



Comisiynydd
Pobl Hŷn
Cymru
Older People's
Commissioner
for Wales

COMMISSIONER'S NEWSLETTER

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales

**JULY
2025**

A MESSAGE FROM RHIAN

With summer now upon us I hope you've been able to keep cool and stay healthy as we've seen many days of record-breaking temperatures.

It's been another busy few months for me and my Team, and May saw a significant milestone when I published my three-year Strategy – A Wales that Leads the Way for Older People – and my 2025-26 Work Programme, setting out the action I will take to deliver positive change for older people.

In addition, I was pleased to publish a new report examining people's experiences of growing older without children and the action needed to ensure that policy and practice responds effectively to changing demographics so that older people can access the services and support they need without needing to rely on support from family.

There was also some positive news from Westminster, with the announcement that the decision to means test the Winter Fuel Payment and limit this to people in receipt of Pension Credit was being reversed, something that I have been calling for since the policy was introduced last year.

My team and I have also travelled throughout Wales, visiting small groups and attending large events, to hear from a wide range of older people, share information and resources and provide advice and assistance. And please remember, if you need help and support with an issue you're facing, you can contact my Advice and Assistance Team on 03442 640 670 or email ask@olderpeople.wales.

Sending good wishes to you all, as always.

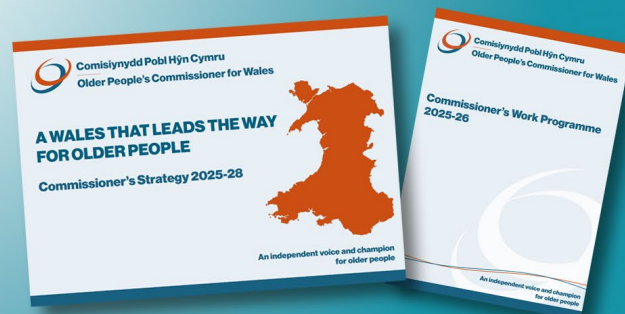
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Creating a Wales that leads the way for older people: Commissioner's Strategy and Work Programme



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales



In May, the Commissioner published her Strategy and Work Programme, setting out the action she is taking to deliver positive change for older people.

Both documents were shaped by the voices and experiences of older people from across Wales, following an extensive programme of face-to-face engagement visits with hundreds of older people and the findings of the Commissioner's national 'Have Your Say' consultation, which over 400 older people responded to.

The Commissioner is taking forward a wide range of work focused on ensuring older people can access the services, support and information they need, and that they feel safe at home and in their communities, with choice and control over their lives.

The Commissioner's work is also focused on ensuring that older people are treated fairly and that the significant contribution they make to our lives and communities is recognised.

Key action for the year ahead will include:

- Examining older people's experiences of social care in Wales
- Reviewing access to dental services
- Improving older people's access to public transport
- Protecting the rights of older people who are not online so they are not excluded from accessing information, services and everyday activities
- Working with partners to improve community safety
- Improving services and support for older people experiencing abuse, including sexual violence
- Launching new training to help policy-makers and public sector staff better understand the harmful impact of ageism and how this can be challenged
- Improving older people's access to independent advocacy so they can make their voices heard during difficult periods and times of crisis.
- Working with local authorities to make communities across Wales more age-friendly to support people to live and age well

Alongside this, the Commissioner will scrutinise a wide range of government policy and practice at both a national and local level, influencing decision-making and holding public bodies to account where necessary.

The Commissioner will also continue to provide help and support to older people across Wales through her Advice and Assistance Service, which helps to ensure people's rights are upheld and empowers older people to challenge poor practice and decisions.

Discussing her Strategy and Work Programme, the Commissioner said:

“For many older people, growing older in Wales is a positive experience – they can access the information, support and services they need, they feel safe in their homes and communities, are treated fairly and can make their voices heard.

“However, it is important to recognise that too many older people in Wales face a range of challenges and barriers across many aspects of their daily lives, which often have a significant impact on people's health, well-being and independence. This leaves older people feeling excluded, left-behind and unvalued, affecting their opportunities to live and age well.

“I'd like to thank all of the older people who have spoken with me or responded to my consultation for sharing the issues affecting their lives so openly and honestly, and for highlighting the change and improvements they want and need to see.

“These voices and experiences are at the heart of my Strategy and Work Programme, through which I will be taking forward a range of action that will make a positive and meaningful difference to the lives of older people across Wales.

“But delivering all of the change required is not something I can do alone, which is why I'm also calling on public bodies and services across Wales to take action to respond more effectively to the issues older people are facing.

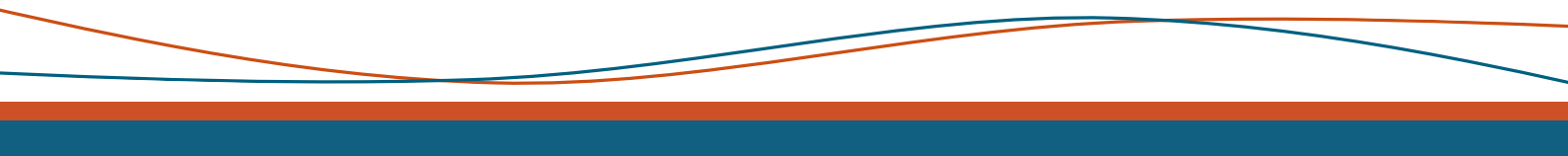
“Working together in this way, we have opportunities to create a Wales where every older person is valued, included and supported to live with dignity and independence.

“By listening, taking action, and driving meaningful change, we can build a society where growing older is something to be celebrated – a Wales that leads the way for older people.”

You can download the Commissioner's Strategy and Work Programme here:

<https://olderpeople.wales/commissioners-priorities/>

Or get in touch if you'd like to receive a paper copy.



Commissioner strongly welcomes Winter Fuel Payment U-Turn



In June, the Commissioner strongly welcomed the announcement from the UK Government that the Winter Fuel Payment will be restored to older people with incomes of less than £35,000.

The Commissioner had called on the Government to reverse last year's decision to means test the Winter Fuel Payment, something that caused significant concern for many older people across Wales.

The Commissioner said: "I welcome the announcement that the Winter Fuel Payment will be restored to many older people, following widespread calls to reinstate this crucial form of financial support.

"The loss of the Winter Fuel Payment was an issue that caused significant concern and continued to be raised with me by older people across Wales. People told me about the extent to which they were forced to cut back on fuel and other essentials last winter as a result of the decision to stop the universal payment putting their health and well-being at risk."

The Commissioner said she was pleased that the new arrangements would be in place in time for the coming winter and that payments would be automatically made to older people.

She added: "I welcome that the payment will be made to all older people above the qualifying age and that those with incomes above the threshold will have the option to opt out or to repay what they receive through a form of taxation. This will mean that there will not be a means tested claims process as such, something that often results in eligible individuals missing out, as well as adding significant costs in terms of administration.

"The UK Government must now provide clear information about how the new system will work in practice to enable people to properly plan and make any preparations they need to ahead of the winter.

"However, it's also important not to lose sight of wider financial issues that affect many older people, particularly here in Wales.

"Even with the changes announced, 1 in 5 older people will still find themselves living in poverty, facing persistent and debilitating hardship that is often hidden. Similarly, around a third of households eligible for Pension Credit do not receive the support they are entitled to, which is worth £3,900 a year on average and unlocks a range of other support.

"It's therefore crucial that work is undertaken to examine the level of income people need to live and age well, which will be fundamental in delivering meaningful action to tackle poverty, the issues it causes and the hidden costs it creates."

New research highlights people's experiences of growing older without children



In June, the Commissioner published a report examining people's experiences of growing older without children and the action needed to ensure that services and support can respond effectively to changing demographics.

The report highlights that growing older without children can bring many benefits, including strong social lives and connections with friends, neighbours, and community organisations; opportunities to build rich, diverse support networks and engage in community activities and volunteering; and financial stability.

However, people without children can also feel invisible, marginalised and ignored during discussions about ageing within a family-orientated society.

The report, which draws upon a wide range of available research, reveals that a range of policy and legislation is 'largely inadequate' in responding to the needs of people growing older without children in Wales.

The report also finds that many policies and services assume the presence of some form of family support, which can create barriers in terms of accessing services and support such as health and social care, transport, social activities, education and cultural activities.

In addition, people growing older without children may find themselves at greater risk of issues that can affect our ability to age well.

The report sets out why action is needed to address these issues as the number of older people without children is expected to increase significantly in the years ahead. This action includes more targeted interventions, improvements to social support and innovative approaches to delivering care, building upon good practice that is already being piloted and delivered.

The Commissioner will be sharing her findings with the Welsh Government, public bodies, service providers and other key organisations to ensure the issues often faced by older people without children are recognised and addressed. She will also use the evidence from the report to support her own work to influence policy and service design across Wales.

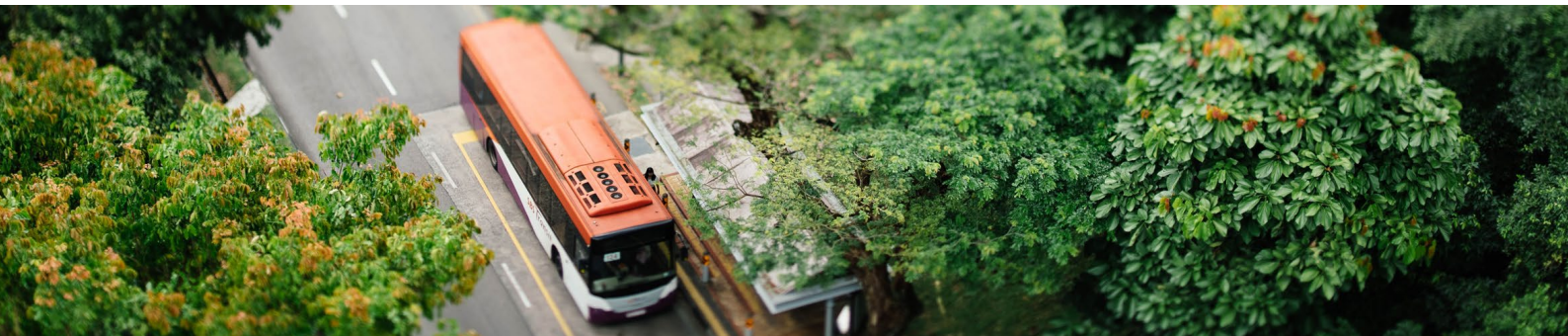
Alongside this, she will be holding an event later this year that will bring together key policy- and decision-makers in Wales to hear from older people about their experiences of growing older without children, examine the evidence within the report in more detail and explore practical ways to tackle the issues identified.

Read the report here:

<https://olderpeople.wales/resource/research-into-peoples-experiences-of-growing-older-without-children/>

Or get in touch if you'd like to receive a paper copy.

Bus Services Wales Bill: Commissioner calls for changes to ensure older people's voices are heard



In May, the Commissioner shared concerns that older people might have been unable to make their voices heard on proposed changes to bus services due to the limited time available to respond to the consultation on the Bus Services (Wales) Bill.

Writing to the Chair of the Senedd's Climate Change Committee, which is scrutinising the Bill, the Commissioner said that the six-week consultation period was 'extremely narrow' and that the timetable would not allow for meaningful consultation with older people, stakeholders, and members of the public.

She highlighted that issues relating to transport, particularly access to bus services, are often raised by older people so it was important that people were able to make their voices heard.

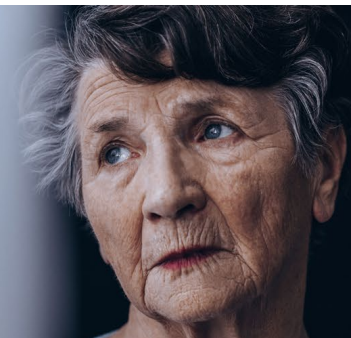
She called for future consultations to be designed to allow more time for people to respond, something that would enable better scrutiny of proposed legislation, while ensuring that these processes do not inadvertently build in digital exclusion, which can prevent older people from participating.

In her evidence to the Committee on the Bill itself, the Commissioner said she supports its aims to improve accessibility, reliability and the quality of bus services, but that sufficient funding to enable this is critical. She also highlighted the need to address safety concerns, which are frequently raised by older people, and the importance of driver training and cross-border planning.

The Commissioner also stressed the need for improvements to be delivered as quickly as possible, given the crucial role that public transport often plays in supporting older people to remain independent and age well, and for ongoing engagement with older people to capture feedback and respond to concerns as changes are delivered.

Read the Commissioner's full response to the Bus Services (Wales) Bill online here:
<https://olderpeople.wales/resource/consultation-response-bus-services-wales-bill/>
Or get in touch if you'd like to receive a paper copy.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day



#WEAAD2025

15 June was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, a day where organisations across the world work together to highlight the scale, nature and impact of the abuse experienced by older people, as well as the help and support available.

Playing her part, the Commissioner shared information about her Abuse Support Services Directory, which provides details of around 150 local and national organisations that can provide support to people who are experiencing abuse or are concerned about someone else. She also shared her Get Help Stay Safe leaflet, which provides helpful information about how to recognise the signs that an older person may be experiencing abuse, and where to find help and support.

Alongside this, the Commissioner published an article in which she argued that there is a need to move away from the outdated term 'elder abuse', which can lead to problematic assumptions and unintended consequences that can undermine progress in protecting and supporting older people.

For example, the term 'elder abuse' reduces individuals and their specific experiences into a category, framing people by their age and a broad sense of victimhood. This reinforces ageist stereotypes, presenting older people as a passive, homogenous group, rather than recognising people's individual identities, needs and the harm they may be experiencing and responding accordingly.

Furthermore, the term implies that what older people experience is somehow different to the abuse faced by people from other age groups, which impacts upon the ways these issues are investigated and responded to. We know, for example, that cases where the abuse of an older person is suspected are often referred to social services rather than the police, leading to missed opportunities to identify potential criminal offences and secure justice for individuals.

The Commissioner said that establishing the day nearly two decades ago marked an important step forward in recognising older people's experiences and highlighting the need for action as there was very little understanding amongst practitioners or wider society about the abuse faced by older people.

But she also said that it is time to recognise the progress that's been made during the past 20 years and to change the focus of the day, removing language that can not only act as a barrier to action, but also potentially limits ambition.

She shared her view that an 'International Day to End the Abuse of Older People' would better reflect the kind of language used by the United Nations to describe similar days of action designed to support other groups and that this would send out a far more powerful message – both to older people and to society as a whole.

The Commissioner will be engaging with the UN to help secure this important change and ensure the language used reflects the urgency and importance of what needs to be achieved to protect older people from abuse and deliver the services and support they need.

Meeting and speaking with older people across Wales

During the past few months, the Commissioner and her team have travelled across Wales, meeting and speaking with older people to hear directly about their experiences of growing older and the changes they'd like to see. These engagement events have also provided opportunities to share helpful information and resources, and provide advice and assistance on a range of matters.

Thanks to everyone we visited for giving us such a warm welcome and for sharing their experiences so openly and honestly, which enables us to identify common and emerging issues and helps to guide the Commissioner's work to influence policy and practice. We've got lots more engagement planned across Wales, but if you'd like the Commissioner to visit your group, please get in touch on 03442 640 670 or email ask@olderpeople.wales.

- Flintshire – 50+ Action Group
- Conwy – Tide Cymru Carers
- RCT – Pontyclun Bosom Pals
- Vale of Glamorgan – Penarth Ageing Well Club
- Swansea – EYST 20 Anniversary
- Vale of Glamorgan – Sporting Memories Group
- Vale of Glamorgan – Dementia Friendly Barry - Turning Barry Blue Event
- Swansea – Ageing Well Community Group
- Cardiff – Ann Craft Trust Safeguarding Event
- RCT – Llantrisant 50+ Forum
- Cardiff – Whitchurch Awen Hub
- Bridgend – Shout Forum
- Cardiff – Conway 50+ group
- Vale of Glamorgan – The Dwelling Place Wellbeing Cafe
- Gwynedd – Morfa Bychan Social Dining Group
- Cardiff – Windrush Elders Celebration
- Wrexham – Age Friendly Group
- Cardiff – Good Vibrations Choir
- Flintshire – Marleyfield House
- Newport – Tredegar House Parkrun
- Bridgend - Pencoed Women's Institute
- Swansea – Dementia Hub
- Cardiff – Severn Primary School





The Commissioner also had information stands at the Cardiff Multicultural Mela and Pride Cymru events in June, which provided a chance to meet and chat with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQ+ older people and their loved ones, distribute information and resources and hear about key issues.

The Commissioner and her team will be connecting with older people at similar large events planned over the summer, including the Royal Welsh Show, National Eisteddfod and Pembrokeshire County Show. So if you're attending any of these, we look forward to seeing you there!

In addition to these events for older people, the Commissioner and her team engaged with wide range of stakeholder events across Wales, to share information and intelligence, grow knowledge and understanding, and influence policy and practice. The organisations and stakeholders the Commissioner and her team engaged with included age-friendly partners in Carmarthenshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, National Independent Safeguarding Board, Bevan Foundation, National Pensioners' Convention, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Carers Trust, and the Wales Anti-Poverty Coalition.

The Commissioner also brought together a key stakeholders for meetings of the Stopping Abuse Action Group and the Age-Friendly Community of Practice, as well as holding a roundtable event for health professionals examining the action delivered in response to the recommendations in the Commissioner's 2024 Access to GP Practices Report (a report highlighting progress and areas where further work is required is due to be published in August).



UPDATE: Radio Teleswitch Service Switch Off



In the last edition of the newsletter, we highlighted that the Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS), which is used to control electricity meters and off-peak tariffs such as Economy 7, is due to be switched off.

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.

The UK Government has announced that rather than a blanket switch off at the end of June as originally planned, the service will now be shut down in phases to minimise potential disruption.

But if you have an RTS meter, it's still 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.

Spotlight On...

Our Spotlight On... section highlights useful information from other organisations, as well as opportunities to make your voice heard or get involved in upcoming projects.

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales Patient Surveys: Make your voice heard

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), inspects NHS services and regulates independent healthcare providers to check that people receive safe, effective care.

They assess services against standards, policies, guidance, and regulations, identifying areas for improvement and driving positive change.

HIW regularly runs patient surveys to hear directly from people who use healthcare services in Wales. Your feedback helps them to understand what's working well and where improvements are needed. Whether you've recently accessed GP services, hospital care, or other health services, your views matter.

Have Your Say: Visit <http://www.hiw.org.uk/have-your-say> to see which surveys are currently live.

Need help completing a survey? Call 0300 062 8163 and a member of the HIW team will assist you.

Transport for Wales Insights Panel: Help to improve TFW's services

Transport for Wales is looking for older people to join its Insights Panel to help improve the services they offer.

As a member of the Panel, you'll be invited to test out new digital tools and explore upcoming features before they go live, helping to shape the experiences of thousands of passengers across Wales.

This might include taking part in one-to-one user testing sessions, trialling a redesigned app or giving feedback on new digital services.

For more information on how you can have your say, visit <https://haveyoursay.tfw.wales/insights-panel> or contact Transport for Wales on **03333 211 202**.

Living well with osteoporosis

Dr. Inder Singh, National Lead for Bone Health, Wales, highlights the impact of osteoporosis and the steps you can take to promote your bone health.

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is also known as 'brittle bone condition', and currently over 3.7 million people are living with osteoporosis in the UK. It occurs when our bones become thin by losing bone mass (bone mineral density) and changes in the bone structure over time. This leads to reduced bone strength which can increase risk of fractures. Unfortunately, without proper osteoporosis care, people are at risk of subsequent re-fractures which can lead to an accumulation of fracture-specific health issues over time. This is described as the 'fracture cascade', a cycle of recurring fracture and increasing dependence or disability.



How common are fragility fractures?

In Wales alone, there are over 4,000 hip fractures and 20,000 fragility fractures every year. Fragility fractures often result from minimal trauma, such as a fall from standing height, and may affect the wrist, hip, spine, pelvis, or upper arm. After age 50, the lifetime risk of a fragility fracture is 1 in 2 for women and 1 in 5 for men. Osteoporosis is often silent, in many cases going undiagnosed until someone breaks a bone. The fractures cost for health and social care services is over £133 million annually, but the impact on individuals and their loved ones is "unmeasurable".

The mission is clear: 'Prevent the first fragility fracture, but if not, [let the first fragility fracture be the last](#)'.

What can you do to promote your bone health?

Bones are living organs: Respect your bones and make sure you exercise safely and regularly. Eat a healthy balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, avoid smoking entirely and limit alcohol to no more than national recommended limit of 14 units/week. When you get a chance, get safe sunlight exposure.



If you are prescribed osteoporosis medications, please do not stop without consulting your doctor, nurse or a pharmacist who can offer you alternatives. More than half of the patients stop taking bone medications, often leading to worsening osteoporosis and the risk of more fractures. You can find reliable information from the [Royal Osteoporosis Society \(ROS\) website](#) and from the [Bone Health in Wales YouTube channel](#) which includes educational videos for patients and professionals.

What support can help you to live well with osteoporosis?

[NHS Wales provides Fracture Liaison Service \(FLS\)](#) which aims to identify all individuals above 50 years systematically who have had a 'fragility fracture'. If you are diagnosed with osteoporosis, you will be given lifestyle advice for good bone health, information on osteoporosis and drug treatment options to strengthen your bones.

Your feedback matters

Have your say about how better support could be offered to you and your community to help you live well with osteoporosis.

Please send your feedback to:

Dr Inder Singh, National Lead for Bone Health, Wales
Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr Hospital,
Ystrad Mynach,
CF82 7GP

Or complete the online form using the link or QR code below:

<https://forms.office.com/e/r2h7ZWCsuv>



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.

How to contact the Commissioner:

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Twitter: @talkolderpeople

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg // This document is available in Welsh