



Comisiynydd
Pobl Hŷn
Cymru
Older People's
Commissioner
for Wales

COMMISSIONER'S NEWSLETTER

APRIL
2025

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales

A MESSAGE FROM RHIAN

It's been a very busy few months for me and my team, with a key focus being my Have Your Say Consultation that's given older people an opportunity to share their view and ideas about the action I should deliver as Commissioner.

Alongside my Have Your Say Questionnaire, which hundreds of older people responded to, I've travelled the length and breadth of Wales with my team to meet and speak with hundreds of older people about key issues and the change and improvements they'd like to see.

The information and evidence shared with me has been invaluable in shaping my Strategy and Work Programme, which is due to be published very soon, and I'd like to thank everyone for making their voices heard.

I've also used my legal powers to issue new Guidance to local authorities to help ensure that older people have more opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities, responding to concerns raised with me by older people across Wales.

Alongside this, my Advice and Assistance Service has also been busy providing information and support directly to older people on a range of different issues and helping to ensure people's rights are upheld. So please remember that if you need help or are concerned about something you can contact the team on 03442 640 670.

Wishing you all a very happy Easter, and I look forward to sharing more information about my work and plans very soon!



Rhian

Excellent response to Commissioner's Have Your Say Consultation

Dweud Eich Dweud // Have your Say



There has been an excellent response to the Commissioner's Have Your Say Consultation, which closed at the end of February, with over 450 completed questionnaires received from older people across Wales.

Older people were invited to get in touch with the Commissioner to highlight the issues affecting their lives, as well as the action they'd like to see that would make a positive difference.

The questionnaire was focused around four key areas identified through the Commissioner's engagement with older people, which began when she took up post at the end of last year:

- **Access to information, services and support**
- **Feeling safe**
- **Fair treatment and recognition**
- **Voice, choice and control**

This engagement continued throughout the consultation period, with the Commissioner and her team travelling throughout Wales to meet and speak with around 500 older people from a wide range of backgrounds and communities, to hear directly about the change and improvements they'd like to see.

The evidence shared by older people is being used to shape the Commissioner's Strategy and Work Programme, which are currently being finalised and will be published in May. This information will also help to support the Commissioner's wider work to influence policy and practice at both a national and a local level, as well as the action she calls for from the Welsh Government and other public bodies.

Discussing the consultation, the Commissioner said: "I'm really pleased there was such a positive response to my Have Your Say Consultation, and I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who completed a questionnaire or shared their views and ideas directly with me and my team during engagement visits.

"Ensuring the action I deliver as Commissioner is shaped by the voices and experiences of older people across Wales is a crucial part of my work, and the information and evidence shared will be at the heart of my Strategy and Work Programme, which will be published soon."

New Guidance to help ensure older people can make their voices heard



In March, the Commissioner issued new Guidance to local authorities across Wales, which sets out the action they should be taking to ensure older people have an opportunity to make their voices heard and influence the decisions affecting their lives.

The Guidance is designed to support local authorities in their planning and delivery of engagement and consultation activities, and help ensure they are meeting their statutory duties.

The Commissioner developed the Guidance in response to concerns raised by older people that they often find it difficult to make their voices heard and influence decisions affecting their lives or communities, which can leave them feeling powerless and that their voices don't matter.

The Guidance reflects what older people have told the Commissioner about the ways they feel these activities could be improved, as well as drawing on wider principles that enable inclusive, person-centred approaches to engagement and consultation.

The Commissioner has issued the Guidance using her legal powers, which means local authorities must have regard for it when discharging their functions.

The Commissioner said: "Since I took up post at the end of last year, older people have frequently raised concerns with me about being unable to make their voices heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives and communities, particularly in terms of changes to public services.

"So it's hugely important that listening and responding effectively to older people's voices is a key part of engagement, consultation and decision-making.

"That's why I have issued this Guidance to local authorities using my legal powers, to support improvements in these crucial activities, as well as to help ensure greater consistency across Wales.

"Through my Guidance, I want to help ensure that people of all ages in all of their diversity have opportunities and are enabled to make their voices heard in a meaningful way, an ambition I know is shared by our public services across Wales."

You can find out more about the Commissioner's guidance here – <https://olderpeople.wales/resource/engagement-and-consultation-with-older-people-in-wales-guidance-for-local-authorities/> – or get in touch if you'd like to receive a paper copy.

New data reveals significant concerns about the cost of living amongst older people



The Commissioner has found that a significant number of older people across Wales are concerned about the cost of living and have been cutting back on essentials in order to try and make ends meet.

With many household bills set to rise again this month, the Commissioner is concerned that many older people will be forced to cut back even further, putting their health and well-being at risk.

Polling undertaken on behalf of the Commissioner found that 90% of older people are concerned about energy prices, an increase of nearly 20% compared to last year, while 82% are concerned about food prices, an increase of 14%.

When asked about their spending, 70% of older people said they had cut back on spending to heat their home, with 60% reducing the amount they spend on food.

Discussing her findings, the Commissioner said: “There are significant concerns about the cost of living amongst older people across Wales and many feel they have no option but to cut back on essentials such as energy or food in order to pay their bills.

“It’s important to remember what this means in reality – that older people are unable to afford to heat their homes properly or may find themselves going hungry or missing out on nutritious meals as they are unable to afford to buy the food they need, which both put people’s health at risk.

“With prices for many things set to rise again this month, these concerns are likely to increase, and people may be forced to cut back even further, creating greater financial pressures, as well as stress and anxiety, which also impacts upon our well-being.

“Poverty amongst older people is also a key issue, exacerbated by the loss of the Winter Fuel Payment, which provided crucial financial support.

“These issues make it more likely that older people will find themselves in vulnerable situations and in need of care and support, which not only have a significant impact on individuals, but also add avoidable costs and pressures to already stretched public services.

“It is vital that the governments in Westminster and Cardiff Bay recognise this and take action to provide support to protect older people from harm.”

Commissioner calls for urgent action to tackle the ‘corridor care’ crisis within the NHS



The Commissioner has called for strong leadership within health boards and from the Welsh Government to tackle serious issues relating to care being delivered in hospitals identified by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

Published in January, the RCN’s report – *On the Frontline of the UK’s Corridor Care Crisis* – highlighted that care is frequently being delivered in spaces that compromise the safety and dignity of patients.

The report included testimonies from frontline staff that detailed shocking failures in the care of some of our most vulnerable patients, many of whom are older people, and found that the issues identified are a daily reality for many patients and staff.

Responding to the report, the Commissioner said:

“The findings from the RCN make for very difficult reading and reflect conversations I’ve had about the health service with older people, many of whom have very low expectations about the quality of care they might receive if they require treatment in hospital.

“It is unacceptable that the provision of care that could put older people’s safety and dignity at risk appears to be becoming normalised, and we need to see strong leadership, both within health boards and from the Welsh Government, to enable urgent action to respond to these issues.

“Further action is also needed to tackle the wider systemic issues that have contributed to the failures identified, to ensure that protecting patient safety and dignity is a priority and that the highest standards of care are delivered at all times.”

‘Significant and sustained’ improvements needed to ensure older people are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty



The Commissioner has called for significant and sustained improvements to ensure that older people are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty, following the publication of a joint report from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW).

The report found that this might be the case for extended periods due to delays relating to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) process in Wales.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) are rules that protect people who can't make decisions for themselves, such as people living with dementia, when they're in a care home or hospital. If staff need to limit a person's freedom to keep them safe – stopping them from leaving or making certain choices, for example – there must be proper checks, including assessments by trained professionals, to make sure it's in the person's best interest and that they're not being unfairly restricted.

Long delays in allocating, assessing and authorising DoLS applications could mean that people's freedom is being limited without these protections being in place. While awaiting for a decision to be made, it's also not possible for people to make their voices heard or challenge what is happening.

This is a particular issue for older people as nearly nine out of ten DoLS applications are for individuals aged 65+.

Responding to the report, the Commissioner said:

“It is clear that significant and sustained improvements must be made to ensure that older people – often in the most vulnerable circumstances – are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty, and I support calls for an overhaul of the system.

“I am also concerned that the issues highlighted in this report reflect a growing trend of public bodies being unable to meet their statutory duties, something that seems to be becoming normalised.

“This must be addressed, and public bodies must have the resources they need to protect and support individuals and ensure people's rights are upheld.”

More Information about Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards is here: <https://www.hiw.org.uk/deprivation-liberty-safeguards-dols>

Or please contact the Commissioner's Advice and Assistance Service if you need information or support relating to DoLS: 03442 640 670 // ask@olderpeople.wales

Commissioner supports calls for action to tackle ageism and its impact across the UK



In February, the Commissioner strongly welcomed the publication of a report by the Women and Equalities Committee in Westminster that highlights the significant harm caused by ageism, both to older people and to society more widely.

Evidence shared by the Commissioner and her predecessor was reflected throughout the report, which included a number of key recommendations such as examining whether legislation to prevent age discrimination is effective in protecting older people and prioritising a new digital inclusion strategy for the UK that includes a detailed focus on the needs of older people.

The Committee also called on the UK Government to look at the structures and systems we have in place here in Wales – including the role of the Commissioner, the national strategy for older people, Age-Friendly Wales and our comprehensive network of local authority Age Friendly Champions – with a view to creating similar framework in England.

The report generated a great deal of media interest and sparked a great deal of discussion and debate about the harm that can be caused by stereotypes and assumptions about older people and growing older.

Discussing the report and its findings, the Commissioner said:

“As Commissioner I’ve said I want Wales to lead the way for older people and this is a good example of that, offering real opportunities to learn from Wales to effect meaningful change for older people.

“I look forward to seeing the response from the UK Government, which I hope is positive, and continuing to work with key partners to tackle ageism and age discrimination in all its forms.”

You can read the Committee’s Report here: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46686/documents/239426/default/>

Engagement Highlights

As highlighted above, our engagement in recent months has been focused on hearing directly from older people across Wales about the issues affecting their lives and the change and improvements that would make a positive difference.

The Commissioner and her team have visited older people's groups, support groups community spaces, extra care schemes and care homes, meeting with around 500 older people from a diverse range of backgrounds and communities, which are listed below. More information about these visits and what older people told us is available from the Commissioner's Engagement Diary on our website - <https://olderpeople.wales/engagement-diary/> - or get in touch if you'd like this information in a paper format.

- Bedlinog and Trelewis Warm Hub
- Cwrt yr Orsaf Extra Care Housing, Pontypridd
- Powys Older People's Forum 'Have your say' event
- Barry Veterans' Group, Vale of Glamorgan
- Birchgrove Welcome Hub, Cardiff
- Bonymaen House Reablement Centre, Swansea
- Widdershins Centre, Torfaen
- Osteoporosis Support Group, Merthyr
- Addison House Extra Care Scheme, Cardiff
- Old Vicarage Care Home, Llangollen
- Severn View Care Home, Monmouthshire
- Newport 50+ Forum
- Rainbow Foundation Centres, Wrexham
- Denbighshire Dementia Centre
- Swansea Age-friendly Communities Waterfront Walk
- Plas Bryn Extra Care Housing, Cardiff
- Alzheimer's Society Dementia Voice, Newport
- Windrush Elders, Cardiff
- Swansea Men's Shed
- Dementia Hwb, Port Talbot
- Abergavenny 50+ Group
- Narberth Community Garden, Pembrokeshire
- Bro Preseli Extra Care Scheme



In March, the Commissioner also spent a week in north Wales, visiting projects and initiatives that are helping to make communities more age-friendly and are supporting people to live and age well.

- Clwb yr Efail, Conwy
- Caffi a Siop Mechell, Llanfechell
- Mencap Mon, Llangefni
- Pickleball Group, Beaumaris
- Digital Skills Class, Benllech
- Canolfan Gwelfor, Holyhead
- Plas Crigyll Care Home, Bryngwran
- Walking Group, Canolfan Glanhwfa, Llangefni
- Canolfan Beaumaris
- Nifty Sixties Exercise Group, Holyhead
- Hafan Cefni, Llangefni

These groups and activities are hugely valued by older people and make a positive difference to people's lives, giving them something to look forward to and opportunities to meet new people – crucial to prevent loneliness and isolation – as well as find information about local services and support.

But people also highlighted some of the challenges affecting these initiatives, such as limited transport that makes it harder for people to attend and difficulties recruiting new volunteers to provide support – many of the volunteers the Commissioner met with were older people themselves and said they were worried about what might happen to the groups when they are no longer able to volunteer.

If you would like to arrange a visit from the Commissioner, please get in touch on 03442 640 670 or email ask@olderpeople.wales.

Spotlight on... Radio Teleswitch Service to Be Switched Off in June



The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS), which is used to control electricity meters and off-peak tariffs such as Economy 7, is due to be permanently switched off in June 2025.

Once the service ends, affected meters will no longer be able to switch between peak and off-peak times, potentially leading to incorrect billing or heating systems not working as expected.

If you have an RTS meter, it's really important that this is upgraded so that your electricity and/or hot water systems continue to work as intended. Your energy supplier should upgrade your meter free of charge.

If you're unsure about the type of meter or tariff you have, you should contact your energy supplier so they can advise you. Contact details for the main energy suppliers in the UK are below:

- **British Gas: 0333 202 9802**
- **EDF Energy: 0333 200 5100**
- **[E.ON](#) Next: 0808 501 5200**
- **ScottishPower: 0800 092 9290**
- **SSE Energy Solutions: 0345 725 2526**
- **Octopus Energy: 0808 164 1088**
- **Bulb Energy: 0300 30 30 635**

You can also contact Advicelink Cymru for further information about the RTS switch off: 0800 702 2020.

Our Newsletter

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to any colleagues or contacts that you think would be interested in receiving it. 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 across Wales.

The Commissioner is working for a Wales that leads the way in empowering older people, tackling inequality and enabling everyone to live and age well.

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