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# Executive summary

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## About the research

This is Age Cymru's third annual report on delays in access to social care in Wales for people aged 55 and over. We continue to hear from older people about worrying delays in getting social care assessments and delays in getting care in place.

We're hearing from more older people who have been struggling since the cost of living crisis who are just above the cusp of financial help and those that are struggling to understand charging arrangements for social care services.

## Conclusions

1. The surge in demand for social care following the pandemic in 2021 to 2022 has reduced and the efforts local authorities have and are making appear to be reducing waiting times. However, delays in access to social care are still too long.
2. Efforts on social care recovery have continued, but the increasing complexity of need and future population projections means greater and quicker change is needed.
3. Communication from social services with older people and their families on first point of contact and whilst waiting for assessment or for care packages to be implemented, needs improvement.
4. Efforts to improve support for unpaid carers need to happen faster.
5. Data collection systems are still not able to effectively report on the delays in access to social care.
6. Short term funding arrangements mean edge of care services and lower-level support services continue to be at risk.
7. Poor advice on charging from some local authority social services, and the complexities of the charging arrangements means that some older people may be paying above the amount allowed through fairer charging, putting undue pressure on finances.
8. Poor communication around hospital discharge means older people remain in hospital longer than they need to.
9. Local authorities are increasingly providing in house support for direct payments that may allow an increase in older people seeing direct payments as a more attractive option.

# **Recommendations**

## **Recommendation 1**

Welsh Government, ADSS Cymru, Social Care Wales and local authorities need to work together to ensure that reporting mechanisms are able to show where positive outcomes rather than outputs are recorded and reported.

## **Recommendation 2**

Local authorities should assess whether their current processes for providing initial advice and information and ongoing access to advice and information are meeting the needs of older people. This needs to include a focus on how well information is communicated and understood on fairer charging.

## **Recommendation 3**

Local authorities should provide an additional focus on those individuals who are currently experiencing a wait longer than 30 days for a care needs assessment or implementation of a care package.

## **Recommendation 4**

Local authorities should provide proactive support for those waiting longer than 30 days.

## **Recommendation 5**

Regional partnership boards, local authorities and third sector services need to work together to improve the availability of earlier intervention and prevention support for older people.

## **Recommendation 6**

Welsh Government, regional partnership boards, health boards and local authorities should ensure that third sector funding is provided on a sustainable basis.

## **Recommendation 7**

There needs to be an emphasis on learning between local authorities and good practice sharing. This will reduce the volume of work that local authorities need to undertake and help them avoid pitfalls that other local authorities have faced.

## **Recommendation 8**

Welsh Government, Regional partnership boards and local authorities should ensure the requirements of the Charter for Unpaid Carers are met.