Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

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

Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

A message from Heléna...

I know that many older people throughout Wales are very worried about what the months ahead will be like, and the impact that dramatically increased living costs will have on health and well-being.

As Commissioner, I'm doing all I can to ensure that older people get the support they need this winter, and I have called on both the UK and Welsh Governments to deliver further action, immediately and in the longer-term, so that older people have sufficient incomes for a decent standard of living.

I'm also providing information and support through my Advice and Assistance Team, so if you are unsure about where to turn for help, please get in touch with my team on 03442 640 670.

With high levels of flu predicted for this winter, and uncertainty about the potential impact of Covid-19, I'm glad that the flu vaccination and Covid booster programmes are now underway, and I would urge everyone aged over 50 to get vaccinated.

In recent weeks, we've also seen the sad passing of her Majesty the Queen, Elizabeth II, which I know has been a difficult time for many. For people throughout the UK, and across the globe, she was an inspiring figure and a reassuring constant in a rapidly changing world. I was very honoured to attend the state funeral and to reflect on how people came together with a strong sense of community to celebrate the Queen's life and service and mourn her passing.

As we head into the winter we will need to come together again, in a spirit of community, to support each other and work together to make sure that no-one is left behind.

Heléna

Heléna Herklots CBE
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Cost-of-living measures announced by Prime Minister do not go far enough to protect older people, warns Commissioner

The Commissioner has warned that the energy 'price cap' of £2,500 does not go far enough to protect many older people from the devastating impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and has called for immediate targeted action to provide older people with the financial support they need to get through this winter.

In a statement issued in response to the measures announced by the new Prime Minister, Liz Truss on 8 September, the Commissioner highlighted that the new cap still represented a doubling of energy costs compared to this time last year, meaning that many older people throughout Wales will still be faced with bills they are unable to pay.

The Commissioner said: "Older people have told me they are already cutting back on essentials in an effort to save money and as we head into the winter months this will result in more ill-health due to cold, damp housing and/or poor nutrition. Sadly, in some cases, this will lead to deaths that could have been prevented.

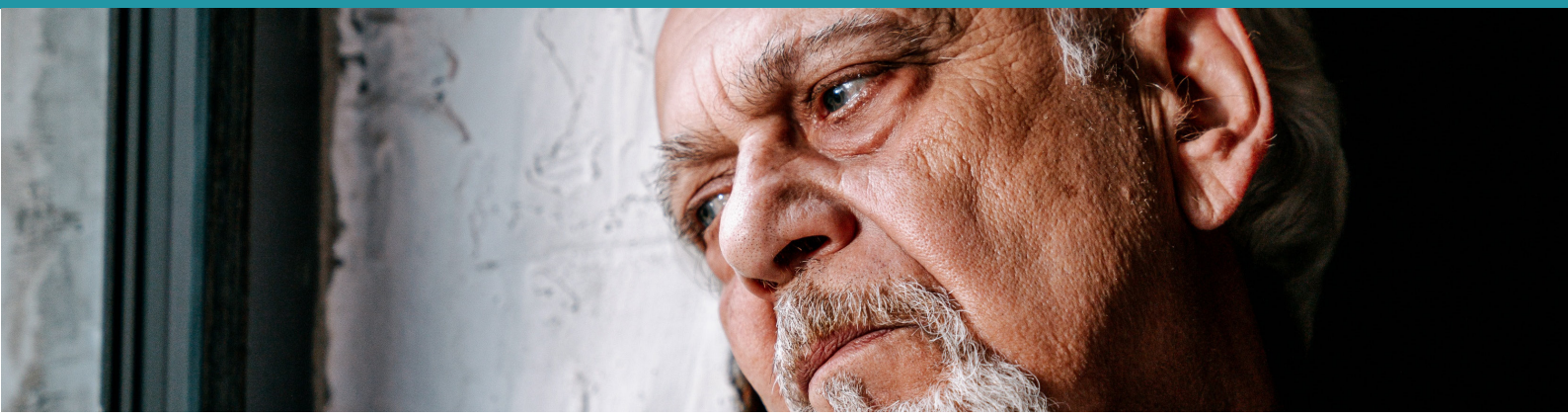
"The Prime Minister must therefore deliver further targeted action to provide older people with the financial support they need to get through this winter. In addition, the UK Government must deliver longer-term change to ensure that older people's incomes are sufficient for a decent standard of living."

Ahead of the new Prime Minister taking up post, the Commissioner joined forces with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes, to call on the UK Government to prioritise the needs of older and younger people due to their particular vulnerability to the cost-of-living crisis, and was disappointed that this was not reflected in the Prime Minister's announcement.

The Commissioner added: "The new Prime Minister has missed an opportunity to deliver crucial, potentially life-saving, support that many older people are desperate for, and the price that will be paid – by individuals and society as a whole – due to these decisions is unacceptable."

For more information about the financial support available to older people this winter, and how to claim, visit the cost-of-living Frequently Asked Questions on the Commissioner's website: https://olderpeople.wales/resource/cost-of-living-faqs/

Improving Support and Services for Older Men Experiencing Domestic Abuse



In August, the Commissioner published a new report examining older men's experiences of domestic abuse, which found that they face significant challenges and barriers when seeking help and support, meaning they may be unable to escape abusive relationships, something that puts them at risk of physical and psychological harm.

The report also found that men may be reluctant to seek support due to the stigma of being a male victim of abuse, and that the small number of domestic abuse services targeted specifically at men are under-resourced, which means the support they are able to provide being very limited.

The research on which the report is based was commissioned as there is very little evidence available about men's experiences of abuse, even though it is estimated that 1 in 4 victims of domestic abuse is male, with older men at greater risk.

The research was conducted on the Commissioner's behalf by Opinion Research Services (ORS), who captured evidence through in-depth interviews with male survivors of abuse aged 50+, as well as professionals working across a range of domestic abuse and other public services based throughout Wales.

Alongside examining the different ways that men may experience abuse, the report also explores the barriers and challenges men face when trying to access support, as well as the ways in which services and support in Wales could be improved, and includes quotes from the male survivors who took part, together with more detailed case studies, to illustrate what they went through and the many difficulties they faced when seeking help.

The report calls for action from the Welsh Government and other public bodies to improve services and support through raising awareness and improving understanding of older men's experiences, delivering training to professionals who come into contact with older people so they can recognise abuse and offer appropriate support and improving data and evidence relating to older men's experiences of domestic abuse to ensure the right policies and services are in place for older men to access the support they need.

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

"My heartfelt thanks to all of the older men who took part in the research for talking about the awful experiences they went through so openly and honestly in order to help other men who may find themselves in similar situations by providing crucial evidence for why change and improvements are desperately needed.

“The research findings make clear that men who experience domestic abuse face barriers and challenges every step of the way that can prevent them from getting the support they need, which puts them at significant risk of harm.”

You can read the Commissioner’s report here: https://olderpeople.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Improving-support-and-services-for-older-men-experiencing-domestic-abuse.pdf

Webinar Event: Improving support and services for older men experiencing abuse

Thursday 27 October // 10:00-11:30am

The Commissioner is holding a webinar in October to examine the action being taken in response to her latest report – ‘Improving support and services for older men experiencing domestic abuse’ – and explore the ways we can work together to help to ensure that older men who experience abuse can get the help and support they need.

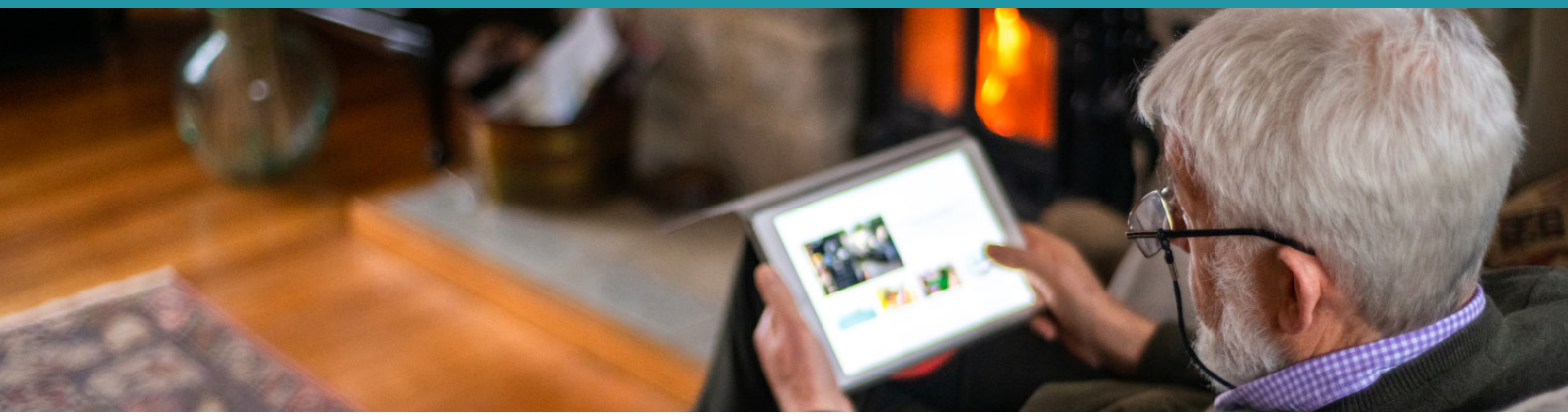
As part of the webinar, male survivors of domestic abuse will talk about their experiences, as well as the barriers they faced in reporting abuse and seeking help.

The Commissioner will also be joined by an expert panel to identify how we can break down these barriers, as well as practical ways in which support and services for older men experiencing or at risk of abuse could be improved.

We hope you are able to join us on the day.

Book your place at the webinar here: https://tocyn.cymru/en/event/da79bde2-5f84-4b79-8001-1e206369daee

Ensuring access to information and services in a digital age: Summary of responses from local authorities and health boards



The Commissioner has published a new report that provides a snapshot of the action being taken by local authorities and health boards to ensure that older people can access information and services in an increasingly digital world, in response to formal guidance she issued at the end of last year.

Her report highlights the importance of building upon the good practice currently underway so that information and services remain available via non-digital means, and older people who want to get online are supported to do so.

The report is based on information shared by local authorities and health boards in response to the formal guidance issued by the Commissioner at the end of last year using her legal powers, which means they must have due regard for the guidance when discharging their functions.

The information provided includes details of work already being delivered, as well plans for the future, including the ways in which the voices and experiences of older people will be used to shape the development and delivery of services and support.

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

"The increasing use of digital technology means that the ways we access information and services have changed and accelerated significantly in recent years, something that can create barriers for older people who are digitally excluded.

"That's why I used my legal powers to issue formal guidance to ensure that older people can access non-digital information and services, and that there is more support available to help older people to get online.

"The responses from local authorities and health boards, summarised in the report I have published today, indicate that a variety of work and projects are underway in different parts of Wales to provide information and services via non-digital means, and tackle digital exclusion amongst older people.

"It's crucial, however, that we continue to build on what's already in place so that older people can access the help and support they may need, in a way that suits them.

“I have provided individual feedback in writing to each local authority and health board to support further improvements, and I will continue to share and promote good practice that is making a positive difference.

“I will also be undertaking further engagement with older people throughout Wales, which will help me to monitor the impact that the kinds of initiatives highlighted within the responses are having, and check that older people’s experiences ‘on the ground’ reflect the policies that should be in place.”

Read the Commissioner’s Report: https://olderpeople.wales/resource/s12-summary-of-responses/

Living in a care home in Wales: A guide to your rights

This October, the Commissioner is publishing a guide for older people that provides important information about their rights when moving into and living in a care home.

Knowing about the rights you have when moving into and living in a care home is crucial, but understanding these rights can often be difficult.

That's why the Commissioner is publishing her guide – to help older people moving into or living in a care home, and their families, to better understand their rights and what they can do if they are concerned that their rights are not being upheld. In addition to the information about older people's rights, the guide also provides contact details for organisations that can provide help and support, including the Commissioner's Advice and Assistance Team.

To develop the guide, the Commissioner worked with experts from Wales and the UK, including members of Wales' Care Home Rights Group, as well as older people, to ensure that the guide provides the information people need, in a way that is easy to understand, and support older people, and their families, to make informed decisions and can get help if they are concerned about their rights.

The guide is available to download from the Commissioner's website, or if you'd like to receive a paper version, please contact 03442 640 670 or email ask@olderpeople.wales

Meet the Commissioner and her Team

Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Commissioner and her team are travelling throughout Wales again to meet and speak with older people to hear about the things that make a positive difference to their lives and about the issues that matter most to them.

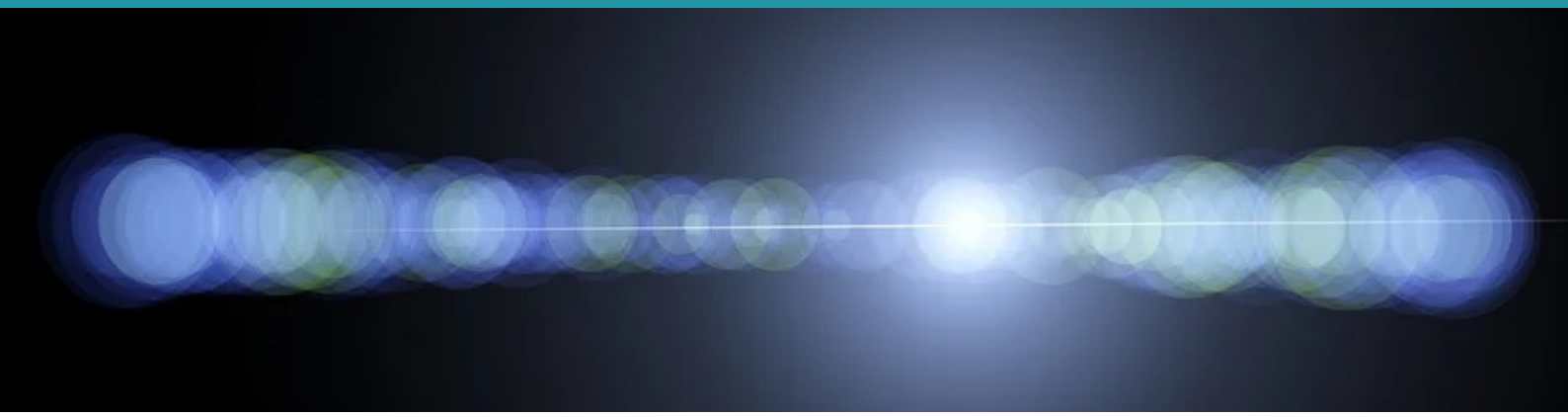
Getting out into the community and talking to older people directly is an important part of the Commissioner's role, and plays a crucial role in helping to ensure that older people's voices and experiences are heard by policy- and decision-makers, as well as guiding and shaping her work.

The Commissioner said: "I'm really pleased that my team and I have been able to get back out in the community to more events in the last few months to meet older people, highlight my work and the ways I can support older people and discuss the ways we can enable everyone in Wales to age well.

"Engaging with older people is one of the most enjoyable parts of my role as Commissioner, and something I missed a great deal during the pandemic, so I'm looking forward to travelling throughout Wales again to hear directly from older people about the issues affecting their lives and the action that would make a positive difference."

If you would like to arrange for the Commissioner or her team to visit your organisation or event, please get in touch on 03442 640 670.

Spotlight On: Care & Repair Cymru Energy Efficiency Services



Care & Repair Cymru is a national charitable body and actively works to ensure that all older people have homes that are safe, secure and appropriate to their needs.

With costs skyrocketing, we must all find ways to save money. Care & Repair services are on hand to help keep your home warm and reduce your bills.

Care & Repair's experienced and trusted Home Energy Officers can provide you with free advice and support on home energy saving techniques and housing improvements.

This service is available to anyone in Wales who is over 60 years of age and is an owner occupier or privately rents.

Simply contact your local Care & Repair to arrange a free Home Energy Assessment, where they can make sure your home is properly insulated and well-heated.

Contact your local Care & Repair today to find out more by emailing https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/en/your-area/

Alternatively you can phone Care & Repair on 0300 111 3333.

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:

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