

The text aims to discuss the Social Services and Well – Being Act 2014 in Wales, with a focus on older persons referring to the act itself. Additionally, it will explore a timeline in which older persons gained independence. Furthermore, an overview of a theory relating to age.

Currently, there are nine hundred, sixty-two million older people in the world, the welsh government note the most recent estimation of Wales' population is at three Million, one hundred and thirteen Thousand, as the population ages there will be a greater demand for care. (The Welsh Government, 2016)

Abraham Maslow (1943) it is presented as a five-tier pyramid; he categorised human needs, then organised them into an order, in which an individual must obtain the first level to progress and move up the pyramid for instance, the basic needs are labelled physiological needs; shelter, water, sleep and sex. These needs are defined as necessities to live, and maintain a moderate lifestyle. However, the more advanced levels are not deemed as imperative for an individual's existence for example, self – actualization, this is situated at the top level of the pyramid, it is often referred to as a person reaching their full potential in their life. (Learning Theories, 2017). Nevertheless, Maslow has been highlighted for the inconsistencies within his theory of need, a common critique is that every individual has different needs, some people may need assistance to advance further up the levels. Namely older persons may need additional support, referring to safety needs. The needs consist of; security in their health, employment and resources. With growth, comes change, in some cases aging intertwines with ill health, financial difficulty and or relationship breakdown. (Rowe, J., Mitchell, A. 2013, p.10 – 11)

In 2011, a British politician broke the silence on the funding of care;

From grandparents that are caring for their grandchildren to husbands and wives caring for each other to sons and daughters dedicated to caring for, and looking after their parents. In the sense, families are and remain, the bedrock of care. (Burstow, P., 2011)

Burstow highlights the blurred line between 'formal' and 'informal' carers within modern society, he reveals shocking figures of future care. He states that One in Four of the UK population will be faced with a healthcare bill of more than Fifty Thousand Pounds, which raises the question, what will social care look like in the forthcoming years? (The King's Fund 2018)

Age UK commented on the current state of care, they mention many issues that need to be remedied although, they refer to the lack of financial services; ‘1.2 million people aged 65 plus don’t receive the care support they need with essential living activities.’ (Age UK, 2017) Therefore, resulting in cuts to local services allowing the needs of the community, and individuals being unmet.

The relation between independence and age has been ongoing, here are key occasions that have impact contemporary society greatly; In 1908, The Old Age Pensions Act was first introduced and passed, the act enabled the UK with their first public pensions. (House of Commons Library, 2008, p.5)

Then, in 1948, The NHS was created allowing residential care homes to be introduced. The National Health Service has developed significantly since its initial formation. A modern growth for the provision relating to age occurred in 2009, the NHS Health Check specifically designed for adults aged between forty and seventy – four years old. (NHS, 2010)

Established by Joceline, and Bob Graham the Counsel and Care charity was announced in 1954. Twenty-Five years later, they supported and assisted approx. Seven Thousand, Five Hundred people. Moreover, through other services, they helped older persons, families and carers. (Independent Age, 2017)

Eight years ago, Independent Age (2017) recognised the connection between older persons and poverty. They identified three key categories; firstly, financial, next, information and lastly, social contact. They state that poverty directly affects each grouping, further research found implications from exploring the threats of disengagement and social exclusion. For instance; the equivalent dangers of diabetes and loneliness. (Independent Age, 2017) They acknowledged the importance of well – being holistically, partnering together mental and physical health.

Social services are at the heart of Welsh public life. They support 150,000 young, old, and disabled people every year to achieve their potential and help make them safe. Many of these services are delivered in partnership with others, with housing, health or education services. (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011, p.5)

Gwenda Thomas, a deputy minister for Social Services presented a government bill in 2013. The bill’s intentions are to integrate the provision of services to protect and maintain everyone’s well-being. (National Assembly for Wales, 2018) The bill was passed and was

pronounced an act in 2014, namely; ‘Social Services and Well – being act (Wales) 2014.’ Next, the act was then put into practice in 2016. (Social Care Wales, 2017) The act provides a legal frame for all the social services provision in Wales, which is replacing eleven public care laws. The new piece of legislation is going to take social services into a new direction oppose to other or prior social service legislation,

Ultimately, well – being underpins the foundation of the act, the needs of communities, families and individuals are placed in the centre. Social services’ purpose is to aid, assist and support people. (MIND, 2013). Preserving a person’s independence is a key value throughout the course of ageing. It comes hand in hand with individuals; their self-esteem, dignity and sense of empowerment.

When independence is removed from a person’s life, the individual may feel defeated, depressed, or begin to doubt their own ability to care for themselves. Low expectations lead to reduced capabilities and can be self-fulfilling, causing deterioration in health and cognitive ability. In a worst-case scenario, the loss of independence can lead to the loss of a will to live. (My Care My Home, 2016)

Within the act, a portion entitled ‘Assessing the Needs of the Individuals’ is a key change to social work legislation. The local authority is now required to provide a service of care to everyone. For instance, children, carers, young and older persons. The assessment considers five inter linked factors of the individual life, they follow as; a persons’ personal circumstances, goals, barriers, risks, strengths and abilities. Coupled with the assessment process, the services range from; information and advice, preventative and community, managed care and support. (Welsh Government, 2014, p.3 – 4)

Another important piece of the act named ‘Meeting Needs: Eligibility’ again, the changes cover a series of rights relating to well – being. It creates an obligation between service users and the provision of care provided by the local authority and partnerships with other services. For example, Social Services often work closely with the national health service and the police; essentially overpowering any barriers affecting the individual. (GOV.UK, 2015) Moving away from the more traditional delivery, the act aims to use a new approach which reflects individual responses, rather than a generalised, grouped together reply. The Welsh Government note that the modernised law does not place emphasis on the ‘right of service’ instead, the intention is to ensure access to care services to fulfil their needs, safeguarding their well – being. (Welsh Government, 2014, p.17)

Viewpoints will vary from person to person, a functionalist approach focuses on all the different parts that make up society, more so, how all the parts ensure that society runs efficiently, William Henry and Elaine Cummings introduced the disengagement theory in 1961, the theory primarily concentrates on older persons withdrawing from their roles and becoming socially excluded. Functionalists deem this process as a necessity to maintaining the balance of humanity. (Act for Libraries, 2017). They state that society expresses such high standards of efficiency and accomplishment They argued that elderly persons do not offer any form of productivity. Therefore, labelled as a burden in such a fast-moving culture. (Gibson, A., Gibson, N. 2016, p.97 – 99).

Nevertheless, the disengagement theory has been known to be deeply flawed. It has been critiqued by Robert J Havighurst, the theorist behind the activity theory in 1961, unlike the disengagement theory, it interlinks with old persons, continuing their social roles and remain an active member of society. (Boundless Sociology, n.d)

Older individuals can often be misrepresented, especially in the media. The media perceive them to be a burden on society because they are not an ‘active member within society’ which is making a sweeping statement. This is false, due to everyone being an individual, with their own experiences, knowledge and interests. Although a new piece of legislation, the social services and well-being act (Wales) 2014 has made an impact in our society, and history. The act introduced many fresh aspects that is currently employed by social services in Wales. However, there has been a lack of negative data documented in relation to the act. A reason for this is the amount of time the act has been in force, it has not been in practice long enough for a sufficient analysis of the act.

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