



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Annual Report 2021-22: Summary

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

Foreword

It has been another year of uncertainty and challenges for everyone but as I write this there is more hope that the pandemic is ending and more opportunity to reconnect with the people and activities that matter to us.

Whilst the pandemic brought significant challenges, we saw huge resilience from older people, as well as some of the very best of our communities, with volunteers, community groups, charities, local businesses and public bodies working together in new partnerships to deliver help and support throughout Wales.

As we, hopefully, come out of the pandemic we face a new set of challenges, from the cost of living crisis to the waiting lists for NHS treatment. We also have opportunities – to build on the new partnerships and ways of working forged during the pandemic.

Despite the difficulties that 2021-22 brought with it, my work as Commissioner supported significant progress in a number of key areas.

Following my calls, for example, the Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society has a strong focus on making Wales a nation of age-friendly communities, essential to support us to age well. My office is also now an affiliate member of the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, providing support to local authorities to make their commitments to being age-friendly a reality. This work has led to the first local authority in Wales – Cardiff – joining the network in recognition of its plans to become an age-friendly city, with many others finalising their plans to support their applications to the Network.

Recognising the impact on older people of the rapid shift towards online services we saw during the pandemic, I also used my statutory powers to issue formal guidance to local authorities and health boards to ensure that older people can access information and services in a way that suits them in an increasingly digital world.

In addition, research I commissioned during the year– which included examining older people's experiences of abuse, and research into the way older people are portrayed in the media has provided new evidence to make the case for change and is leading to action.

I would like to thank all of the older people and partners I worked with during 2021-22 for their support in taking forward my priorities, as well as my Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for their advice and wise counsel. I'd also like to thank my team for all of their hard work, commitment and dedication.



Looking ahead, I am pleased that my term as Commissioner has been extended until August 2024. It is a great honour to be the independent voice and champion for older people.

During the next two years, my focus will be working to ensure that older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind, and I will take forward and build on the progress made under my four priorities of rights, ageism, abuse and ageing well.

Together with my team we continue our commitment to do all we can for older people throughout Wales.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Heléna Herklots'.

Heléna Herklots CBE

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

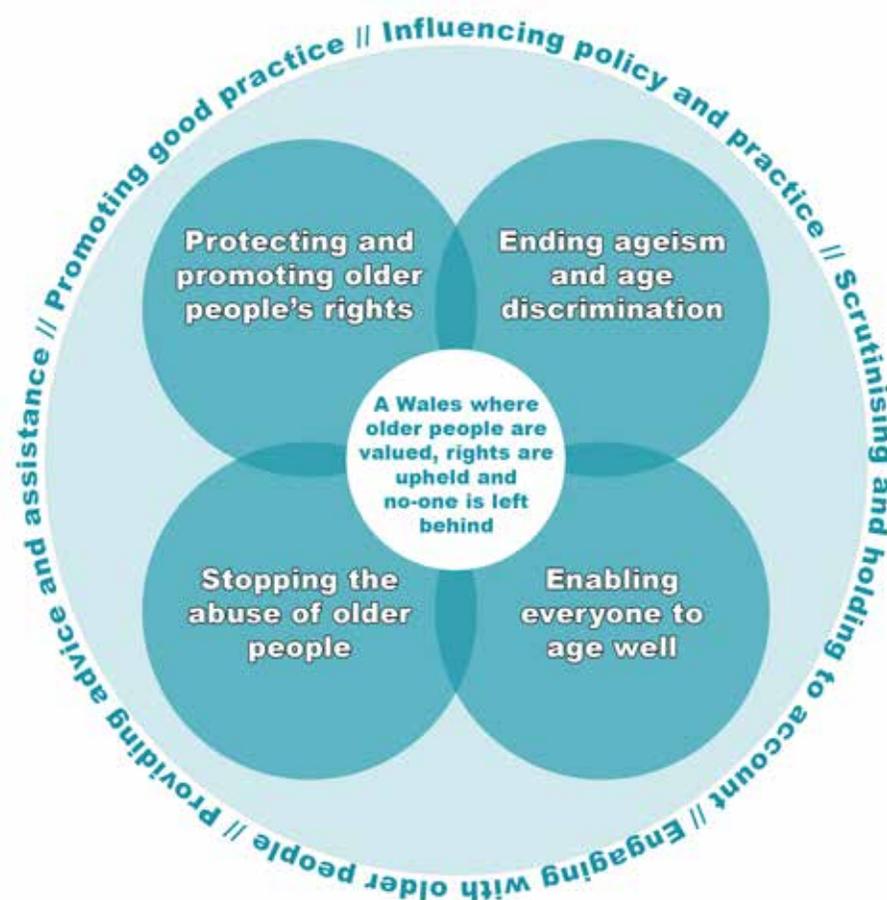
Delivering against my priorities

Reflecting the issues relating to older people's rights seen throughout the pandemic, my work during 2021-2022 included a new priority area – **protecting and promoting older people's rights** – alongside my other core priorities of **ending ageism and age discrimination, stopping the abuse of older people and enabling everyone to age well**.

Alongside this, I also continued to **scrutinise and influence** the action and decisions of the Welsh Government and other public bodies to ensure that the right policy and practice is in place so that older people can access the support and services they may need, are able to participate in our communities and that no-one is left behind. This has included **calling for a range of short-term remedial action** to support older people as we recover from the pandemic and deal with the cost-of-living crisis, **as well as longer-term action** to address the wider structural issues that impact upon older people in Wales and were exacerbated by Covid-19.

Engagement with older people has also remained a priority and throughout 2021-22 I held regular engagement sessions **to hear directly from older people** about their concerns, any issues and challenges they are facing and their views on the action needed to deliver improvements. This included specific sessions looking at older people's mental health and reconnecting with our communities, key issues affecting older people as Covid restrictions began to ease.

For more detailed information about the Commissioner's work during 2021-22, including audited accounts, download the Commissioner's Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22 here: <https://olderpeople.wales/about/annual-reports/>



Snapshot of the year 2021-22



April 2021

Convenes the first in a series of Care Home Rights Roundtable sessions to identify how to improve the rights of older people living in care homes in Wales.

Holds a series of engagement sessions with older people focused on mental health and how to ensure the right support is available.



May

Calls for action to enable safe visits to care homes as Covid restrictions are lifted.

Brings together key organisations working across health and social care to identify the action needed to support older people's health and well-being as we recover from the Covid-19 Pandemic.



June

Launches a directory of abuse support services to help older people who are being abused, or those at risk, find the information, advice and support they need.

Publishes report examining the portrayal of older people in the media, which finds that two-thirds of news stories about older people portray them in a negative light.



July

Brings together groups and organisations representing Black Asian and Minority Ethnic older people to identify opportunities for partnership working to capture crucial evidence and data about the experiences of older people from these communities.

Works with the National Union of Journalists to identify opportunities to provide information and training to journalists on avoiding ageism in news stories.



August

Publishes Transport to Health, a report setting out the ways that issues relating to transport and the redesign of services can affect older people's access to health care.

Publishes briefing paper setting out the ways in which evidence in the report has influenced the Welsh Government's Llwybr Newydd Transport Strategy.



September

Delivers online Tackling Ageism training sessions to help older people to recognise ageism and empower them to challenge age discrimination.

Holds a series of engagement sessions with older people to hear their views and experiences of reconnecting with their communities.



October

Publishes State of the Nation Report, which brings together key data relating to people's experiences of growing older in Wales.

Welcomes the Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society, which is strongly focused on making Wales a nation of age-friendly communities following calls from the Commissioner.



November

Publishes formal guidance to ensure that older people can access information and services in a way that suits them in an increasingly digital world, and that older people who want to get online are supported to do so.

Highlights the action being taken by older people to protect the environment to challenge ageist assumptions ahead of the COP26 Summit.



December

Commissions research to examine the barriers that may prevent older men experiencing or at risk of abuse from seeking help, and the availability of services and support.

Works in partnership with the Welsh Government and other partners to develop a new leaflet to provide older people with information about keeping well in the winter and tips for getting out and about again.



January

Publishes guidance for journalists on writing about older people and growing older, which is included on Press Regulator IPSO's resources hub for journalists.

Raises concerns about the impact of rapidly rising living costs and calls on the Welsh Government to provide additional financial support for older people.



February

Calls on the Welsh Government to develop an action plan that sets out the ways in which older people will be protected from the cost of living crisis.

Delivers the keynote speech at the first Global Intergenerational Week conference, which includes delegates from all over the world, highlighting the importance of solidarity between generations.



March 2022

Calls on the Prime Minister to take further action to support older people affected by the war in Ukraine, in partnership with older people's organisations from across the UK.

Distributes a guide to help public bodies avoid ageism in their communications providing guidance on language, tone and imagery.

2021-22 in Numbers

408

Number of older people supported by the Commissioner's Advice and Assistance Team



45

Number of engagement sessions held or attended by the Commissioner and her team to hear directly from older people. **595** older people took part in these sessions in total



168,795

Number of people reached with posts from the Commissioner's Facebook Page



604,400

Number of Twitter impressions (number of times tweets from the Commissioner were seen) during 2021-22

70

News items relating to the Commissioner's work



538m

'Opportunities to see' news items relating to the Commissioner's work across a wide range of publications



£3.9m

Advertising value equivalent of Commissioner's news coverage

Looking ahead

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 my 2022-24 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.

My 2022-24 Work Programme, which provides further details about my action and outcomes for the next two years, is available here: <https://olderpeople.wales/about/commissioners-strategy/>

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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