

“The way we care for each other can define us a nation” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Speaking at the National Social Care Conference in Cardiff, the Minister told an audience of social services' leaders that “the way we care for each other can define us a nation.”

He said that while steps have already been taken to help meet current challenges, “there will still be a need to consider further investment in the sector if we are to support everyone to live full and rewarding lives.”

The Minister discussed the scale of the challenge by revealing that during 2016 -17, local authorities provided care and support to around 10,000 more people aged over 65 than in the previous year.

The number of people aged over 85 living in Wales will increase by an estimated 119% by 2035, according to the National Population Needs Assessment report, published in 2017.

The Welsh Government is currently considering how its new fiscal levers could be developed as part of a wider consideration about potential new taxes in Wales. This has included consideration of a proposal by Professor Gerald Holtham to introduce a social care levy to raise additional resources for social care, which people would pay from their income.

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Successfully meeting increased demand in all parts of the social care sector, raises many questions. Not least, what care and support will be required in the future? How should this be provided and how should this be funded?

“In part we are responding to this challenge by revitalising social care and support in Wales in a number of ways; by focusing more attention on prevention wherever we are able; by developing our Regional Partnership Board approach to the commissioning of care; by protecting funding for social care as much as we are able; and by listening and responding to what people tell us matters to them.

“While these steps make us better placed to meet current challenges, there will still be a need to consider further investment in the sector if we are to support everyone to live full and rewarding lives. As a result we have made a commitment in our national strategy for Wales, ‘Prosperity for All’, to develop

innovative funding models that will help meet the demand for social care in the future.”

The Minister added:

“Encouraging citizens in Wales to engage in a dialogue about the future of social care could be a challenge. Negative stereotypes of ageing can deter people from planning for their future. Too often older people are framed as the cause of financial pressures rather than viewed as part of the solution. The reality is that as our population ages, more and more older people are contributing to society, not only by volunteering and providing vital care to their loved ones, but also by working and paying taxes.

“I believe we need to broker an honest conversation with citizens in Wales about the rewards and challenges of an ageing society. Social care must be seen as a positive choice that enables individuals to carry on living the life they chose. By placing individuals at the centre of their care, everyone can be supported to achieve their potential, to learn, to age well and, most importantly, to enjoy life.

“The way we care for each other can define us a nation.”