



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Annual Report 2022-23: Summary

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

Foreword

When I wrote the foreword for my annual report last year, I reflected on the sense of hope amongst many people that the pandemic was ending and that there would be more opportunities to reconnect with the people and activities that matter to us.

But as the year progressed, this was somewhat overshadowed by the cost-of-living crisis, which forced many older people to cut back on essentials as they were faced with impossible bills.

Based on what many older people were telling me, the optimism they had felt was unfortunately slipping away as people saw energy costs more than doubling, alongside public services facing significant pressures. Furthermore, many older people are still struggling in terms of having the confidence to get out and about into their communities again.

These kinds of concerns were reflected in the findings of a survey I undertook during spring of this year to capture the experiences of older people living throughout Wales, which highlighted that just 40% of people aged 60+ felt optimistic about the future (half the level of 2021), and that there were high levels of anxiety about the NHS, social care and other public services.

I have been, and will continue to be, a vocal champion on these issues, and the other issues currently affecting older people's lives, calling for and taking forward action, which I hope provides some assurance to older people that there is someone standing up and speaking out on their behalf during these still challenging times.

More positively, 2022-23 saw significant progress in a number of key areas, building on action during previous years and underlining the importance of partnership working in delivering change for older people.

This included working with and supporting local authorities and their partners throughout Wales to take forward plans to make their communities more age-friendly – crucial to enable us to age well – and finalise their applications to join the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, of which I am an affiliate member. Anglesey, Cardiff and Flintshire have already successfully applied to join the Network, recognising their commitment to age-friendly action and initiatives, and many more are expected to join in the months ahead.



In terms of my priority to stop the abuse of older people, we've seen the publication of a Welsh Government draft national action plan specifically focused on preventing the abuse of older people, as well as recognition of older people and their particular needs within the updated Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy, both significant steps forward.

During 2022-23, I also delivered significant projects to improve understanding and evidence in under-researched areas and explore the experiences of older people whose voices often go unheard.

This included qualitative research into older men's experiences of abuse, including the stigma and barriers many men often face when seeking help, which was published alongside calls for action for the Welsh Government and other key bodies.

I also established an Advisory Group representing people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, to advise on research into the experiences of older people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Drawing on their advice, I provided funding to local organisations throughout Wales to reach out to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic older people to hear about their experiences of growing older, and any particular issues and difficulties they face. I will build on this in the year ahead, working with partners to call for targeted action and deliver change.

My work has also reflected ongoing and emerging issues for older people that have arisen due to the pandemic or the cost-of-living crisis.

This included developing a guide on older people's rights in care homes, which was distributed to every care home in Wales and more widely through GP surgeries, pharmacies and other community settings.

I also continued raising awareness of people's rights to access information and services via non-digital means, and examined whether there is sufficient action being delivered by local authorities and health boards to uphold these rights.

Ensuring older people did not miss out on financial support was another key focus of my work, and I continued raising awareness about Pension Credit amongst older people and their families, as well as working with key bodies and organisations to identify effective ways to reach out to older people and encourage people to claim the entitlements they are eligible for.

Hearing directly from older people throughout Wales about the issues that affect their lives, and the things that support people to age well, remained a priority for me throughout the year, and it's been really positive to have opportunities to get back out and about to meet and speak with older people in their communities, whether at larger events or at smaller groups and clubs.

This engagement provides crucial information and evidence to support my work to influence policy and practice at both a national and local level, which has included engaging with Welsh Government Ministers, Senedd Members and officials; providing evidence to Senedd Committees; and scrutinising the work of public bodies to identify good practice and where further improvements may be needed.

On a personal level, I have spent time bringing together significant amounts of evidence to share with the UK Covid-19 Inquiry to ensure that the voices and experiences of older people and their families are put on the record, and help to inform its findings in a meaningful way.

It has also been positive to see our work in Wales during the past few years being highlighted as part of campaigns for Commissioners in England and Scotland. I know that older people in Wales hugely value having an independent Commissioner, and similar roles in other parts of the UK could help transform the lives of millions of older people, as well as providing important opportunities for Commissioners to speak with a collective voice on key issues, which would be a powerful lever for change.

I would like to say thank you to everyone I worked with throughout the year – particularly older people and partners – for their support in taking forward my priorities and wider work to influence policy and practice, as well as to my Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for the helpful advice and counsel they provide.

I would also like to thank my team for all of their hard work, dedication and commitment in talking forward so much to support my work to make Wales an age-friendly nation where older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.

Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Delivering against my priorities

Throughout 2022-23, I took forward further action against my four core priorities: **protecting and promoting older people's rights; ending ageism and age discrimination; stopping the abuse of older people; and enabling everyone to age well.** My work has also been focused on supporting older people through the cost-of-living crisis, particularly through increasing the uptake of Pension Credit in Wales, which provides crucial financial support and unlocks other entitlements.

Alongside this, I also continued to influence the action and decisions of the Welsh Government and other public bodies to shape policy and practice, to help ensure older people can access the services and support they may need, and no-one is left behind.

This work has led to significant progress in key areas, including the development of the Welsh Government's National Action Plan to Prevent the Abuse of Older People – the first of its kind in the UK – and successful applications from several Welsh local authorities to join the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

This year has also provided more opportunities to travel throughout Wales to meet and speak with older people, to hear directly about people's concerns, any issues and challenges they are facing and their views on the action needed to deliver improvements. During 2022-23, I also undertook a programme of engagement to learn more about the lived experiences of older people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities throughout Wales and explore the kinds of action needed to improve the availability of support and services.

For more detailed information about my work during 2022-23, including audited accounts, download my Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 here: <https://olderpeople.wales/about/annual-reports/>



Snapshot of the year 2022-23



April 2022

Calls for human rights to be the foundation of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry.

Distributes copies of 'How to avoid ageism in communications' to key public bodies and stakeholder organisations throughout Wales.



May

Says that improving the rights of older people living in care homes is critical as part of oral evidence to the Senedd Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee Inquiry on Care Home Commissioning.

Calls for men who have experienced abuse to share their experiences to improve abuse support services.



June

Holds Age-Friendly Communities in Partnership webinar to share good practice to support older people to age-well, and celebrate positive action.

Announces research on the lived experiences of older people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.



July

Compiles, publishes and distributes a cost-of-living guide – online and paper copies – to provide information about the financial support available for older people.

Welcomes confirmation that the Welsh Government's Winter Fuel Support Scheme will be extended to include households in receipt of Pension Credit, after calling for this earlier in the year.



August

Publishes findings of research examining the experiences of older men experiencing abuse, and sets out a series of recommendations for the Welsh Government and other public bodies.

Publishes a briefing paper setting out the action required to support older people through the cost-of-living crisis.



September

Publishes a summary of responses to the formal guidance issued in 2021-22 to highlight action to ensure that older people who are not online can still access the services and support they might need, and where further work is needed.

Raises concerns that the Prime Minister has missed a crucial opportunity in the mini-budget to deliver vital financial help for older people.



October

Launches new guide to provide information to older people and their families about the rights we have when moving into or living in a care home, and where to get help and support.

Holds webinar to examine the action being taken in response to the report into older men's experiences of abuse.



November

Publishes briefing setting out the action needed to significantly increase the number of older people receiving the Pension Credit to which they are entitled.

Calls on individuals and organisations to make a Pension Credit Promise, to highlight the action they will take to help ensure older people do not miss out.



December

Holds a Pension Credit Summit to bring together key stakeholders to explore the ways to reach out effectively to older people and encourage them to claim Pension Credit.

Joins over 150 organisations as a signatory of a joint letter highlighting why human rights matter to us all.



January

Publishes Pension Credit Summit report.

Calls for action from the Welsh Government and Department for Work and Pensions to identify older people who may be missing out.



February

Responds to the findings of the EHRC's Inquiry into challenging social care decisions, highlighting concerns that adults receiving social care are being 'failed' when they try to challenge decisions or make complaints.

Welcomes the publication of the Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan, and the ambition to make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe.



March 2023

Keynote speaker at age-friendly events in Carmarthenshire and Anglesey, which also provide opportunities to meet and speak with older people and learn more about the positive difference local initiatives are making.

Launches updated version of Easy Guide to Lasting Powers of Attorney, developed in partnership with the Office of the Public Guardian.

2022-23 in Numbers

568

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



1,750

Number of visits to the Commissioner's Abuse Support Services Directory

36,228

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



413,550

Number of Twitter impressions (number of times tweets from the Commissioner were seen) during 2022-23

29,708

Number of individuals who visited the Commissioner's Website

88,529

Number of pages viewed on the Commissioner's Website



82

News items relating to the Commissioner's work

Looking Ahead

During 2023-24, I will be taking further action against my four key priorities to protect older people's rights, end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

I will take forward a substantial work programme, supported by my team, that builds upon progress made in key areas during recent years, while also focusing on emerging issues and responding to concerns being raised by older people.

My 2023-24 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/>

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, together with providing help and support directly to older people through my Advice and Assistance Service.

My team and I will also travel throughout Wales to meet and speak with older people and hear about the kinds of action 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.

In addition, I will provide evidence to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry to ensure that the voices and experiences of older people and their families are put on the record, and help to inform its findings in a meaningful way.

Together with my team, older people and other partners I will work for a Wales where older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.

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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