



Older People's Commissioner for Wales  
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

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# Framework for Action

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2013-2017



An independent voice and  
champion for older people



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# Foreword

As the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, I am an independent voice and champion for older people, standing up and speaking out on their behalf. My work is driven by what older people, and those who care for and support them, say matters most to them.

I work to ensure that older people’s voices are heard and that the issues that matter to them are addressed. It is my role to deliver and influence real change to the lives of older people.

There are almost 800,000 people over the age of 60 within Wales – over a quarter of our population – and in the next 20 years this will exceed 1 million. Older people have a wealth of knowledge and experience, and through their volunteering, caring and, for many, their continued years of employment, older people are a major contributor to the Welsh economy, and our communities across Wales. Society must fundamentally change the way it thinks about older people and ageing, and recognise them for the significant asset that they are, both to our communities and wider economy.

For many older people, Wales is a good place to grow older. They have a good overall quality of life, and receive the services and support they need to stay safe and independent.

However, despite the many examples of good practice across public services that make a real difference to the lives of older people, too often we fail to get the basics right. Too many older people struggle to get the information, support and services they need on a timely basis and feel that they have little voice or control. Too many older people live in poverty and many of the community services upon which they depend are disappearing. Inequalities in life expectancies are stark and growing, and we are not yet good enough at providing the support that older people need when they are vulnerable or in need of protection.

When I took up post in June 2012, one of my priorities was to meet and speak with older people from all backgrounds across Wales and I will continue to do so over my term of office. I have used their voices, and the voices of those who care for and support them, to shape the priorities contained within this four-year Framework for Action. This is their Framework for Action, this is the change that older people want and need to see. It is ambitious, as am I as Commissioner on behalf of older people in Wales.

Within Wales we have, from the Welsh Government and across the political spectrum, a longstanding commitment to listening to and supporting older people. We also have some excellent public services, many dedicated public service staff and our Third and Voluntary sectors are a credit to Wales. I know we share the same aspiration – to make Wales a good place to grow older.

My role as Commissioner will be to work in partnership with our public services, our national and local governments, and others, to grow our understanding about the issues that matter to older people and the changes that are required. I will lead the development of new ways of thinking and good practice to bring about the change that we need to see. I expect our public services to get it right for older people and I will always recognise and give credit when they do – but where there are failures, I will hold to account and, if necessary, will use my legal powers to both protect older people and deliver the change they want and need.

Delivering this change will not be easy. It will require all of us to be at our best, to think and behave differently and to be brave and bold. We should be ambitious, not just for older people today, but for the younger generations who will follow.

This Framework for Action clearly outlines my priorities, the changes I expect to see in Wales and how I will drive forward improvements in older people’s lives over the next four years, helping to make Wales a good place to grow older – not just for some, but for everyone.



**Sarah Rochira**  
Older People’s Commissioner for Wales

# A life that has value, meaning and purpose

Older people rarely talk about services or systems – their priority is to stay safe, as healthy and independent as possible, and to lead lives that have **value, meaning and purpose**. This is how older people define quality of life – synonymous with the concept of wellbeing, increasingly used by our public services. Older people have told me that their lives have **value, meaning and purpose** when they:

- Feel safe and are listened to, valued and respected;
- Are able to get the help they need, when they need it, in the way they want it;
- Live in a place which suits them and their lives;
- Are able to do the things that matter to them.

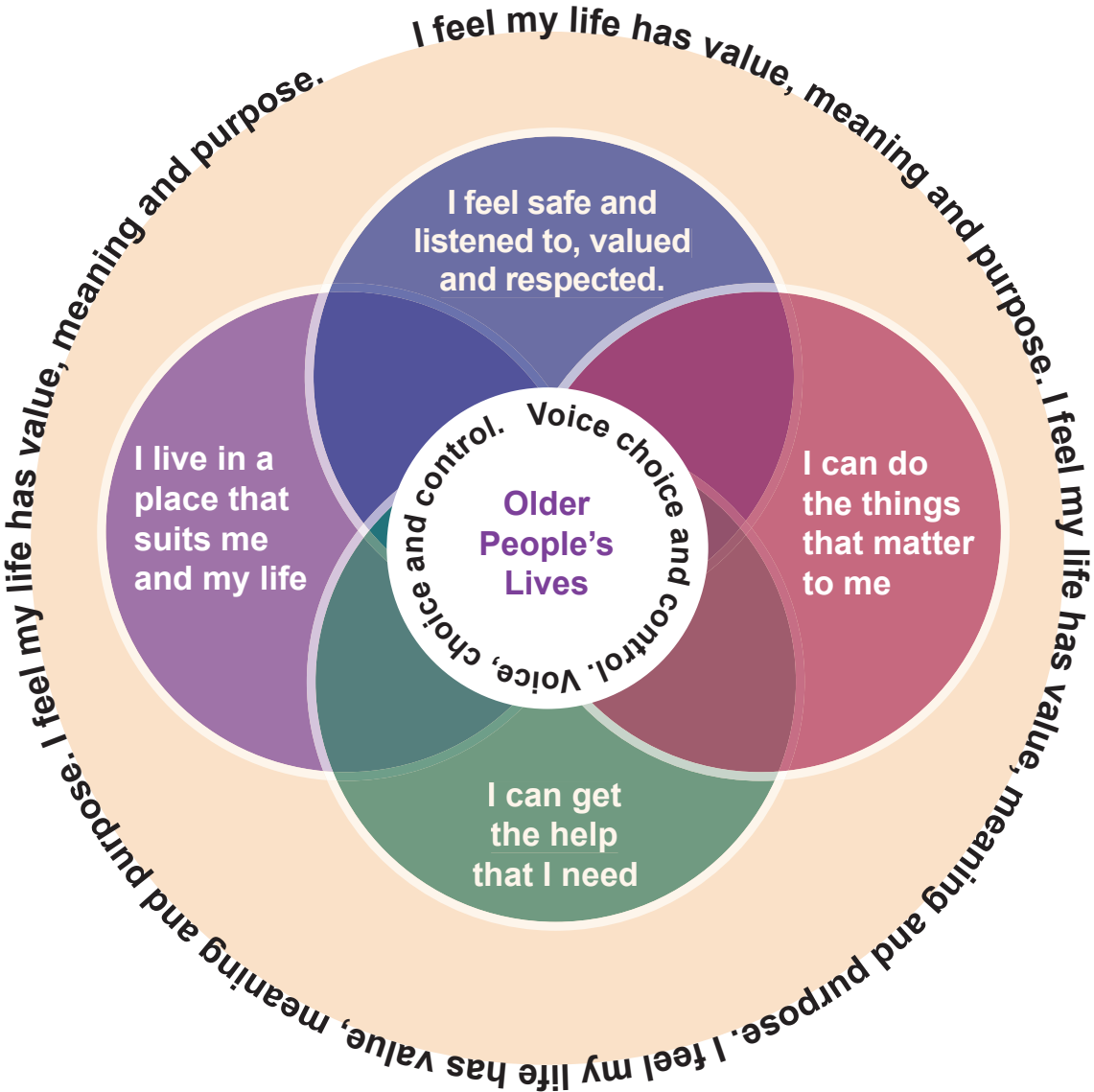
Older people are also very clear that they want to have a strong voice and meaningful control over their lives, particularly in how they are supported and cared for. The extent to which they do has a direct impact on their quality of life and, in many cases, both increases the impact of services and reduces the cost of those services to the public purse.

Public services within Wales must not only be focused on financial balance, efficiency and process measures, but also on the impact that services have on the overall quality of life that older people lead. Public services must focus more on how they ensure older people feel safe, listened to and respected, can do the things that matter to them, can get the help they need to stay safe and independent, and that the places and communities in which they live support the lives they want to lead.

To achieve this, public services will need to improve significantly the extent to which they work together and listen to older people. This includes involving older people in the design, development and delivery of services and ensuring that care and support provided to individuals is tailored to their specific needs and wishes.

Five accompanying reports will be published in relation to each of the quality of life themes, each giving a voice to older people, considering in more detail their experiences and the change required to make a real difference to their lives.

**Figure 1: Quality of life model**



We must recognise that not all older people are the same and cannot be simply categorised. Public services must recognise the needs of ALL older people and respond to their particular needs in an appropriate way so that no-one is unable to access the support and services they need.

Older people’s voices will, and must, be the ultimate test of how effective our public services are and whether the change they want and need to see is taking place.

## My work over the next four years

I have used the strong, consistent and clear voices of older people to develop my work. Each priority in this Framework for Action contributes towards a number of the quality of life themes, reflecting the complexity and inter-connectedness of the work I undertake.

### As Commissioner, I will ensure that:

- My work continues to be driven by what older people, including those whose voices are not always heard, tell me matters most to them;
- My work is relevant to all older people across Wales, inclusive of location, race, gender, language, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief;
- My work uses the skills, knowledge and experience of older people to both support other older people and to drive forward change;
- I work in partnership with others across the public and Third sectors to drive forward change in the lives of older people;
- I am ambitious, bold, challenging and independent, but also strongly supportive of those who are working to improve the lives of older people in Wales.

Every year I will publish a work programme that will outline specific action linked to the priorities set out in this document. I will also publish an annual 'Impact and Reach' report, which will form the heart of my statutory Annual Report. This will be presented to older people at an annual open meeting.

Older people's voices will, and should be, the ultimate test of how effective my work is and whether I am delivering the change they want and need to see.

I will also publish an annual assessment on the overall quality of life for older people in Wales, based on the four themes in the quality of life model. The methodology I plan to use to do this is outlined on page 16.



# Priority one: Embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services

The concept of wellbeing – called quality of life by older people – is not yet sufficiently understood and reflected in the planning, development and everyday delivery of public services. Despite increasing references to the concept of wellbeing within existing and proposed Welsh legislation – such as the Public Health Bill, the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Bill and the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 – there is no common definition or understanding of the term. Public bodies and services need to strengthen significantly the use of wellbeing indicators within their work and see the concept of wellbeing as fundamental to the success of our public services.

There is too often a misconception that the only issues that matter to older people are confined to health and social care. Whilst these are important, services such as education, leisure, housing, transport, community facilities and support to remain in employment all play an essential part in maintaining the wellbeing of older people. Failing to recognise this undermines the wider health, independence and wellbeing of older people in Wales.

## The change I expect to see:

Public bodies will have a consistent understanding of what wellbeing means in tangible terms, as well as its importance to older people. Wellbeing will sit at the heart of public service plans and, increasingly, the wellbeing of older people will be used to drive the development of services and support, as well as the evaluation of their impact. Self-reported measurements of wellbeing from older people will improve.

## Evidence of this will include:

- The concept of wellbeing lies at the heart of key legislation, strategies and plans, and is described in a way that reflects older people's voices and the issues that matter to them.
- Wellbeing is routinely measured and published, and is used by public services as a key indicator of the effectiveness of services in meeting older people's needs.
- Older people's priorities and issues are recognised and reflected across the breadth of Welsh and local government portfolios – not just in health

and social care.

- Social isolation and loneliness are recognised as major public health issues facing older people in Wales and action is underway to address them.

**Playing my part: Over the next four years I will:**

- Make the case for wellbeing becoming a public service priority, and promote an integrated approach to public health across public services.
- Continue to work with governments, both Welsh and local, to develop a concept of wellbeing that is consistent and reflected across legislation and portfolios.
- Work with the Welsh Government to raise the profile of older people's issues across key portfolios outside of health and social care.
- Lead Wales' work to support older people to age well through the strategic Ageing Well Programme, including seeking European funding, to support wellbeing initiatives in Wales and to learn from successful approaches in other countries.
- Keep under review the effectiveness of how our public services use the voices of older people to drive and develop their work.

## Priority two: Driving up the quality of – and availability and access to – health and social care

Whilst there are many excellent examples of health and social care in Wales, many dedicated public service staff and many older people’s experiences are positive, there are unacceptable variations in access to, and the quality of, health and social care. Many older people fail to receive the often basic and essential preventative support and services they need to stay safe, independent and to age well. For some older people, the services they receive fail to keep them safe and free from harm. Too many are not treated in a compassionate and dignified way and, for some, the quality of their care is unacceptable. There needs to be a fundamental shift in the way we consider the delivery of health and social care, away from a service and system focused approach to a more holistic, joined-up and outcome focused model. Health and social care providers must recognise that older people are now the predominant users of their services and must design and develop their support and services on this basis.

### The change I expect to see:

All older people will be treated and cared for in a safe, effective, dignified and caring way. They will receive, on a timely basis, the help they need to stay safe and independent. Their voices – as well as the voices of front-line staff – will drive the continuous evaluation and improvement of health and social care.

### Evidence of this will include:

- Access to primary and secondary care for older people is appropriate and meets their needs.
- Older people receive safe, effective and dignified treatment and care within hospital settings, delivered in ways that protect their dignity and respect.
- People with dementia, and other groups of older people requiring specific support, have their needs understood and met by service providers.
- Quality of life sits at the heart of provision of residential social and nursing care and there are no high-risk residential care homes in Wales.
- Everyone considering important decisions, such as going into residential social care, has the information, time and support they need to make the

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right decision for them.

- Older people have voice, choice and control over how they receive services, support and care.
- Older people's voices are central to the planning of health and social care and are used to drive continuous improvement.
- Carers receive the support they want and need to continue to look after those for whom they care.

**Playing my part: Over the next four years I will:**

- Work with health and social care providers to increase understanding about the issues that matter to older people and how to respond effectively to them.
- Assess ongoing progress made by the Welsh NHS in relation to dignity and respect in health settings and improving support to carers and people with dementia, requiring further action where necessary.
- Develop and publish guidance for health and social care providers on effective engagement with older people and the impact assessment of planned changes to older people's access to, and experiences of, healthcare.
- Keep under scrutiny the impact of the reconfiguration of health and social care across Wales to ensure it does not have a disproportionate impact on older people.
- Work with the NHS and social care providers in Wales to ensure a strong focus on safety and effective scrutiny and governance, and improve openness and transparency.
- Work in partnership with others to set the benchmark for the quality of residential care within Wales, ensuring the action needed to deliver this is taken by public services.
- Promote good practice in social care and review social care failures to ensure that lessons are learnt.
- Support individuals, through both advocacy and the use of my legal powers, to ensure they receive the health and social care support they require.
- Work with the Welsh Government to develop a framework of patients' rights that has a statutory basis.

## Priority three: Protecting and improving community services, facilities and infrastructure

Whilst high-quality health and social care matters enormously to older people, they consistently raise the need to focus more strongly on key local and community-based facilities, such as buses and community transport, public toilets, pavements, public seating, outdoor areas, leisure facilities, community centres and public libraries. These are not luxuries – they are essential to the maintenance of older people’s health, independence and wellbeing. These are the services talked most about by older people and there is huge concern that these are disappearing.

As we grow older as a nation, we need to fundamentally rethink how we design and plan our communities. Age-friendly and dementia-supportive communities and accessible environments, particularly for those who have a disability or who are frail, must now be prioritised. Good practice must become standard practice if older people are not to become further excluded from the wider built and external environment. A fundamental shift is required in the way we think about and plan our communities.

We also need to fundamentally change the way we think about employment and retirement planning. Many older people will want or need to continue working far beyond expected or planned retirement, but to do so will need opportunities to continually develop and learn new skills. For people who have retired, access to ongoing opportunities to develop and learn new skills is an essential element of maintaining their health, independence and wellbeing.

### The change I expect to see:

Essential community services are recognised as being as impactful and as important as statutory services and older people can continue to access them, albeit in different ways. There must be greater recognition of the need to plan for older age and opportunities must also be available to maintain and develop the skills necessary to remain within employment for as long as necessary. Older people themselves report that they are still able to do the things they need to do to maintain their health, independence and wellbeing.

### Evidence of this will include:

- Older people will be effectively engaged with, listened to and be partners in decision-making about the future of community services and facilities

and the choices facing local authorities.

- Older people will increasingly be involved in the design, development and delivery of community based services and facilities.
- The impact of service changes on older people is not disproportionate and robust alternatives are put in place where traditional service models cannot legitimately be retained.
- Communities and homes will be age-friendly – our high streets and public spaces will meet the needs of older people and ensure that they are accessible and attractive. People’s homes will be adapted to meet their needs.
- Older people are able to do the things that are essential to maintain their wellbeing.
- Older people are supported to learn the skills necessary to stay in employment and effectively plan for retirement.

**Playing my part: Over the next four years I will:**

- Develop and publish a strong economic case for retaining non-statutory community services and facilities.
- Keep under regular review the availability of key community services and facilities for older people and support older people to retain these local services.
- Provide guidance to local authorities on effective consultation and engagement with older people and keep under review the effectiveness of engagement mechanisms.
- Make robust representations to the Welsh Government and local government for protection of funding to existing community services and for the extension of those services to groups who need them most.
- Work with the Welsh Government to ensure that older people’s issues are reflected in a wider range of portfolios.
- Ensure that the Ageing Well Programme leads the way in developing age-friendly communities in Wales.
- Continue to work with others to ensure that older people have the opportunity to continue to learn and develop the skills essential to ageing well and their overall wellbeing.
- Work to make sure that older people have the support and services to stay in their own homes for as long as they wish.

## Priority four: Standing up for older people who are at risk of harm and ensuring that they are safeguarded and protected

Over 34,000 older people in Wales – a proportionately higher figure than the rest of the UK – are said to be victims of abuse. For many, this occurs in the place they call home. There is not yet sufficient understanding within public services, and society generally, of the nature of abuse faced by older people and the circumstances that lead to older people becoming particularly vulnerable or at risk. Increasingly, older people are at risk, not just physically but also emotionally and financially. Work has begun in Wales to improve how we identify those at risk and act to keep them safe, but we must also ensure that older people have access to the full support of our civil and criminal justice systems.

### The change I expect to see:

The different forms of abuse faced by older people are recognised and addressed. There is a systematic approach to identifying those who are at risk and all older people who are at risk have access to effective safeguarding support. Those who are abused are swiftly and appropriately supported to regain their safety and abuse of older people is recognised as a criminal act. Where they fit the legal definition, older people are recognised as victims of domestic abuse and have access to the widest possible support available under domestic abuse legislation and domestic abuse support services.

### Evidence of this will include:

- Wales has effective safeguarding and protection arrangements in place and is swift to take action when service failures lead to the abuse or neglect of older people.
- Financial abuse, scams and coercive control are recognised as being significant and growing issues for older people.
- Older people, and those who work with them, are enabled and encouraged to raise concerns about care and safety – and those concerns are acted upon.
- Older people have stronger rights in law, understand what they are and are supported to access remedies and justice.

- Successful prosecutions take place against those who abuse older people.

**Playing my part: Over the next four years I will:**

- Work with public services to improve understanding of the nature of abuse faced by older people and ensure that this is referred to in Welsh legislation and guidance.
- Assist and support older people who are at risk of abuse or harm or who have been abused or harmed.
- Review or investigate, using my legal powers where necessary, service failures or specific examples of abuse, in order that changes can be made as a result of lessons learned.
- Work with the wider criminal justice system, safeguarding agencies and police services to increase awareness of the nature of abuse faced by older people and ensure they have access to support and justice.
- Scrutinise the way in which public bodies respond to concerns raised by front-line staff and ensure that good practice is developed and shared so staff working with older people receive greater support to raise concerns about poor care or mistreatment.
- Take action to ensure that older people in situations of vulnerability have a strong voice of their own and are heard, including a right to independent advocacy, both for those who have and do not have capacity.
- Work with partners to improve awareness, detection and prevention of financial scams against older people.



## Priority five: Tackling prejudice, inequality and discrimination

We live in a world obsessed by age and stereotypical views of older people. All too often, older people are talked about in a derogatory, disrespectful and defamatory manner. This undermines older people's self-esteem, self-confidence and independence. Phrases such as 'burden of care', 'demographic time-bomb' and 'silver tsunami' that are used by public services, the media and other commentators, are simply unacceptable.

Too many older people feel that services, and indeed some sections of society, discriminate against them simply because of their age. This includes financial services, access to health care and other essential services and support, as well as access to safeguarding and criminal justice. Some of the changes taking place, such as the move to digital access, will further exclude them.

Older people are not a homogenous group. We are not yet good enough at understanding and recognising the full diversity of older people. This undermines the effective delivery of public services.

Putting equality and fighting discrimination at the heart of public services and our wider society delivers better quality of life for everyone, not just for older people.

### The change I expect to see:

Portrayals in society of older people and growing older will be balanced and reflect the true value of older people to society. Older people will report that they feel listened to, valued and respected. Older people will be recognised in a much wider breadth of strategies, plans and policies, and service planning and delivery will recognise and meet their needs. The law is increasingly used to uphold the rights of older people.

### Evidence of with this will include:

- Older people's contribution to society is recognised and valued across the media and wider society. The language used about older people recognises them as a significant asset to Welsh life.
- A stronger rights-based approach underpins the lives of older people in Wales and human rights are used as key supporting principles in the delivery of public services.
- Older people are not excluded or prevented from accessing services and support simply because of their age.

- Public services have effective mechanisms in place to engage with and listen to all older people and can demonstrate that they responded to all older people's concerns, understanding the important relationship between age and other protected characteristics.
- Older people are not disproportionately affected by changes made as a result of reductions in public expenditure. Public sector bodies can provide evidence of robust and effective impact assessments.
- Older people are able to access the legal system more effectively to have their rights upheld and secure justice.

**Playing my part: Over the next four years I will:**

- Work with others to raise the profile and impact of discrimination faced by older people.
- Consistently and publicly challenge negative stereotypes of older people across the media and wider society.
- Work with the Welsh Government to establish a declaration of rights for older people and a more human rights based approach to key legislation.
- Ensure that older people have a strong voice, speaking out on their behalf, including on behalf of older people who are particularly marginalised.
- Make sure that older people have access to effective advocacy, including independent advocacy, when needed.
- Keep under review the equality strategies of public bodies and the Welsh Government, to ensure that older people – and the issues that matter to them – are properly and fully reflected and addressed.
- Challenge discrimination using my full legal powers, where it is in the public interest.

## How will I know if change has taken place?

This is an ambitious Framework, which seeks to change and influence a wide range of services across Welsh society and, in many ways, Welsh society itself. Measuring change of this breadth is complex, as is measuring my direct influence as Commissioner on that change, and I recognise that others will be working to bring about similar change.

I will use a variety of methods to determine whether change has taken place over the four year period of this framework. This will include:

- Ongoing engagement with older people and those who care for and support them.
- Drawing on external reports and studies that contribute to the evidence base about the lives of older people.
- Using existing quantitative indicators, where possible, to gauge progress and change.
- Establishing new quantitative indicators where there are gaps in existing data sets.
- Commissioning qualitative research that gives direct voice to older people themselves to gain an insight into their understanding of what it is like to grow older in Wales.

Older people's voices will, and must, be the ultimate test of how effective our public services are and whether the change they want and need to see is taking place.

## A period of opportunity

Wales is a nation of older people. They bring huge knowledge, experience, value and wealth to our communities and economy. Older people have a right and deserve to be seen as a major asset. We must break away from traditional stereotyping of older people and recognise them for the individuals they are. Individuals with real hopes, real desires, real fears and concerns, and – for some – real needs that we must get better at meeting.

Wales, like the rest of the UK, faces difficult challenges in the years ahead. Reductions in funding for public services are already having an impact upon older people, at a time when there is a rapidly increasing need for specialist support for those who are particularly vulnerable, frail or have complex health needs. Falling budgets, rising needs and greater expectations are only likely to intensify and the impact on older people will grow over the coming years.

However, this is also a period of opportunity. The challenges we face must drive us to be smarter in the design and delivery of public services, to work with the energy and creativity of older people and, working together, refocus our work around ensuring that people are not just safe and independent, but also have a good quality of life. In parts of Wales, this is already underway, but the pace of change must increase.

This Framework for Action sets out an ambitious programme of change for Wales. The changes I expect to see as Commissioner and my priorities reflect the voices of older people across Wales. This is the change they want and need to see. This is the change we must see if we are to ensure that older people today, and those who are growing older, have lives that have value, meaning and purpose in the years to come.

This Framework for Action is for ALL older people, inclusive of where they live, race, gender, language, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

It is also for younger people, because if we get it right for the generations today we will get it right for our younger generations as well. Wales must be, and Wales can be, if we focus on the issues identified in this Framework, a good place to grow older – not just for some, but for everyone.

# Appendix 1: Evaluating the quality of life of older people in Wales

As Commissioner, it is my intention to undertake a periodic evaluation of the quality of life of older people in Wales. I recognise the complexity and an inevitable degree of subjectivity in doing this, but these in themselves are not reasons to avoid monitoring and tracking how older people feel about their lives and whether they are improving or worsening.

My starting point will be the ‘Quality of Life model’ (see page 02), which will be used as a way to assess the extent to which older people’s lives have **value, meaning and purpose** – specifically, that older people:

- Feel safe and are listened to, valued and respected;
- Are able to get the help they need, when they need it, in the way they want it;
- Live in a place which suits them and their lives;
- Are able to do the things that matter to them.

Building upon the model, I propose to evaluate the quality of life of older people in Wales in two main ways. Firstly, I will seek to align the Welsh Government’s Older People’s Wellbeing Monitor to my work and ensure that this provides an in-depth qualitative account of how older people in Wales feel about their lives. Where necessary, I will also commission additional qualitative research to supplement this work. Secondly, I will measure a range of existing quantitative indicators that will help me to track quality of life amongst older people in Wales. I may also commission new indicators where necessary to support this.

The aim of this is to enable me, as Commissioner, to tangibly measure older people’s wellbeing and quality of life. It is my intention that this work will form not only part of my own annual ‘State of the Nation’ reports, but will also be a tool that future Commissioners can choose to continue and build upon so that in the years to come we can develop a longitudinal picture of the lives of older people in Wales and determine whether Wales is, in fact, a good place to grow older.

Following preliminary work, the table overleaf sets out key questions we should be asking on behalf of older people, as well as proposed quantitative indicators. I welcome discussion on how these may be further developed, so that they have value not just to me as Commissioner, but to our wider public services and government.

**Table 1: Draft quality of life indicators**

Quality of Life domain	Proxy subject areas / questions	Indicators
<b>Older people are listened to and respected</b>	Abuse – “Am I safe from harm?”	Number of POVA investigations for 60+
		Domestic violence victims 60+
	Discrimination and exclusion – “Is my voice heard and valued, and am I treated fairly?”	Do you feel you have a say in your local community? Proportion of older people reporting discrimination or loss of respect because of age
<b>Older people can do the things that matter to them</b>	Transport – “Can I get out and about?”	I can get to all the places in my local area that I want
		Levels of car ownership amongst older people
		How easy is it for you to get to and from public transport?
	Poverty – “Can I afford the things I need?”	Percentage of older people who are satisfied with their income
		Percentage of older people who are able to get by financially
	Health – “Am I healthy enough to get out and about?”	Proportion of older people reporting satisfaction with quality of life and health
Percentage of older people with medium/high rating of satisfaction with their mental wellbeing		
<b>Older people can get the help that they need</b>	Finding information and advice – “Do I know where to get help, and how to access it?”	Do you have access to the internet at home?
		Proportion of older people with access to telephone or PC
		Number of older people accessing advice services
	Accessing formal services – “Do the services I get make my life better?”	Percentage of older people with medium/high satisfaction of staff delivering services
		Overall, how satisfied are you with the care and support services you receive?
		The way I am helped and treated makes me feel better
	Informal support networks – “Do I have people who look out for me?”	Do you have anyone with whom to discuss personal matters?
		Percentage of older people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood
		Percentage of older people who said they had someone on whom they could count in a crisis
<b>Older people live in places that suit them and their lives</b>	Choice and quality of home environment – “Does my home make me feel better about my life?”	How well do you think your home is designed to meet your needs?
		Proportion of over-50s who live in households classed as (a) unfit and (b) defective
		Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of your living environment?
	Built environment and public realm – “Is my local area a good place to grow older?”	Do you live within a ten-minute walk of a green or blue space?
		Percentage of older people who feel safe or fairly safe walking alone after dark