

Dominic Wheatley  
Chair - Ageing Well in the Bailiwick  
c/o Guernsey Community Foundation  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Tudor House  
Le Bordage  
St Peter Port  
GY1 1DB

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Dear States Members

### **SUPPORTED LIVING AND AGEING WELL STRATEGY**

I am writing to you on behalf of Ageing Well in the Bailiwick, ahead of this month's debate on the Supported Living and Ageing Well Strategy (SLAWS).

Ageing Well in the Bailiwick is a group of voluntary and private sector organisations which aims to represent the interests of older people in the Bailiwick. There are over 90 people in our network, representing over 30 separate organisations. We have been consulted at various stages of the development of SLAWS, through its Public Engagement Group. We contributed fully to the public consultation in July 2015, and would be happy to provide copies of our response on request. We have also recently responded to consultations on the Chief Executive's Community Survey and the introduction of Secondary Pensions, on behalf of older islanders. We would be more than happy to provide States Members with further information about our role, if this would be of assistance.

Following the publication of SLAWS earlier this month, we invited members of our network to attend a private meeting on 19 January, to discuss their reactions to the report and consider whether there were any representations we might wish to make to States Members about the strategy. We were joined by a number of representatives from the Guernsey Disability Alliance (GDA), generally representing younger adults who need care or support, and their feedback also informs our response.

#### **Our reaction to the Supported Living and Ageing Well Strategy**

Our overall reaction to SLAWS was positive, both at the consultation stage and in respect of the policy letter. We welcome the strategy's vision of a care system which meets people's needs and respects their dignity. We commend the guiding principles or "strategic commitments", which recognise the importance of person-centred services and inclusive communities, and which aim to balance sustainability with affordability.

We are, however, disappointed at the length of time allowed for realisation of the strategy. The package of measures leading to its implementation, as set out in Appendix 3 to the SLAWS policy letter, require a considerable amount of additional research and further reports to be brought to the States before practical changes can be implemented. Ageing Well in the Bailiwick members have

consistently drawn attention to the fact that there are people in need of care and support today, who are not well-served by the current system, and who would benefit from improvements in services, support and information. We were therefore surprised by the lack of any recommendations in the strategy that would help to improve the situation for people who are struggling at present.

We are aware that individual States Departments are already pursuing initiatives that may help to change the present situation. Paragraph 9.1 of the SLAWS policy letter draws attention to some of the work that HSSD is already doing in this regard, and we hope that the Department will continue to pursue these initiatives, with the support of the States.

### **Our hopes for the States' debate**

We hope that the States will confirm their commitment to ensuring that Guernsey can provide appropriate, equitable and sustainable long-term care and support in future, as demographic changes continue to put more pressure on the current system. We hope that the vision of varied and flexible services, responsive to the dignity and autonomy of the people who use them – and of age-friendly, inclusive communities – will be embraced by the States, and used to inform current services as well as future plans.

We recognise that States Members will be debating a policy letter which seeks a fairly high-level, in-principle commitment to certain strategic aims and objectives. Nonetheless, we consider that there are real needs in the community today, and we would welcome any moves by the States to look at the kind of changes which could be achievable in the near term (which we discuss further below), or to speed up, where possible, the timeframe for the delivery of the Strategy, including a clear commitment to strong, inclusive governance and leadership throughout its implementation.

We note that the Strategy suggests interim changes to the funding of long-term care services, but would also have expected the full, sustainable solution to be a matter of some urgency. Our own members have diverse views on the way in which, and the extent to which, the States should fund services in future; and we have no doubt that diversity of opinion will be reflected in the wider community, and in the States itself. However, we hope that concerns over this or any other issue will not, at this stage, prevent the States from making a fundamental commitment to progress this work, and to do so in a manner which respects and promotes the interest of people who use care and support services.

### **Our hopes for change in the near-term**

Ageing Well in the Bailiwick members have regularly highlighted the challenges faced by people in need of care and support services today. There are four issues which surface with greater frequency than any others. These are:

- a) **Dementia:** There is a feeling that specialist provision for dementia is stretched, and that generalist services are not well-equipped to provide good support to people with dementia. Both are areas in which further development would be welcome. Members also report a lack of continuity and coordination between services.
- b) **Community care:** As the SLAWS policy letter illustrates, the range of available provision is limited, and individuals generally have little control over when and how they receive care. The system is not geared up to provide care in a preventive way, to help avoid crises and

maintain people's independence; and services that help people to regain skills and confidence ("re-enablement" services) are very limited.

- c) **Respite care:** There is a lack of provision and support for carers (that is, people who provide care to a family member or friend, rather than professionals); including a lack of formal respite care options. The recommendation in SLAWS to develop a Carers' Strategy was welcomed by our members with caring responsibilities, although, again, there was a plea for change sooner rather than later.
- d) **Information:** There is a lot of concern among our members about the lack of comprehensive, accessible information about the range of services and support available to people who may need to use them, and about how to navigate the system. Timely access to relevant information is a basic building block, without which people cannot even begin to seek the support that they might need.

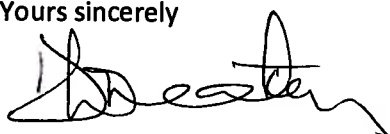
We are aware that work is being done in each of these areas already. We hope that the Dementia Framework, which is currently under development, will identify and fill gaps in service provision in this area; and that the gradual roll-out of Signpost.GG will help to improve the quality and availability of local information. We hope that the transformation projects underway in HSSD will help to secure improvements in community care and support for carers.

We are also hopeful that the overall process of Public Service Reform, led by the Chief Executive, will improve service provision in the short term. In responding to the Community Survey, we asked members of our network to consider the challenges older islanders face when accessing public services, across the whole range of government responsibilities – and we found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that it is information about, and access to, care and support services which already presents the greatest challenge. We are pleased that the Chief Executive has engaged with us on this topic, and trust that work in this area will continue to be supported and pursued.

While some of these developments are outside the formal framework of SLAWS, they are of enormous importance to the same group of people who are intended to be benefited by the strategy. We therefore hope that States Members will also take an interest in current initiatives intended to promote the best interests of people who use care and support services today.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasise that we do not feel that SLAWS is the responsibility of the States alone – it is the responsibility of the whole community. We identified a number of SLAWS recommendations where the voluntary and private sectors could take a significant role in helping the States to deliver its ambitions: whether in terms of helping to expand the range of community care options, or in understanding and tackling the effects of loneliness among older islanders. We would be more than happy to meet with any States Members to discuss further the issues raised in this letter; and we remain committed to working in partnership with the States, where appropriate, to help to achieve positive change for people who need care and support, now and in the future.

Yours sincerely



Dominic Wheatley  
Chair, Ageing Well in the Bailiwick