



**Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales**

Work Programme 2023-24

**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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Accessible formats

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“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.”

Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People’s Commissioner for Wales

Introduction

As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, I want to see a Wales where older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.

To deliver this vision, I'm taking action against four key priorities: protecting older people's rights, ending ageism and age discrimination, stopping the abuse of older people and enabling everyone to age well.

As you'll see below, my team and I will take forward a substantial work programme during 2023-24, which builds upon progress made in key areas during recent years, while also focusing on emerging issues and responding to new concerns being raised by older people.

Alongside this, I will continue to provide help and support directly to older people through my Advice and Assistance Service, in addition to travelling throughout Wales to meet and speak with older people and hear about the kinds of action, empowerment and support that would make a positive difference to their lives.

I know that the Commissioner's Office is hugely valued by older people, and together with my team I will continue to influence policy, engage with decision-makers, promote good practice and, where necessary, hold public bodies to account.

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 you provide.



Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales





Protecting and promoting older people's rights

Rights matter to us all, and play a crucial role in helping to ensure that we are treated fairly and are not discriminated against. But it can be difficult to recognise when our rights are not being upheld, and even more difficult to challenge this, particularly during moments of crisis.

I will be undertaking further work to empower older people and their families so they better understand their rights, as well as working with older people – including those from groups whose voices often go unheard – to ensure their voices and experiences are used to help embed rights-based approaches across our public services, which deliver better outcomes for us all.

My work during 2023-24 will include:

Strengthening older people's rights in care homes through working with experts and stakeholders across the UK to understand and improve policy, practice and culture.

Identifying and taking further action to ensure the protection of the rights of older people who are not online to access information and services by engaging with older people throughout Wales to hear directly about the barriers created by digital exclusion and the impact these have on people's lives.

Using findings from my research to improve the awareness, understanding and response to the needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic older people, as well as developing further relationships with these communities, to support further research and calls for action.

Improving older people's awareness and understanding of their rights, including rights relating to care homes, access to services, and decisions about Do Not Attempt CPR through producing and promoting information and guidance, as well as learning from my Advice and Assistance service.

Ending ageism and age discrimination



Research by the World Health Organisation suggests that around half of people hold ageist attitudes, and we know that ageism underpins many of the issues faced by older people. Stereotypes and assumptions about older people and growing older are common, often reinforced by negative portrayals across different types of media, which lead to unfair treatment and discrimination, and limit the opportunities and support we may need to age well.

I will be taking forward further action to empower older people throughout Wales to recognise and challenge ageism and age discrimination, together with promoting practical tools and resources to improve the language and imagery we see relating to older people and ageing in the media and other forms of communication.

My work during 2023-24 will include:

Examining the ways that ageism interacts with issues affecting older people's lives, beginning with a focus on the abuse of older people, working with experts to identify priority areas for action.

Working with the media, public bodies and other stakeholders to improve the language and imagery used when communicating about older people and growing older, and build awareness and understating of ageism and its impact.

Contributing to progress on ending ageism and age discrimination by working with key organisations in the UK and internationally.

Ensuring that policy and legislative development and implementation does not reflect nor result in ageism and age discrimination by scrutinising, analysing and influencing policy.



**Stopping the abuse
of older people**

Whilst there is growing recognition and understanding of the scale of the abuse of older people and the ways it affects people's lives, a significant number – estimated to be in the thousands – of older people in Wales experience abuse and often struggle to find the help and support they need.

I will be taking forward further work to raise awareness about the scale and impact of the abuse of older people, working with partners throughout Wales, alongside influencing policy and practice both nationally and locally.

My work during 2023-24 will include:

Improving the support and services that older people who are at risk of or experiencing abuse can access by influencing the Welsh Government's national action plan to prevent the abuse of older people and its implementation, the implementation of the new Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy, and the implementation and commissioning of services at regional and national level.

Enabling 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 the Commissioner's Office.

Improving 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.

Contributing to improvements in practice through identifying, sharing and promoting good practice in support and services for older people at risk of or experiencing abuse.

A group of four elderly people are walking outdoors. In the foreground, two women are laughing and talking to each other. The woman on the left has short, curly grey hair and is wearing a red quilted jacket and a patterned scarf. The woman on the right has short white hair and is wearing a grey and white patterned sweater. In the background, a man with white hair and a beard is walking, wearing a plaid shirt and a dark jacket, and holding a walking stick. Another man is partially visible behind him. The background shows a grassy field and hills under a clear sky. The entire image has a light blue tint.

Enabling everyone to age well

Age-friendly communities play a crucial role in supporting us to age well, helping to ensure we can do the things that matter to us as we get older and that we feel valued, included and respected.

There has been significant progress towards making Wales an age-friendly nation and as an affiliate member of the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, I will continue to support local authorities and their partners throughout Wales as they finalise their age-friendly plans and applications to join the Network, as well as share and promote good practice that supports us to age well.

My work during 2023-24 will include:

Improving 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 throughout Wales, supporting local authorities to work with older people other partners by sharing and promoting good practice, evidence of what works and opportunities for learning and development.

Influencing policy and strategy on the eight domains of age-friendly communities, through proposing and responding to policy and strategy development and by effective stakeholder and political engagement, to improve opportunities for older people to age well.

Strengthening older people's access to support from the NHS and social care services, by scrutinising and influencing policy and service development and using information captured through my Advice and Assistance Service to identify potential areas for formal review.

Improving access to and provision of financial support for older people through evidencing need and promoting effective communications and services.

Supporting and reaching out to older people

In addition to the work highlighted above, I will continue to provide information and support directly to older people through my Advice and Assistance Service, who provide help to hundreds of enquirers each year.

My team and I will also continue to travel throughout Wales to meet and speak with older people and hear about the kinds of action, empowerment and support that would make a positive difference to their lives.

As always, older people's voices and experiences will guide and shape my work, and I will ensure these are heard and responded to by policy- and decision-makers.

Influencing policy and practice

During 2023-24, I will continue to influence policy and practice more widely through my engagement with the Welsh Government, public bodies and other key organisations throughout Wales.

This will include sharing intelligence and good practice, providing practical tools and resources and, where necessary, scrutinising and holding to account to deliver the change that older people want and need to see.

I will also provide evidence to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry to ensure the voices of older people and their families, and evidence about the difficulties they faced, are captured so meaningful lessons can be learned from their experiences.

Taking forward this wider action alongside delivering against my priorities will play a key role in ensuring that, throughout Wales, older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.

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