



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Work Programme

2022-24

**An independent voice and champion
for older people**

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people throughout Wales.

The Commissioner is taking action to protect older people's rights, end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

The Commissioner is working for a Wales where older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg // This document is available in Welsh

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Introduction

It is an honour to be the independent Older People's Commissioner for Wales and I am pleased that my term of office has been extended for a further two years to August 2024. I look forward to continuing the work underway with older people and organisations across Wales towards the long term vision of making Wales the best place in the world to grow older.

During the next two years, and reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on older people, my focus will be working to ensure that older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind. I will take forward and build on the progress made under my four priorities of rights, ageism, abuse and ageing well as set out in this work programme. I am also responding to the new challenges older people are facing including the cost of living crisis and access to NHS services and treatment.



Much of what has been achieved since I became Commissioner in 2018 has been through working closely with older people and in partnership with many different organisations and individuals across Wales. This way of working is fundamental to my approach as Commissioner, and particularly in these challenging times, it is only by working together and drawing on each other's skills and experiences that we will make sustainable progress and impact.

As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales I have a number of statutory functions supported by a set of legal powers – to hold public bodies to account, to provide assistance to older people, to encourage best practice, to scrutinise policy and legislation affecting older people. These enable me to be an independent voice and champion for older people and I know how important this is for older people, their families and friends. Together with my team we continue our commitment to do all we can for older people throughout Wales and would like to thank all those we work with for the inspiration, challenge and support that they provide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Heléna Herklots'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Heléna Herklots CBE

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

My priorities as Commissioner

Protecting and promoting older people's rights

Older people's experiences during the pandemic have shown that there is still a long way to go until rights and rights-based approaches are firmly embedded across our public services. It is therefore important to raise awareness and understanding of older people's rights across society as well as focus on groups who are particularly at risk of not having rights upheld – for example Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic older people, and older people living in care homes.

I have established a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Advisory Group to provide expert advice and guidance on my research and work with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic older people, and a Care Home Rights Group including experts from Wales and across the UK to work together to improve the rights of older people living in care homes.

Outcomes and actions

- Increase older people's awareness and understanding of their rights, through producing and promoting information and guidance on rights for older people and learning from my Advice and Assistance service.
- Improve older people's rights in care homes through working with experts and stakeholders to understand and improve policy, practice and culture.
- Improve the awareness, understanding and response to the needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic older people through working with my Advisory Group to develop ongoing relationships with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, undertake research and act on the findings.
- Improve older people's involvement in decisions about their future healthcare, through increasing the understanding and use of Advance Care Planning.
- Improve the experience of older people and their families in decisions about DNACPR, through working with relevant stakeholders to share learning from the pandemic, and identifying improvements that can be made.
- Seek to ensure that Welsh Government and public bodies uphold older people's rights by monitoring and scrutinising their actions or lack of action and intervening when necessary.
- Improve older people's ability to access information and public services by creating awareness of older people's rights to information and communication in a digital age, and adherence to my [Section 12 guidance](#).

Ending ageism and age discrimination

Ageism underpins many of the issues faced by older people, with stereotypes and assumptions about growing older often leading to unfair treatment and discrimination, and limiting opportunities that people need to help them to age well.

Despite a growing body of research that indicates ageism has a wide range of negative impacts on older people – affecting physical and mental health, recovery from illness, levels of social inclusion and even life expectancy – ageism is still very prevalent, with research from the World Health Organisation highlighting that 1 in 2 people worldwide are ageist against older people.

Combatting ageism is one of the four areas for action within the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) and provides an opportunity to learn from others across the world and to share good practice and ideas from our work in Wales.

I have developed training and information resources on ageism for older people and organisations and have published research and formed partnerships to improve the media representation of ageing and older people.

Outcomes and actions

- Empower older people to understand and challenge ageism through scaling up the provision of our training and identifying other methods to engage older people.
- Ensure that policy and legislative development and implementation does not reflect nor result in ageism and age discrimination by monitoring, analysing and influencing policy.
- Increase awareness of ageism and action needed to prevent it through providing information and training to public bodies.
- Improve the communications of public bodies and other stakeholders through promoting my practical [guide on how to avoid ageism in communications](#) and offering support in its use.
- Contribute to progress on ending ageism and age discrimination by working with key organisations in the UK and internationally.

Stopping the abuse of older people

Whilst there is a growing awareness of the scale and nature of abuse and crimes against older people – which affect thousands of older people in Wales each year – understanding of these issues is still too low across our public services and society in general, compounded by a lack of data about the ways that abuse affects older people in Wales.

Older people affected by abuse often face barriers when trying to access help and support, and there is a need for services to be more accessible and inclusive for older people.

I have established an action group and steering group, bringing together older people and over 30 organisations, committed to working together to build the evidence, increase awareness and improve support and services.

Resources produced include a support services directory, information for older people, and reports on service provision and what needs to change.

Outcomes and actions:

- Enable older people to seek help if they are at risk of or experiencing abuse by improving awareness and understanding through communications campaigns and provision of information by Welsh Government, key organisations and my office.
- Improve the support and services that older people who are experiencing abuse can access, by influencing the new Welsh Government Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy, implementation and commissioning of services at regional and national level.
- Improve the awareness, policy and services response to the abuse of older men, through publishing new research on older men and taking action on its findings.
- Improve the public's understanding and response to the abuse of older people by enabling and supporting older people to share their experiences and engaging with community groups and networks.
- Contribute to improvements in practice through identifying, sharing and promoting good practice in support and services for older people at risk of or experiencing abuse.
- Contribute to the effective implementation of the Welsh Government's action plan on the abuse of older people, through engagement with my action and steering groups and ensuring appropriate monitoring and learning.

Enabling everyone to age well

Ageing well – ‘adding life to years, not just years to life’ – is important for each of us, and for our country as a whole, and is something everyone in Wales should be able to do. Older people should be seen as a vital part of society and should be able to have more opportunities to participate in and contribute to our economy and our communities.

However, many people face barriers that prevent them from ageing well.

Making Wales a nation of age-friendly communities is therefore crucial to ensure that older people feel valued, included and respected and can do the things that matter to them.

The World Health Organisation identifies 8 features or ‘domains’ of age-friendly communities: community and health care; transport; housing; social participation; outdoor spaces and buildings; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information

My office is now an affiliate member of the WHO Network of Age-friendly Communities, encouraging and supporting local authorities in Wales to commit to becoming age-friendly. To support this I have established a Partnership Group to develop, champion and influence age-friendly policy and practice across Wales, and a Community of Practice to enable the sharing of learning and ideas.

Outcomes and actions

- Improve older people’s ability to get out and about and do the things that matter to them, by driving and supporting the development of age-friendly communities in Wales.
- Increase local authorities and their partners understanding and commitment to being age-friendly through sharing and promotion of good practice, evidence of what works and opportunities for learning and development.
- Improve the opportunities for people to age well by influencing policy and strategy on the eight domains of [age-friendly communities](#).
- Improve access to and provision of financial support for older people through evidencing need and promoting effective communications and services.
- Improve the awareness, support and services for older people experiencing mental health problems, through influencing the Welsh Government’s new mental health strategy and its implementation.
- Improve older people’s timely access to the right NHS and social care support by influencing and scrutinising health and social care policy and service developments.

Leave no-one behind

Alongside the action described above, I will also be taking forward work to ensure that older people are not left behind as we recover from the pandemic:

- **Ensure that older people's circumstances, needs and contribution are recognised and effectively responded to, in the Covid recovery plans and implementation.**
- **Ensure that the Covid 19 Public Inquiry is informed by the insights and work of my office and that it listens, values and responds to the experiences of older people and their families.**
- **Improve public bodies understanding and response to our ageing society, by influencing the implementation and learning from the Strategy for an Ageing Society and the prioritisation of resources.**

Measuring Progress: State of the Nation

As Commissioner, I monitor and review a wide range of data, evidence and research relating to people experiences of growing older in Wales, and have published two State of the Nation reports which examine the progress being made against key measures relating to older people's health, well-being and quality of life.

Whilst the pandemic has restricted the information collected from and about older people over the past couple of years, I will use what is available to scrutinise the impact of policy and practice on older people and to identify potential issues or areas of concern where additional action may be needed to prevent older people from being left behind.

I will also seek to fill gaps in data and evidence through:

- **Engaging directly with older people throughout Wales.**
- **Monitoring issues and concerns being raised with my Advice and Assistance team.**
- **Undertaking and publishing research on specific issues.**
- **Carrying out polling to reach out to older people in larger numbers.**
- **Gathering information and evidence via partners and stakeholders.**

Our Values

My work during 2022-24 will continue to be underpinned by a set of values which guide my work and the work of my team.



One Team

Shared goals above individual agendas
Proactive in offering support to others



Respectful

Actively seek the views of others
Demonstrate that value different views and perspective



Inclusive and Friendly

Pay attention to each other's wellbeing
Be kind, welcoming and supportive to everyone
Consider the impact on others of what we say and do



Open

Challenge constructively and be open to challenge
Seek to learn from others
Always look for better ways of doing things



Ambitious

Show passion for our vision
Strive for excellence
Be bold and ready to take considered risks to achieve impact



Integrity

Strive to do the right things and take responsibility for our work
Do what we say we will do



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