works in true partnership with public sector bodies.

"If we have that shift, we can achieve a great deal but if we don't I'm afraid we're going to fall short and this would be deeply disappointing for those requiring services.

"The national eligibility criteria and portable assessments should help end the current postcode lottery in social care.

"We have always campaigned to have the right services in the right place at the right time. It should not matter where you live.

"It is going to be important to develop a transformation agenda to new services while we hold on cross Wales to those important services that we are still going to need.

"That is going to require a change of mindset and one of the important aspects is the Memorandum of Understanding to develop a partnership approach between the

independent and the public sectors in relation to the commissioning of social care.

"We understand that the Deputy Minister is passionate about the MoU because she has recognised that without this change of culture, a new approach to partnership working, a lot of what's contained in the Bill will not be delivered.

"The national eligibility criteria and the portable assessments are vital elements of providing a consistent and fair service to the people of Wales. It is also important to empower people and the national framework contract will assist in this.

"The current postcode lottery is simply not acceptable. With a population of just three million, Wales does not need 22 variations on a theme with different councils doing things differently. There are also seven local health boards and we must have a more joined up approach.

"In reality, we have seen far too much growth in bureaucracy, the growth of the back office at the expense of front line services.

"Independent sector wages are effectively set in county hall and we must value the contribution of social care workers in Wales.

"The tender arrangements that local authorities are adopting in relation to domiciliary care across Wales are designed to drive down price at all cost, regardless of quality.

At the launch of the consultation period, Gwenda Thomas said: "This Bill is about giving people a stronger voice and real control over the social care

"We are not prepared to sit by as fewer and fewer people receive the support they need. services they use, and to help meet their changing needs."

Happy birthday Wales Care Awards!

The Wales Care Awards are celebrating a very special birthday this year.

The Oscars-style ceremony at Cardiff City Hall on Friday, October 26, will mark the 10th anniversary of the glamorous event.

Mario Kreft, the Chair of Care Forum Wales, said the Wales Care Awards had gone from strength to strength since being established a decade ago.

Nominations for the 2012 awards are now being sought, so don't delay. Go to www.careforumwales.co.uk for more information.

Among the fans of the Wales Care Awards is Rhian Huws Williams, the Chief Executive of the Care Council for Wales.

She said: "I think Care Forum Wales did a fantastic thing in creating the Awards as a way of raising the profile of social care. "At the time, we were almost believing our own bad press in terms of the morale and value of the sector.

"In putting on the awards, Care Forum took the opportunity to celebrate success, generating enthusiasm and pride - and that's been fantastic.

Mario added: "The Wales Care Awards are always a very special event - but this year it is going to be even more special.

"The occasion is now firmly established as one of the main highlights in the social care calendar.

"An evening like this underlines the importance of the social care sector. It is the glue that binds our communities together, both socially and economically.

"The aim is to recognise the unstinting and often remarkable dedication of the unsung heroes and heroines working in the care sector.

"The Wales Care Awards has filled a gap - I think most people know the care sector but it's taken an annual event for people to see it as it really is.

"The care sector is full of wonderful people because it's

not just a job it's a vocation - the people working in the care sector are just as vocational as any other profession, including the nursing profession.

"If you don't recognise the people who do the caring you will never provide the standards that people need and you are never really going to recognise the value of the people who need the care in society.

"We need to do all we can to raise the profile of the care sector workforce. This is their moment in the sun - and they deserve to be lauded and applauded.

"The annual Oscars of social care would not be possible without the generous and greatly appreciated support of our sponsors, particularly given the current economic climate."

We are now seeking nominations for the 2012 Wales Care Awards at City Hall on Friday, October 26. For more information go to www.careforumwales.co.uk



New Academy for social care workers

Ambitious plans to set up a professional body for people who work in social care are set to become a reality.

The creation of the Academy of Care Practitioners will be announced by Health Minister Lesley Griffiths at a conference at Glyndwr University, in Wrexham, on April 20.

This will be followed by the official launch of the new organisation at the Senedd in Cardiff on May 21 at a reception hosted by the Minister and the Deputy Minister, Gwenda Thomas.

Mario Kreft MBE, Chair of Care Forum Wales, said: "We talk a lot about raising the status and the

professionalism of the social care workforce.

"One of the biggest issues in our view is that they are a profession without their own professional body. We believe it's about time that was put right.

"Due to the nature of the demanding job, it's unrealistic to expect one or two care practitioners in Wales to be able to bring about the creation of their own body.

"We believe that with some help we can make this happen and then it will be run entirely by the workforce.

"It's really about providing a support mechanism, helping people with their personal and professional development.

"What we have to accept, when you have issues about further education and regulation, is that they deserve to have an

independent voice and somewhere where they can go for advice - not just to the employer or the regulator.

"As a concept, it's been widely supported for some time and the pilot project we have undertaken has shown overwhelming support.

"In recent months the need for an Academy has been recognised by the Deputy Minister, Gwenda Thomas, and the Health Minister, Lesley Griffiths, as something that can only be good for care practitioners and therefore it can only be a good thing for the care of vulnerable people and the whole professional agenda.

"We are delighted that Professor Mike Scott, Vice Chancellor of Glyndwr University, has seen fit to support this initiative.

"It's very important that something like this is seen as independent, that it's not part of any employer group, so its home for the foreseeable future will be Glyndwr University."

For more information about the Academy ring Sue Thomas on 01978 752500 or email her at sue@careforumwales.co.uk

Help us play our part

Care Forum Wales is planning to play an active part in the consultation over the new Social Services (Wales) Bill.

The launch of the Academy of Care Practitioners at the Senedd on May 16 will provide a great opportunity to make our views known. Care Forum Wales Chair Mario Kreft MBE explained: "It seems to us a very appropriate thing that we're putting the workforce forward because care is about people.

"The important thing with the consultation is to get as many people involved as possible.

"Care Forum Wales is writing to every provider in Wales, asking them to use this consultation period to get their Assembly members to look at the Bill, to put forward their own thoughts forward either directly to the Government or through Care Forum Wales.

"We are going to be hosting a number of events across Wales so that providers can have that conversation together.

"The reception at the Senedd will be an opportunity for Assembly members to become engaged with providers.

"We are then going to encourage providers to invite Assembly members to come and see what they do and talk through the issues as they affect them, service users and staff.

"Hopefully, we will come to a position where we will have a Bill that is very well thought through and carries widespread support because that will make it more successful."



Right: Professor Mike Scott, Vice Chancellor of Glyndwr University,

Left: Health Minister, Lesley Griffiths

Exclusive interview.
Rhian Huws
Williams, Chief
Executive, Care
Council for Wales,
in conversation with
Ceidiog Hughes



“We’re very fortunate to have Care Forum focusing on the Welsh agenda”

Can you tell me about your background and how your upbringing influences what you do now?

I am from a Welsh-speaking, farming, Christian family in North Wales. I am sure that has shaped the social responsibility element of my interests and what’s driven me so far. In school, I was very clear that I believed in social justice and, in those days, particularly in relation to language rights. I think the whole ethos of entering social work has been about social justice and that cliché of wanting to make a difference.

How important is the independent sector in the provision of social care in Wales?

The reality of social care in Wales is that we have a mixed economy so we have a rich mix

of provision. The important thing for Wales is to make sure that the service is to the same level of high quality, whoever is providing it. The trick for Wales is to cluster around a public service ethos.

What do you hope the new Health and Social Services Bill will achieve and in what ways will the provision of social care improve and become more equitable as a result of the legislation?

Making new legislation that is going to be shaping future services is a big test for Wales. With the aspiration of securing more powers for Wales, comes the responsibility of making good new legislation which will make a positive difference.. I am really excited about the potential of the Bill and I am expecting

it to be pinning down the things set out in the policy paper for Social Services. We have a responsibility to make sure it’s the right legislation for the future because this will have a long shelf life. We have to leave our own interests behind and look at the legislation from the perspective of people who use the services. It will be about new models of service with greater voice, control and equity for citizens across Wales and, I hope, about strengthening professionalism as well.

How important is it to put people at the centre of the commissioning process so that the views of service users and social care workers are taken properly into account?

*“Putting people
at the centre
means seeing
the world
through their
eyes”*



The rhetoric of putting people at the centre of the agenda is easy. There's a massive responsibility on all of us - whether we are commissioners, providers of services, employers or managers, workers or regulators - to be clear about what this really means in practice. Putting people at the centre means seeing the world through their eyes. That is a challenge and we have some more work to do to make sure we have the right services for the future. For me, the new and exciting bit of the policy paper was the greater emphasis on acknowledging that social care - whether it's for adults or children, residential or community and social work - is dependent on the people who deliver the service. The only way to secure high quality is by investing in the people who deliver that service. The Care Council's Code of Practice is very important in setting out the values and expectations people should have of those who deliver services and of their employers.

How keen are you to join Care Forum Wales in promoting partnership working and getting the Memorandum of Understanding involving Care Forum Wales, the WLGA and the Association of Social Services back on track?

We were not part of the Memorandum of Understanding so it's not for me to comment on whether it has worked or not. From my perspective, the MoU was an important symbol of a commitment to partnership working. That means a new way of collaborating. The Deputy Minister is keen on all of us working effectively in collaboration, really putting effort into understanding each other's realities and working out how we reach a resolution on those matters we may not agree on with our eye firmly on better outcomes for people who need or are receiving services. That is the bottom line.. The MoU



"I think Care Forum Wales did a fantastic thing in raising the profile of social care. At the time, we were almost believing our own bad press in terms of the morale and value of the sector"

is good at a national level but, as we design and deliver new services, it needs very strong partnership and trust at regional and local level too.

How would you describe and quantify the role of Care Forum Wales in influencing and helping to shape the future of social care in Wales?

I think Care Forum Wales has been a significant partner. It has stepped up to the plate and ensured that we have a voice for the employers in the independent sector. We need to have very clear national perspectives for practitioners and employers so that we hear the different perspectives. Care Forum Wales has worked hard over many years to present that perspective and into working in partnership with others.

You're from a farming background and when the Welsh Government are dealing with agricultural issues, they seek the views of the farming unions. In a similar vein, do you see Care Forum Wales as the pre-eminent go-to organisation to represent the independent social care sector?

There will be several voices for different elements of the sector and Care Forum Wales has presented itself as the voice for the independent sector. I think we're very fortunate to have Care Forum focusing on the Welsh agenda in respect of the independent provision. .

Is it possible to improve standards in social care at a time of reducing budgets and how important is it that the people commissioning social care adopt a realistic approach to the funding guidelines laid out by the Welsh Government?

The whole issue of what we can realistically expect at a time of economic downturn is exercising everybody. I don't think it's a choice between quality and money. The task we have is match the money to new models of services

that still meet the quality standards. It means thinking differently and working together to make the most of the resources we have between us - and how we make it go as far as we can.

How passionate are you about developing the skills and training of people who work in social care?

Incredibly passionate. People in social work and social care are the most important resource the sector has. I am really pleased that the policy paper acknowledged the need to move beyond the baseline. Now we're about raising the bar. People need to continue to learn and develop so that they are in touch with best practice. For me, that's at the heart of everything we need to do. In terms of the relationship between Care Forum and the Care Council, I think there is a new opportunity for us is to work together on how we promote the importance of regulation of managers and embracing this new focus on "leader of practice" role of managers and how that can be massively significant in terms of improving practice and experiences of people receiving the services.

How excited are you about the prospect of the Academy of Care Practitioners being established and what do you hope it will achieve?

We have talked about the Academy for a long time and I think there's a recognition that if we're serious about professionalism for care practitioners and social care managers that we have got to think about where they come together for that collective sense of identity, who would represent their perspective. At the moment, I am not sure where that would happen and if that can be done through the Academy that's fantastic.

Getting rid of the chemical cosh

"I have developed a document for use in all care settings and at home to help people with dementia"

Steve Ford
Dementia advisor of
Care Forum
Wales

A new initiative has been launched in Wales to save people with dementia being subdued under the chemical cosh.

The ground-breaking guide has been devised by Steve Ford, the dementia advisor of Care Forum Wales which represents more than 500 independent care providers in Wales.

Steve, from Colwyn Bay, is a life-long campaigner to reduce the use of anti-psychotic drugs for dementia patients.

The easy-to-use guide helps identify what might be triggering behavioural problems and ways to handle it...without drugs.

The document, Assessment of Challenging and Management Problems Initiating Options for New Solutions (ACHAMPIONS), can be downloaded from CFW's website.

It has been endorsed by the all important

All Wales Dementia Group, set up by Welsh Government, which believes it will be valuable in reducing inappropriate use of anti-psychotic drugs.

Care Practitioners can fill in the ACHAMPIONS form in five to 10 minutes as they come off shift and it can just as easily be used in the domiciliary care setting.

Steve, a nurse manager with 37 years experience of caring for vulnerable adults, has been a board member of Care Forum Wales since its inception in 1993 and is managing director of Pembroke Nursing Homes Ltd which provides dementia nursing care for 45 clients at two Colwyn Bay homes.

He said: "I have developed a document for use in all care settings and at home to help people with dementia.



"There is a national impetus to move away from inappropriate anti-psychotic medications for use in challenging behaviours and this piece of work helps to achieve solutions for some of those care management difficulties without necessarily picking up the phone to request a GP visit."

Steve consulted with user groups, families, care providers, including nurses within the NHS and representatives of local health boards and social services and drafted his document seven times before he was satisfied. But he says: "It is important that the document should evolve and change based on practical experiences."

"The document is comprehensive in that it identifies the problematic behaviour and gives ideas for the solutions, but it's very easy to complete," added Steve.

Melanie cares about her new role



After more than 20 years trying to ensure government agencies run smoothly, Melanie Minty has made a huge career change to put something back into the community by working for the care sector.

"I just decided that it was a good time for a career change and wanted to do something which would contribute something useful for the community," said mother-of-two Melanie, who lives

with husband Ray at Penperlleni in Monmouthshire.

Melanie has just been appointed the deputy policy advisor for Care Forum Wales.

She is concentrating her efforts in the South Wales region and she has specific responsibility for communications and membership, working closely with North Wales-based senior policy advisor Mary Wimbury.

"I'm originally from London but moved to South Wales about 10 years ago when I got promotion within the Civil Service and went to work at the passport office in Newport," said Melanie.

After graduating from Bristol University, Melanie worked for a short while with the British Computer Society in London before starting her civil service career with the Public Guardianship Office in London.

For 14 years Melanie worked as caseworker and manager handling complex cases involving large compensation payments and approving deceased estate accounts.

But for the last 10 years Melanie was involved with the identity and passport service in Newport and as regional business services manager was responsible for 140 staff dealing with everything from customer service to fraud.

With major changes at the passport office, Melanie took redundancy and decided the time was right for change.

"Care Forum Wales are committed to working within the Memorandum of Understanding and working with a public service ethos.

"With the new Social Services Bill in the offing, joining Care Forum Wales at this time of historic change is a very exciting opportunity.

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Anthony's blockbuster

A health and safety advisor for Care Forum Wales has produced his own global movie 'blockbuster'.

His safety advice to keep children from harm on building sites was short-listed for an award by 5,000 delegates at a recent international congress on health and safety and is being viewed all over the world.

Anthony Arcari is also the health and safety manager responsible for health and safety issues affecting 570 staff, contractors and the tenants who live in the 9,000 homes owned by Bron Afon Community Housing in Cwmbran.

But as a freelance expert Anthony has also done vital work for Care Forum Wales.

His safety video, Falls Cost Lives aimed at reducing risks to vulnerable people, was recognised during the Wales Care Awards night in 2009 with a silver medal. Each day as many as 400 beds are occupied in Welsh hospitals by people who have fallen.

His latest production, Ten Little Schoolchildren, uses the 10 Green Bottles children's nursery rhyme to illustrate the dangers children can be exposed to on a construction site.

It has now been viewed in North and South America, Europe, Africa, India, the Middle East, Australasia and Japan.

Anthony, from Bridgend, said: "I made the film with the help of children at the Hillside primary school in Blaenavon, which has since been amalgamated with another school, and the Health and Safety Executive's construction based group.

"It was put forward for a film award in Cologne and then it was short-listed for a world safety congress meeting in Istanbul where there were 5,000 delegates. It was shown at the Congress and received a lot of exposure."

He became involved with the Health and Safety in the Civil Service in 2000 and later the social care and social housing sector, but has retained a self-employed health and safety remit since 2003.

His Ten Little Schoolchildren video can be viewed on www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWY4mH_g7oo



Lifelong friends stick together



Lifelong friends at the Rhos Residential Home, Malltraeth in Anglesey. From left, Gladys Williams, Sarah Smith, Catherine Owen and Lizzie Roberts with carers Jacqueline Jones and Annette Andrews and Ann Hughes.

Reminiscing is a popular and fulfilling pastime for most elderly people, but in one Anglesey home there is even more than usual to talk about.

For four of the residents at the Rhos Residential Home in Malltraeth have grown up together, and even attended the same primary school.

And to add to the community spirit at the 33-bed home, many of the staff are also from the same village of Aberffraw – as is home owner Ann Hughes.

Gladys Williams, 91, has been at Rhos for about nine years, and over the years has been joined by Lizzie Mary Roberts, 90, Sarah Smith, 92, and, most recently by Elen Catherine Owen, 88, who moved in at the end of 2011.

“We all grew up together, played together and went to the village school in Aberffraw,” said Elen Catherine, who retired at the age of 73 after working as a nursing auxiliary at the former Druid and Cefni Hospitals in Llangefni.

“Not only did we grow up together but our children also grew up together,” she said.

Ann, who took over at Rhos 10 years ago, was in school with her grand-daughter, forging another close link.

“There used to be about 20 shops in the village, but now there’s only one left and the chapel and school has closed,” said Elen Catherine.

The nearby Ty Croes army camp provided much of the entertainment for local people, and Lizzie Roberts, who had a fine singing voice, sometimes went on the stage to entertain the audience.

“Although we were poor they were happy times and everybody looked after each other,” said Elen Catherine.

She said she considered herself fortunate to have been able to move into Rhos, which she described as “home from home”.

“It’s champion here, and everyone is very kind. It’s so convenient for so many of our relatives to visit us,” she said.

Urgent VAT reform demanded by Five Nations group

Care Forum Wales is taking the lead in a major campaign by the Five Nations group.

The national trade associations from the four home countries, the English Community Care Association, the United Kingdom Homecare Association, the Registered Nursing Homes Association, the Nursing Homes Association of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Care Association, have joined forces to demand the reduction the VAT rate to five per cent for social care providers.

Mary Wimbury, the Senior Policy Officer of Care Forum Wales, said it would make paying for care more affordable for local authorities and the NHS – while helping to stimulate the economy at the same time.

She said: “Reduced rates of VAT already exist for things like listed

buildings – surely caring for vulnerable people is even more important.”

“We are calling on the Government to make a special case for reducing VAT in relation to social care down to five per cent.

“Extensions to the homes of disabled people are already zero rated for VAT purposes.

“We believe, for example, it would be logical to have a similar, zero-rated exemption for extensions to residential care homes.

“This would have the effect of encouraging people to invest in capital items. As things stand, VAT at 20 per cent is a tax on care which makes it prohibitive; to improve quality.

“It’s going to mean that in a perverse way we’re not going to have the stimulation in the

economy that we might otherwise have.

“There is an opportunity here for the Government to alleviate the pressure on local government and the NHS in terms of fees because most people are publicly funded.

“On the other hand, such a move would offer a substantial economic stimulus for our communities.”

“In Wales, we have more than 1,200 care homes while there are more than 20,000 in the UK.

“An imaginative and progressive approach along the lines we propose would enable independent care providers to improve their service and invest in infrastructure and capital items.”

*Mary Wimbury, the
Senior Policy Officer of
Care Forum Wales*



Giving evidence about “two tier system”

Care Forum Wales will be giving evidence to the inquiry into the provision of residential care for older people.

We will be appearing in front of the Assembly’s Social Care Committee on June 14.

Senior Policy Officer Mary Wimbury said: “Residential care has seen a huge transformation over the past decade. Local authorities are no longer funding people

in residential care unless they are highly dependent.

“We have significant concerns with regard to the current provision of residential care which we feel must be addressed, including the development of a two tier system and the inability of those who cannot self-fund to choose residential care.

“Local authority planning and commissioning

arrangements, including fee setting, which in many areas do not adhere to the principles of the Welsh Government’s Commissioning Framework Guidance and Good Practice.

“This has led to fee levels in many areas which are unsustainable and do not permit the investment needed to maintain provision let alone improve it.”