



UK Parliament

Women and Equalities Committee:

The rights of older people

31 October 2023

Executive summary

- The establishment of an Older People's Commissioner for Wales has created a position that is uniquely placed to champion older people's rights and hold the Welsh Government and public bodies to account to ensure that older people's rights are upheld.
- Northern Ireland also has a Commissioner for Older People. The creation of complementary roles for England and Scotland would be a positive step towards enhancing the rights of older people consistently across the UK.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioner played a central role in highlighting the risk to and erosion of older people's rights, especially in relation to older people living in care homes, taking action to ensure that policymakers were reminded of their obligations, and that older people's rights were not overlooked.
- It would be helpful for the UK Government to review and then improve the level of protection of older people's rights in relation to equality law and how easy or difficult it is to enforce such rights, including the effectiveness of Equality Impact Assessments.
- The UK Government should support the introduction of a UN Convention for Older People to help provide a clearer, more accessible interpretation of universal human rights and address specific rights violations experienced by older people.
- Both UK Government and the Welsh Government should have a specific Cabinet minister with responsibility for older people, reflected in the portfolio title.

- The UK Government should develop, publish, and implement a positive strategy for ageing well in the UK, addressing the opportunities presented by a population that is living longer.
- The UK Government should take appropriate steps to ensure that all public bodies collect meaningful and timely data that enables understanding and scrutiny of service provision to older adults, and that will enable constructive changes to be made where necessary.
- The UK Government could take a lead on challenging digital exclusion, considering legislation, if necessary, to ensure that offline options for services including banking and utilities, remain available to all people who want or need them.
- Building on the Enhancing Lives through Digital Engagement, the UK Government could publish and make available for public use The 'What Works' Toolkit, which was prepared for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in 2020.
- The Commissioner has previously used her legal powers to address the impact of digital exclusion and issued guidance to local authorities and health boards.¹ The guidance set out what needed to be delivered by local authorities and health boards to ensure older people can access information and services in a digital age, and that older people's rights are protected and upheld. This is a positive example of the role an Older People's Commissioner can play.
- Training and public awareness campaigns on the harmful impact of ageism should be explored in more detail by the UK Government, seeking opportunities to join up with any existing initiatives where possible.
- In relation to employment, it will be important to take action across a number of fronts to enable older people who wish to work longer to do so. These include tackling healthcare waiting lists, ensuring the language used in relation to recruitment is attractive to older people, increasing the availability of and promoting flexible working options, developing support for employers and older workers across a range of specific industries, and challenging ageism.

Introduction

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales (OPCW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Women and Equalities Committee's consultation on the rights of older people.

Established by the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006 which sets out details of the Commissioner's role and statutory powers, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people throughout Wales. The role of the Commissioner is to promote awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales, challenge discrimination, encourage best practice and review the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

At present, the Commissioner is focused on four specific areas of work: promoting and protecting older people's rights, ending ageism and age discrimination, stopping the abuse of older people and enabling everyone to age well.

The establishment of an Older People's Commissioner for Wales has created a position that is uniquely placed to champion older people's rights, hold the Welsh Government and public bodies to account to ensure that older people's rights are upheld, and the barriers faced are considered when decisions are made that affect their lives. Additionally, it is important older people are not treated as a homogenous group. Policy development needs to reflect the fact that we become more diverse as we age i.e., in terms of experiences, interests, income, health and social relationships.

Northern Ireland also has a Commissioner for Older People. Therefore, the creation of complementary roles for England and Scotland would be a positive step towards enhancing the rights of older people consistently across the UK.

Comments on specific areas of the consultation are set out below.

Digital exclusion

As the move towards digitalisation of services continues at pace, digital exclusion impacts ever greater numbers of older people. In Wales, 31% of over 75s do not have access to the internet at home and 33% of over 75s do not use the internet (including Smart TV and handheld devices), compared to 13% of 65-74s and 0% of 25-44s.²

Areas of concern

Older people continue to share experiences of digital exclusion directly with the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. The areas where digital exclusion is a concern are expanding, impacting everything from health, to finance and banking, to social activity. Some of these are expanded in more detail below.

Healthcare raises a variety of challenges. A common theme is the challenge of booking GP or other appointments online, where some older people cannot do this due to not having access to the internet, do not want to do this, or lack the confidence or skills to do so. Some older people also report being unable to accept

video consultation appointments while also struggling to book face to face appointments, or being told to send digital photos when this is not possible.

As an increasing number of car parks move to payment by app, older people report being unable to visit places due to not having a smart phone to pay for parking. This impacts on social activities as well as the ability to access services, such as healthcare, or to undertake everyday activities like shopping.

Public transport also demonstrates a shift to more exclusionary practices. The move away from printed and published timetables impacts older people, with instances of phone numbers that used to be displayed on bus stops to ring or text to see whether the bus had been delayed or cancelled, in some cases being replaced by a QR code. This makes such information accessible only to those who have a smart phone and who have the skills to use it in this way.

The closure of local bank branches and the move to online banking has also exacerbated digital exclusion. Older people have contacted the Commissioner about struggling to use banking services. Many transactions have to be made, or queries answered, online. This can be very time-consuming and complicated. There is also a greater risk of exposure to fraud and scams where older people lack the awareness, confidence, or skills to challenge suspicious activity. Highlighting levels of financial scamming can understandably make older people (and others) reluctant to engage in online activity. Trust in digital services is a significant issue. Some older people do not wish to be online or do not trust technology. Alternative options, which do not involve going online, are essential.

Utilities are another area where many accounts are now online with little provision for people who do not use the internet. This causes problems for sending gas and electricity readings and monitoring and making payments.

Services provided by local councils are increasingly online, with phone numbers becoming harder to find. Older people report being unable to renew their Blue Badge other than online, with alternative options – in person at libraries or hubs or over the phone - not being highlighted when engaging with contact centres. Older people also report issues engaging with benefits systems whether those managed by local authority or central government, with the assumption that everyone is online.

There is also the challenge of the cost of being online and being able to afford internet access, whether broadband or pay as you go data. Polling undertaken on behalf of the Commissioner in March 2023 found that a third of older people were cutting back on phone/internet as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

Not being online prevents older people from accessing a wider and cheaper range of goods and services. Some supermarket discounts, for instance, are now only available to people who have smart phones. Limited access or no access to the internet means that consumers cannot access the most suitable products for them and risk paying more.

Where older people are online, websites are sometimes poorly designed with text that is difficult to read or can time out. There is also the issue of the language used

around technology which is unfamiliar, that technology is constantly changing and evolving so it is hard to keep up, as well as the challenges of remembering several different passwords. The physical impacts of ageing, with effects on dexterity or concentration for example, can also affect older people's ability to use smart phones and online services.

Steps required to prevent older people from being digitally excluded

There are a number of steps that could be taken to prevent older people from being digitally excluded. As a starting point, essential services (which include, for example, the ability to make healthcare appointments, being able to manage utilities and banking, engaging with local authorities) and information should be available offline as well as online, and offline options should be delivered to the same high standard. Older people should be given a choice and online must not be the only available option.

In Wales, the legal powers of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales have been used to address digital inclusion by local authorities and health boards. The Commissioner for Wales has legal powers under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act which mean that the Commissioner may produce guidance on best practice in connection with any matter relating to the interests of older people in Wales. The Commissioner must consult with such persons as she thinks appropriate when producing any guidance. Once the guidance is produced, public bodies and those providing regulated services must have regard to the guidance when discharging their functions.

In November 2021, the Commissioner issued guidance to local authorities and health boards under the Act – 'Ensuring access to information and services in a digital age: Guidance for Local Authorities and Health Boards'.³ The guidance set out what needed to be delivered by local authorities and health boards to ensure older people can access information and services in a digital age, and that older people's rights are protected and upheld. The guidance cited the legal bases for the right to access information which is a key element of the broader right to freedom of expression and is protected across several human rights instruments, including the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The guidance was accompanied by a proforma requesting information about local authorities' and health boards' action in this area. In September 2022, 'Access to information and services in a digital age: Summary of responses from local authorities and health boards' was published, based on the completed proformas.⁴

Issues and concerns about digital exclusion continue to be raised with the Commissioner by older people. Further work has been undertaken in recent months to gather older people's experiences, with a particular focus on accessing local authority and health board information and services. A report and recommendations identifying further action to take will be published once responses have been analysed.

The UK Government could take a lead on challenging digital exclusion, considering legislation, if necessary, to ensure that offline options for services including banking and utilities, remain available to all people who want or need them.

For older people who wish to go online, the provision of accessible and relevant training has to be expanded, delivering on what older people actually want and what works rather than assumptions of what older people need or based on what providers can deliver. The digital skills sought by older people are often very different to those needed and acquired in the workplace. Research by Leela Damodaran, Professor Emerita of Digital Inclusion and Participation at Loughborough University, and others shows that older people want IT support that is readily available, trusted and sustained; delivered in familiar, welcoming, and local venues; embedded in social activities / personal interests; free of time pressure and assessments; inclusive of problem solving / troubleshooting; and offering impartial advice and 'try before you buy'.

Existing community venues such as drop-in centres, libraries, clubhouses, schools, pubs, and shops should be used to provide IT support to older people in informal environments and this support needs to be available long-term, rather than centred on short interventions. Partnership working with older people, local government, schools, health centres, libraries, community organisations, local companies and others should be further developed to help address the ongoing issue of digital exclusion.

Professor Damodaran was commissioned to complete work on the Enhancing Lives through Digital Engagement: The 'What Works' Toolkit, which was prepared for the UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport in 2020 and addresses digital inclusion in relation to specific groups, including older people. Following a meeting with Professor Damodaran, the Commissioner requested access to the toolkit which is a very helpful resource. At present, the toolkit is still under embargo although access can be granted to individuals for their own use on the understanding that it will not be circulated more widely. This obviously restricts the usage of the toolkit, and it would be helpful if the UK Government would make it available for public use.

As more and more aspects of everyday life move online or incorporate elements of digitalisation, the issue of digital exclusion broadens into one of social exclusion more broadly. Older people report being made dependent and forced to rely on others; being left behind; feeling "inadequate, unintelligent, not part of twenty-first century"; and "past my sell by date". The UK Government should recognise the wider impact of digital exclusion on older people and address this as a significant societal challenge.

Championing older people's rights

Wales was the first country in the world to establish a Commissioner for Older People following calls and campaigning from older people and a wide range of groups and individuals representing older people. The Commissioner is an independent voice and champion for people aged 60 and over and promoting

awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales and challenging discrimination is fundamental to the role.

The Commissioner is uniquely placed to champion older people's rights, and to hold the Welsh Government and public bodies to account to ensure that their rights are upheld. Ensuring that older people are championed at all levels of government and helping to ensure that their rights are protected is key to the role. As such, the Commissioner is supportive of calls to establish an Older People's Commissioner in England and Scotland.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioner played a central role in highlighting the risk to and erosion of older people's rights, in particular in relation to older people living in care homes. The Commissioner took action to make sure that policymakers were reminded of their obligations, ensuring that older people's rights were not overlooked.

An important part of the Commissioner's role is also to ensure that the voices of older people are heard by policy-makers and that lived experiences are understood and inform the decisions that affect older people's lives. Early in the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioner published *Care Home Voices* which gave a voice to people living and working in care homes, providing a snapshot of experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.⁵ The report not only highlighted the issues and challenges faced by older people living in care homes, but also some of the good practice that has been making a positive difference to older people's lives. The issues highlighted in the report, in addition to a number of other, more specific issues, were taken forward by the Commissioner in her work to uphold older people's rights.

Additionally, in April 2021, the Commissioner established the Rights of Older People Living in Care Homes Group. The Group brings together organisations from across the UK that are working to strengthen the rights of older people living in care homes and ensure that they and their families know and understand their rights and are able to exercise them. An area of particular concern has been in relation to older people's security of tenure within care homes and the extent to which people can assert their rights without fear of being asked to leave their home.

The Covid-19 pandemic clearly highlighted the risk to older people's rights, especially during times of crisis, and this should be addressed in both UK and Welsh Government Cabinets. The Commissioner would like to see a clear designation of responsibility for older people reflected in a minister's title. This should be a Cabinet level responsibility, both in the Welsh Government and UK Government.

Older people's rights in relation to equality law

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in Wales requires public bodies to assess the likely impact of proposed policies and practices on their ability to comply with the general duty set out by the Equality Act 2010. However, the publication of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) is only required where they show a substantial impact (or likely impact) on an authority's ability to meet the general duty. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioner was concerned about the lack of published EIAs in relation to some of the decisions made that affected older people, raising questions about the extent to which equality law is adequately implemented.

An individual who has been subject to unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 may experience several challenges in making a claim through the courts. These challenges may include an individual recognising for themselves that they may have been discriminated against, the costs of pursuing a claim, the requirement to make a claim within strict time limits, lack of access to free legal advice and navigating the complexity of the court process (especially for those living with a disability or who do not have English or Welsh as a first language).

The UK Government should review the level of protection of older people's rights in relation to equality law and how easy or difficult it is to enforce such rights. The extent to which Equality Impact Assessments are operating in the way that was intended and genuinely taking into account the impact of proposed actions could form part of such a review.

Improvements to data collection are also needed and could be undertaken or required by the UK Government. The result of the lack of equality data collected, including data on age, is that it is often difficult to understand the extent to which older people are sufficiently protected by equality law.

Older people's needs and rights and Government policy-making

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioner was concerned about the experiences of older people and the extent to which rights were being upheld, including whether the needs of older people were genuinely taken into account when decisions were being made. The Commissioner was particularly concerned about potential breaches of the human rights of older people living in care homes. In response to this, the Commissioner worked in partnership with the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales to explore whether potential breaches of older people's human rights had occurred and to assess whether the Welsh Government and other public bodies had complied with their relevant equality and human rights duties in response to the pandemic.

As a result of this intervention from the Commissioner and the EHRC in Wales and the concerns raised, a number of changes were introduced including improvements relating to the use of impact assessments and the creation of a new working group within Welsh Government to improve staff awareness and training and share good practice. Additionally, the Welsh Government published an Action Plan for care homes in Wales in response to the Commissioner's concerns.

These are relevant and positive examples of the benefits of the role of an Older People's Commissioner. The fact that overall, more people are living longer, is something that should be celebrated. However, this means planning ahead to ensure that structures are in place to enable everyone to age as well as possible. This should be approached in a coherent way, making sure that all relevant areas of government policy join up and that decisions about transport or housing, for example, are not taken in isolation from those about health.

The Welsh Government's Age Friendly Wales strategy is a positive example of planning for the future and seeking to unlock the potential of current generations of older people.⁶ The strategy works across government departments to address the

range of factors that influence how we age. The strategy adopts a rights-based approach that promotes equality and social justice across a range of policy areas.

The UK Government should develop, publish and implement a positive strategy for ageing well in the UK and addressing the opportunities presented by a population that is living longer. This should be undertaken on a cross-departmental basis to ensure that different areas of policy join up to complement each other. Particular attention should be paid to those areas of policy that affect older people where powers are held at a UK level rather than by devolved administrations. In drawing up the strategy, discussions should be held with the devolved administrations to ensure that existing work is not duplicated and any opportunities for existing strategies, such as the one published by the Welsh Government, are maximised.

Intersectionality

Many of the challenges and issues faced by older people are not unique but are often compounded by the ageism people face on a daily basis. However, existing human rights treaties offer little clarity regarding how to tackle ageism to proactively support the equal realisation of human rights in older age. The lack of UN Convention for Older People also means that there is not always a sufficient focus on older people in decision-making processes. The UK Government should support the introduction of a UN Convention for Older People which would help provide a clearer, more accessible interpretation of universal human rights and address specific rights violations experienced by older people. This would also help to promote a systematic mainstreaming of human rights in older age and could better address the multiple disadvantages that occur at the intersections of different forms of inequalities.

Further research is needed on the impact of how different protected characteristics interact with ageism to produce situations whereby individuals experience discrimination that goes beyond simply experiencing more than one type of discrimination. Discrimination or disadvantage in such instances is likely to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Stereotyping and discrimination

Ageism is the stereotyping, prejudice and/or discrimination against people on the basis of their age or perceived age. Ageism can apply to any age group.⁷ The World Health Organisation estimates that globally, one in two people are ageist against older people, highlighting the scale of the challenge that needs to be addressed.⁸

In Wales, only 59% of older people reported feeling like a valued member of society since the start of the pandemic, showing the impact that ageist stereotypes that have become more widespread during this period have had on older people's feelings of self-worth.⁹ These stereotypes can contribute to ageism, suggesting that older people have "already lived their lives" and now it is time for them to step aside for the benefit of younger generations.

To better understand the impact of ageism on older people and the extent to which services perpetuate ageism, improved data collection is needed. The lack of equality data, including data on age, collected on the fulfilment of legal requirements, such as in relation to the provisions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, for example, means that we do not fully understand the experiences of older people. The lack of data collected on age means that it is not possible to compare access to services, such as waiting times for a Care and Support Assessment, between age groups to provide assurances that older people are not waiting longer than younger adults or are discriminated against because of their age in accessing support.

It is important that all data collected by public bodies should respond to the need to be able to disaggregate data by protected characteristic to ensure equality of access to services. Without equality data collected in relation to the provision of public services, older people are rendered invisible. The UK Government should take appropriate steps to ensure that all public bodies collect meaningful and timely data that enables understanding and scrutiny of service provision to older adults, and that will enable positive changes to be made where necessary.

There is increasing recognition of the fact that ageism legitimises and perpetuates the many types of abuse experienced by older people. In a report published in 2022, the World Health Organisation identified ageism as a ‘major risk factor’ in the abuse of older people.¹⁰ Ageism can also lead to a higher tolerance of abuse towards older people. In a survey undertaken by the charity Hourglass, one in three respondents did not consider inappropriate sexual acts towards older people as abusive; nearly a third (30%) didn’t view ‘pushing, hitting, or beating an older person’ as abuse, and nearly a third (32%) did not see ‘taking precious items from an older relative’s home without asking’ as abuse.¹¹ These shocking statistics show that behaviours that would be seen as abusive if perpetrated towards younger people are somehow seen as more acceptable when perpetrated towards older people.

Ageism can also affect the ways in which professionals respond to the abuse of older people. Sometimes professionals are slow to investigate the abuse of an older person assuming perhaps, that a bruise or physical injury has occurred because of physical frailty.^{12, 13} There are likewise concerns that the perpetrators of abuse against older people are rarely held to account for their actions and that older people at risk of or experiencing abuse do not presently have parity of access to criminal justice.¹⁴ Further work and action by the UK Government is needed to understand and tackle this issue.

Data concerning the abuse of older people is another area where improvement is needed in order for more effective action to be taken. Current methods of data collection have not always enabled understanding of the extent to which older men and women experience domestic abuse. The Commissioner has already undertaken significant work to improve the collection of data related to the abuse of older people. This has included calling for the removal of the ‘upper age-limit’ within the Crime

Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) to better show the numbers of older people who are victims of crime. The upper age limit for the self-completion modules was removed completely in October 2021, meaning that ‘all age’ data will be available as of this year.

The Commissioner’s response to the consultation on the redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (August 2022) called for further improvements in the provision of age-related data around crime and abuse. Here, calls were made for CSEW to include age-related data on fraud offences, for the gathering of data on older people’s experiences of the criminal justice system, and for further disaggregation of the data collected on older people’s experiences of crime to highlight differences in experience on the basis of attributes such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality).¹⁵

Negative portrayals of older people are prevalent in the UK media and combine with existing stereotypes in ways that have a damaging effect. This was explored in the Centre for Ageing Better’s 2020 report, ‘Dodderly but dear?: Examining age-related stereotypes’.¹⁶ The Older People’s Commissioner for Wales also undertook research into the portrayal of older people in news media (published in June 2021), which found that two-thirds of articles about older people are negative in tone or content. Evidence captured in the report was used to support the Commissioner’s call for press regulator IPSO to update its editors’ code to include age as a ‘protected characteristic’.¹⁷

Improved understanding of ageism and its harmful effects is essential to effective challenge. This can be delivered by training and public awareness campaigns, both of which could be explored in more detail by the UK Government, seeking opportunities to join up with any existing initiatives where possible.

Labour market access

Older people leave paid employment for a number of different reasons. These include active choices to retire, ill health, being made redundant, the need to care for others, and the effects of ageism. Action can be taken to address a number of these issues and support older people who wish to remain in work to do so.¹⁸

Key actions that the UK Government could take are set out below.

Addressing the backlog of people waiting for healthcare

The backlog in NHS treatment as a result of the pandemic has impacted older workers’ ability to maintain employment; around one in five workers aged over 50 who had left employment since the start of the pandemic said they were currently on an NHS waiting list for medical treatment.¹⁹

Among older people who want to work but are not employed, 39% of 65–74-year-olds say a long-term illness or condition, or a disability is the reason why they are unable to work.²⁰ ONS research also shows that between 2019 and 2022, there was a 16% increase in economic inactivity because of long-term sickness among people aged 50-64.²¹

Changing the language around recruitment to attract older people

Many job adverts and recruitment processes are not designed to appeal to older people, an issue highlighted in research by the Centre for Ageing Better which explored how language in job advertisements affects the application behaviour of older jobseekers. Words such as “innovative”, “adaptable”, “technologically savvy” and “ambitious” had a discouraging effect on older workers whereas terms such as “knowledgeable”, “experienced” and “dedicated” were more appealing.

The UK Government could ensure its own recruitment materials, and those of organisations to which it provides funding ensure recruitment activity, appeal to older people by modifying language and ensuring older people are included in any images used.

Increasing opportunities for flexible working and actively promoting these to existing employees or during recruitment

Research by the Centre for Ageing Better also found that highlighting flexible working options and other employer benefits increased the likelihood of older workers applying.²² ONS research on older people who left the workplace during Covid but who would consider returning found flexible working hours was the most popular factor identified when older people were considering a return to paid employment. People over 60 were most likely to say flexible working was important, with over a third of respondents identifying this as an important factor.²³

There are a number of reasons why flexible working matters to older workers, but caring is a key consideration.²⁴ More employers need to take account of how to accommodate the caring responsibilities of employees, including those of older workers, if they are to be able to recruit (and subsequently retain) staff. Alongside this, employers can provide assurance that they are aware and supportive of people with caring responsibilities by introducing HR policies such as carers’ leave or special leave. The UK Government could review its own employment practices and actively promote the benefits of flexible working to employers.

Develop support for employers and older people in a range of industries

The occupations and types of work that people do impact on whether someone can remain in their specific industry or role as they get older. Some industries will have a larger number of workers who need to transition into different roles or retrain as they grow older; the changes that might be possible for an existing managerial or administrative role will be very different for people who work on site in the construction industry, for example.

There is also the challenge of ill health and how to manage this, which impacts sectors differently, particularly as people in manual occupations can expect four fewer years of healthy life beyond age 50, compared with workers in administrative or professional roles.²⁵ Specific support needs to be developed for older workers in

manual occupations to stay in employment or transition to less physically demanding roles, which could take the form of much more tailored career training and advice.

The UK Government could work with employers across a range of industries to undertake specific research on this issue and develop how best different groups of older workers can transition to suitable roles or how existing roles can be modified.

Challenge ageist stereotypes

Ageist stereotypes of older workers persist suggesting people are harder to train, resistant to change, slower at using technology and lack the drive to progress.²⁶ Likewise, managers can often believe that it is less cost effective to invest in training older employees, so older workers are the least likely to receive on the job training. Many managers see older workers as closer to retirement with fewer years to benefit from training. This takes no account of the fact that older workers tend to be more loyal than younger workers and so may in fact stay longer in the job than a younger employee.²⁷

As set out earlier, ageism has a range of consequences and impacts on health, wellbeing, as well as economic productivity with older people reporting feeling pressed into retirement and out of the workplace.²⁸ The UK Government could play a leading role in training staff to be aware of ageism, both in the workplace and more widely, to ensure that the harmful effects of this type of discrimination are challenged. Policy proposals that will impact on employment should be examined for unintended ageism and amended accordingly.

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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¹ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2022) Access to information and services in a digital age: Summary of responses from local authorities and health boards. Available at: Access to information

and services in a digital age: Summary of responses from local authorities and health boards - Older People's Commissioner for Wales

² Welsh Government. (2022) National Survey for Wales April-June 2021. Available at:

<https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-results-viewer>

³ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2022) Access to information and services in a digital age: Summary of responses from local authorities and health boards. Available at: Access to information and services in a digital age: Summary of responses from local authorities and health boards - Older People's Commissioner for Wales

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2020) Care Home Voices: A snapshot of life in care homes in Wales during Covid-19. Available at: [Care Home Voices: A snapshot of life in care homes in Wales during Covid-19 - Older People's Commissioner for Wales](#)

⁶ Welsh Government. (2021) Age Friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society. Available at: [Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁷ For more information on ageism, see: Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2020) Taking Action Against Ageism. Available at: [Taking Action Against Ageism - Older People's Commissioner for Wales](#)

⁸ World Health Organisation. (undated) Ageism. Available at: [Ageism \(who.int\)](#)

⁹ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2021) State of the Nation 2021. Available at:

<https://olderpeople.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Understanding-Wales-ageing-population-18.9.pdf>

¹⁰ World Health Organisation. (2022) Tackling the Abuse of Older People. Available at: [Tackling abuse of older people: five priorities for the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing \(2021–2030\) \(who.int\)](#)

¹¹ Hourglass. (2021) Last in Line; The Lack of Profile and Commitment on the Abuse of Older People. Available at: [lastinline-research_0.pdf \(wearehourglass.org\)](#)

¹² Ward, D. (2000) Ageism and the Abuse of Older People in Health and Social Care. British Journal of Nursing 9(9), pp. 560 – 563.

¹³ McGarry, J., Simpson, C. and Hinchliff-Smith, K. (2011) The Impact of Domestic Abuse for Older Women: A Review of the Literature. Health and Social Care in the Community 19(1), pp. 3-14.

¹⁴ Wydall, S., Clarke, A., Williams, J. and Zerk, R. (2018) Domestic Abuse and Elder Abuse in Wales: A Tale of Two Initiatives. British Journal of Social Work (48), pp. 962-891.

¹⁵ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2022) Consultation Response: Redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Available at: <https://olderpeople.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Redesign-of-the-CSEW-220729-final-for-submission.pdf>

¹⁶ Centre for Ageing Better. (2020) Dodderly but dear?: Examining age-related stereotypes. Available at: [Dodderly but dear?: Examining age-related stereotypes | Centre for Ageing Better \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2023) Annual Report 2021-22. Available at: [Annual-Report-2021-22-FINAL-website.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#), p.17.

¹⁸ The Commissioner recently published a paper on employment and older people, focused on the Welsh Government. See: Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2023) Working Together: Improving Employment Opportunities for Older Workers in Wales. Available at: [Working Together: Improving Employment Opportunities for Older Workers in Wales - Older People's Commissioner for Wales](#)

¹⁹ This rose to 35% for those who left their previous job for a health-related condition. See: Office for National Statistics. (2022) Reasons for workers aged over 50 years leaving employment since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Available at: Reasons for workers aged over 50 years leaving employment since the start of the coronavirus pandemic - Office for National Statistics

²⁰ Older People's Commissioner for Wales. (2022) Understanding Wales' understanding ageing population. Available at: [230307-Understanding-Wales-ageing-population-24-November.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#), p. 9.

²¹ Office for National Statistics. (2022) Half a million more people are out of the labour force because of long-term sickness. Available at: [Half a million more people are out of the labour force because of long-term sickness - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

²² Centre for Ageing Better. (2021) Understanding and improving recruitment language, imagery, and messaging. Available at: [understanding-recruitment-language-GROW.pdf \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](#), pp. 5-7.

²³ Office for National Statistics. (2022) Reasons for workers aged over 50 years leaving employment since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Available at: [Reasons for workers aged over 50 years leaving employment since the start of the coronavirus pandemic - Office for National Statistics](#)

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ International Longevity Centre. (2022) Health and Place: How Levelling up health can keep older people working. Available at: [ILC-Hope-policy-brief.pdf \(ilcuk.org.uk\)](#)

²⁶ Centre for Ageing Better. (2023) Ageism: What's the harm? Available at: [Ageism-harms.pdf \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](#), p.12.

²⁷ Ibid., p.13.

²⁸ Research published by 55/Redefined and Reed Talent Solutions found that 30% of people surveyed who had retired had felt forced to do so. See 55/Redefined and Reed Talent Solutions. (2022) The Unretirement Uprising. Available at: <https://work-redefined.co/resources/the-unretirement-uprising-report>, p.22.