

Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales // Jun 22



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

A message from Heléna...

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, and 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.

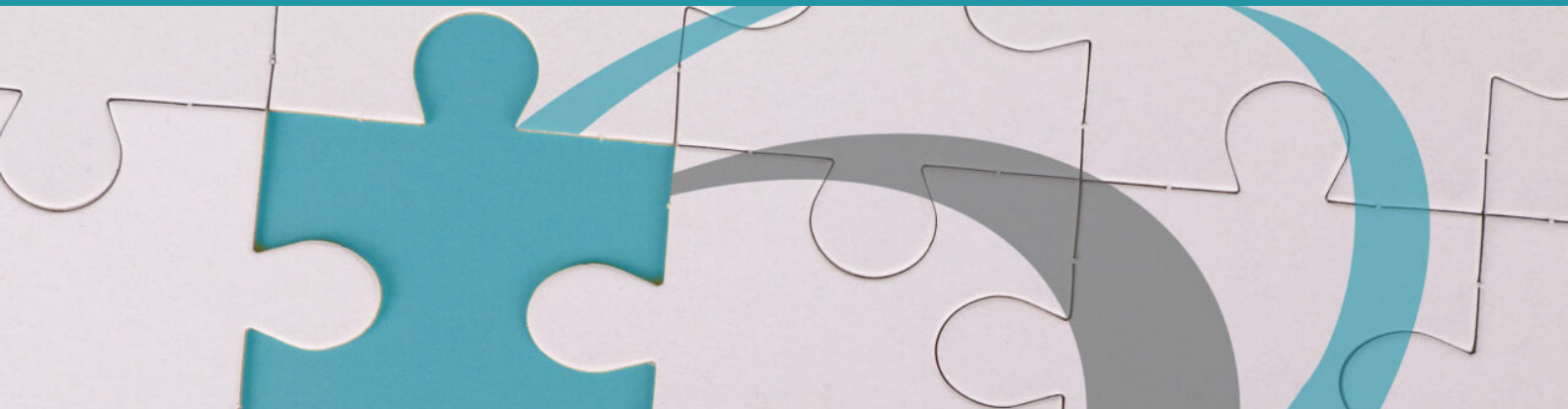
Much of what has been achieved since I became Commissioner in 2018 has been through working closely with older people and in partnership with

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.

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 continue to provide.

Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Commissioner's Work Programme 2022-24



Following confirmation that her term of office has been extended until 2024, the Commissioner published her 2022-24 Work Programme, which sets out the action she is taking forward to ensure that older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.

The Commissioner is taking forward action under four key priority areas:

- **Protecting and promoting older people's rights**
- **Ending ageism and age discrimination**
- **Stopping the abuse of older people**
- **Enabling everyone to age well**

Work planned for 2022-24 includes publishing new resources to help older people and their families better understand rights relating to care homes, as well as engaging with older people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to capture evidence relating to their experiences of growing older in Wales.

Alongside this, the Commissioner will be publishing findings of research into older men's experiences of abuse and the barriers that may prevent them from seeking help and support, as well as influencing the new Welsh Government Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy and ensuring that the new National Action Plan to prevent the abuse of older people is implemented effectively.

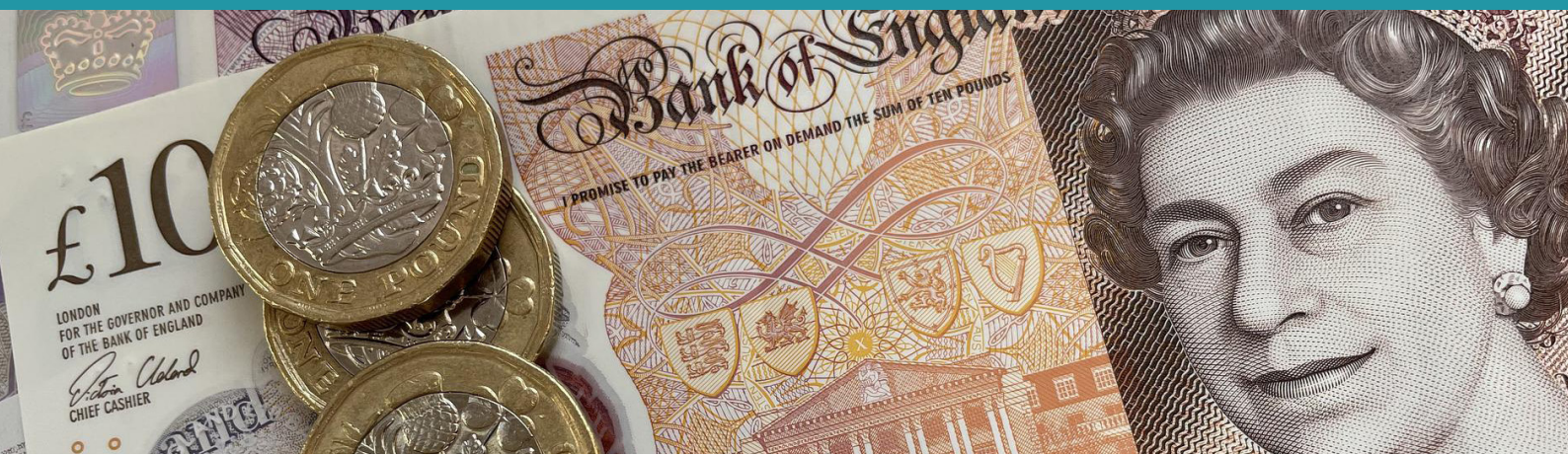
Work will continue with local authorities to support their applications to join the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities by offering advice and support as they develop and finalise plans to make communities throughout Wales more age-friendly.

In addition, the Commissioner is responding to the new challenges older people are facing, including the cost-of-living crisis and access to NHS services and treatment, and will continue to scrutinise the action and decisions taken by government and public bodies, calling for further action and holding them to account where necessary.

Reaching out to and engaging with older people also remains a priority so that older people's voices and experiences are heard and responded to by policy- and decision-makers, and used to shape the development and delivery of policies and services throughout Wales.

To find out more about the Commissioner's 2022-24 Work Programme, please visit: <https://olderpeople.wales/about/commissioners-strategy/>

Commissioner calls for action to ensure older people are not left behind as living costs spiral



Throughout the spring, the Commissioner has been calling for action to ensure that older people receive the financial support they need as we face the cost-of-living crisis.

This included working with several key organisations – Age Cymru, The Bevan Foundation, Care & Repair Cymru, Citizens Advice Cymru, National Energy Action Cymru and Oxfam Cymru – to call on the Welsh Government to extend the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Support Scheme. The Commissioner subsequently welcomed confirmation from the Welsh Government that the scheme would be extended to older people in receipt of Pension Credit for winter 2022-23.

The Commissioner also called on the Welsh Government to encourage older people to claim all of the financial entitlements they are eligible for, particularly Pension Credit, £200 million of which went unclaimed in Wales last year, as well as promoting the Discretionary Assistance Fund, which can provide financial support to older people via local authorities.

The Commissioner also welcomed the announcement from the UK Government that households will receive a £400 energy bills grant, with older households receiving a further £300, and that the pensions triple lock will be restored for 2023-24.

However, given that energy prices are forecast to rise significantly again in October, the Commissioner wants to see further action to ensure older people get the financial support they need and receive what they are entitled to, including automatically paying Pension Credit to those who are eligible, rather than the current system where people must go through a process to claim it.

Highlighting her concerns, the Commissioner said:

“Without action, many older people will be left behind as Wales faces the cost-of-living crisis and the health and well-being of tens of thousands of older people on the lowest incomes, who may be particularly vulnerable and least able to deal with spiralling living costs, will be put at significant risk, something that quite simply is not acceptable.”

How to avoid ageism in communications: Practical tips for professionals



The Commissioner has published a new guide to help professionals working across our public services to avoid ageism in communications.

The guide provides practical tips about using the right language and imagery so that communications and resources do not reinforce ageist stereotypes and attitudes about older people, and better reflect the diversity of older people and their experiences of growing older.

The Commissioner developed the guide as part of her work to end ageism and age discrimination, which is one of her key priorities, and follows the publication of a guide for journalists published earlier this year in partnership with the Centre for Ageing Better, which is now included on press regulator IPSO's resources hub for journalists.

One of the key things we can all do to challenge ageism is to share our concerns if we see something that portrays older people in an unfair or negative way.

So, if you see an article in a newspaper that includes stereotypes of older people, then please contact the editor to share your concerns. Or if you see an information leaflet that uses images of wrinkly hands, then get in touch with the organisation to let them know they could use better images.

We'd also be really grateful if you could share any examples you come across with us, which will help to build further evidence for why the IPSO Editor's Code needs to be updated to include age as a 'protected characteristic' as is the case for other groups who are often discriminated against.

Ageism is still prevalent, but by taking practical action and making our voices heard, we can all play a part in tackling stereotypes and assumptions about older people.

You can download the Communications Guide here: <https://olderpeople.wales/resource/how-to-avoid-ageism-in-communications-practical-tips-for-professionals/>

For a paper copy, or to share examples of ageist content you encounter, please email ask@olderpeople.wales or call 03442 640670.

Human rights must be the foundation of UK Covid-19 Inquiry, says Commissioner



The Commissioner has called for human rights to be the foundation of the forthcoming Covid-19 Inquiry to ensure key issues that affected older people during the pandemic are properly examined, so that lessons can be learnt and improvements delivered.

The Commissioner's response to the draft Terms of Reference also sets out the need for the Inquiry to examine the disproportionate impact the pandemic and social restrictions have had on older people, as well as specific issues such as the use of Do Not Attempt CPR (DNACPR) notices, and whether age discrimination affected older people's access to treatment and services.

The Commissioner says a key priority must be enabling and supporting older people to share their experiences, including people who have lost loved ones and people living in care homes and that the Inquiry must reach out directly to older people throughout Wales to ensure their voices are heard and their evidence can inform the panel's findings and recommendations.

The Commissioner said:

"Whilst the draft Terms of Reference are generally comprehensive, it's crucial that the Inquiry has a greater focus on human rights to ensure there is proper scrutiny of the decisions made and action taken in response to the pandemic, and the ways these affected older people.

"Throughout the pandemic we have seen examples where older people's rights appear to have not been sufficiently protected – such as the use of DNACPR and in access to treatment and services – and the Inquiry must be equipped to examine these issues in detail given the significant and disproportionate impact the pandemic and social restrictions have had on older people.

"Older people must be enabled and supported to share their experiences and provide important evidence to ensure that lessons are learnt and that improvements are quickly delivered, so the Inquiry must reach out directly to older people throughout Wales to ensure their voices are heard.

"To support this, there needs to be Welsh representation on the Inquiry Panel to ensure that the political, cultural and legislative distinctiveness of Wales is properly understood and built into plans for taking forward evidence gathering from individuals and organisations, which must include evidence sessions held here in Wales.

"I welcome the commitment within the Terms of Reference to publishing interim findings, which will be important to provide much-needed answers and help deliver change and improvements as we recover and heal as a nation."

Intergenerational solidarity is vital to recovery from Covid-19 pandemic, say Commissioners



To mark Global Intergenerational Week 2022 (25 April – 1 May), Wales’ commissioners for older people, children and future generations joined forces to highlight the importance of promoting solidarity between generations and providing opportunities for people of different ages to come together.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted many of the inequalities in our society but has also shown the importance of communities supporting one another through difficult times. By harnessing this community spirit, we can all help to strengthen bonds between us and promote greater solidarity between generations as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

This was one of the key themes of this year’s Global Intergenerational Week, which sought to inspire individuals, groups, organisations, local and national governments, and NGOs to fully embrace intergenerational practice and connect people of all generations together.

Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, Heléna Herklots CBE, said:

“Building a sense of solidarity between generations is more important now than ever before as we continue our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the lives of people in all generations, with older people and younger people facing particular challenges with their health and well-being as a result of long periods of isolation.

“I believe that by coming together across generations, we can build stronger, more cohesive communities that support older people to age well and enable people of all generations to reach their potential.”

Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes, said:

“The pandemic was indiscriminate: it affected every generation, in every corner of Wales. Its effects, including mental health concerns, loneliness and financial insecurity affected every age group, and we know that many children worried about the impact of the Coronavirus on older people in their family.

“As commissioners, we recognise the power of intergenerational connections. We strive for a country that treats everyone equally, for a country free from hate and discrimination and call for sustainable intergenerational connections to be strengthened in Wales’ road to recovery.”

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Sophie Howe, said:

“People in Wales, regardless of age, currently face a huge number of challenges including the cost of living crisis, mental health and social isolation, fuel poverty and high levels of income and health inequality. Intergenerational solutions provide greater protection for all as we strive for a better world for future generations.

“The problems of both the present and the future can be addressed at the same time by communities if we come together and support one another.”

The commissioners were founding members of the Senedd’s Cross-party Group on Intergenerational Solidarity, which has been meeting since November 2020 to bring together politicians, academic researchers, practitioners with experience running intergenerational projects, and representatives of older and younger people with a shared aim of promoting solidarity and understanding between generations.

Delyth Jewell MS, Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Intergenerational Solidarity, said:

“Building connections and sharing experiences across generational divides enriches everyone in society – as it’s only through fostering links that we come to realise how interconnected our lives truly are. These past couple of years have been isolating for people of all ages, but the very young and very old have both seen their lives and routines disrupted to an unprecedented degree.

“The Cross-Party Group on Intergenerational Solidarity in the Senedd aims to highlight the shared challenges we face, as well as finding ways in which generations can both tackle barriers together and find ways of sharing joy and creativity. I’m immensely proud to be associated with the work of the cross-party group, and to add my voice to those of the commissioners in calling for greater support for intergenerational work: there is so much we can achieve together.”

Spotlight On: ReAct+ offers free, tailored employment support



Working Wales

#changeyourstory

Launching in June, ReAct+ is a new Welsh Government programme that offers free, tailored employment support to help people progress into sustained employment.

The programme provides a personalised support package built around an individual's specific needs to help remove potential barriers to work they may face such as skills gaps, improving confidence and wellbeing. Depending on an applicant's situation, financial grants could be offered by way of skills training and development, funding for travel, childcare and mobility, and mentoring.

For those who have been made redundant or are under notice of redundancy, or are currently unemployed, they could be entitled to ReAct+ funding to update their skills. In addition to a Vocational Training Grant of up to £1,500, funded assistance could include personal development support of up to £500 to help individuals build up the confidence they need to return to work.

ReAct+ can also help unemployed people looking to change their career path. It's not unusual to want to change careers later in life but taking the plunge can be daunting. By offering mentoring, work experience opportunities and free training advice, the programme aims to help people reconsider their job prospects at any age. Employers will also benefit from recruiting someone through the ReAct+ programme, by receiving funding to cover the first year or their wages.

A specialist health and wellbeing service is offered to individuals dependent on their personal situation, as well as care and childcare grants to make learning a new skill or qualification possible. Support is available not only to those individuals requiring additional support but also to caregivers and adults looking after dependents.

No matter somebody's needs, ambitions or potential barriers into work, ReAct+ can provide flexible employment support that is as unique as they are, irrespective of age, background, ability and gender. Their needs will be assessed by a Working Wales adviser who will create a personalised package of support on a case-by-case basis.

To access the programme and find out more about its employment support, search ReAct+ or call 0800 028 4844 to book an appointment.

Our Newsletter

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to any colleagues or contacts that you think would be interested in receiving it.

If you have received this newsletter via a third party and would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us (details below). We can also provide hard copies of the newsletter or a large print version on request.

Please contact us if you would like to be removed from our newsletter distribution list.

Your comments, feedback and stories

We welcome your feedback about our newsletter so please feel free to contact us to share any thoughts or comments that you have.

We also welcome suggestions about potential content for the newsletter, so if you have any information that you would like us to include in future editions, please get in touch.

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.

How to contact the Commissioner:

Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff
CF10 5FL

Phone: 03442 640 670
Email: ask@olderpeople.wales

Website: www.olderpeople.wales
Twitter: [@talkolderpeople](https://twitter.com/talkolderpeople)

Accessible Formats

If you would like this publication in an alternative format, please contact us. All publications are also available to download and order in a variety of formats from our website.

