



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Commissioner's Work Programme 2026-27

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

COMMISSIONER'S WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

Jump in...



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from the
Commissioner**



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An independent voice and champion for older people

Welcome!

As Older People's Commissioner for Wales my vision is a Wales that leads the way in empowering older people, tackling inequality and enabling everyone to live and age well.

To make this vision a reality, we need to see progress against a number of key national priorities, focused on ensuring that older people:

- Can access the information, services and support they need
- Feel safe in their relationships, homes and communities
- Are treated fairly, with their contribution recognised and valued
- Can make their voices heard and have choice and control over their lives

Playing my part in supporting progress against these priorities, each year I deliver a robust and responsive work programme, shaped by older people's voices and experiences, which also reflects my own Strategic Objectives, as highlighted in the diagram (click and hold to expand):

Wales leading the way?

It's true to say that Wales has led the way in terms of policy-making relating to older people in a number of regards, and the establishment of the Commissioner's role – the first of its kind in the world – is a good example of this.

But more than that, there are examples of policies and legislation, both nationally and locally, that aim to ensure services are person-centred, that people's voices are heard and their rights are upheld. There are also examples of Wales seeking to do more than the 'minimum' that might be mandated at a UK level, with enhanced duties in key areas designed to enable more locally focused solutions.

However, the extent to which these policies and legislation have made a tangible difference to older people's day-to-day lives may be open to question, based on a range of available evidence and, perhaps even more importantly, firsthand accounts from older people across Wales I have spoken with or who have contacted my Advice and Assistance Service.



Older people's experiences

Older people often use negative language when describing their experiences (or the experiences of their loved ones), highlighting a range of concerns, issues and challenges. Many older people also tell me they feel there has been a decline in both the accessibility and quality of services, and that they increasingly feel excluded and unheard because of their age.

Experiences like this suggest there are significant, and potentially growing, gaps between the ambitions set out in policy and legislation and the reality of practice on the ground.

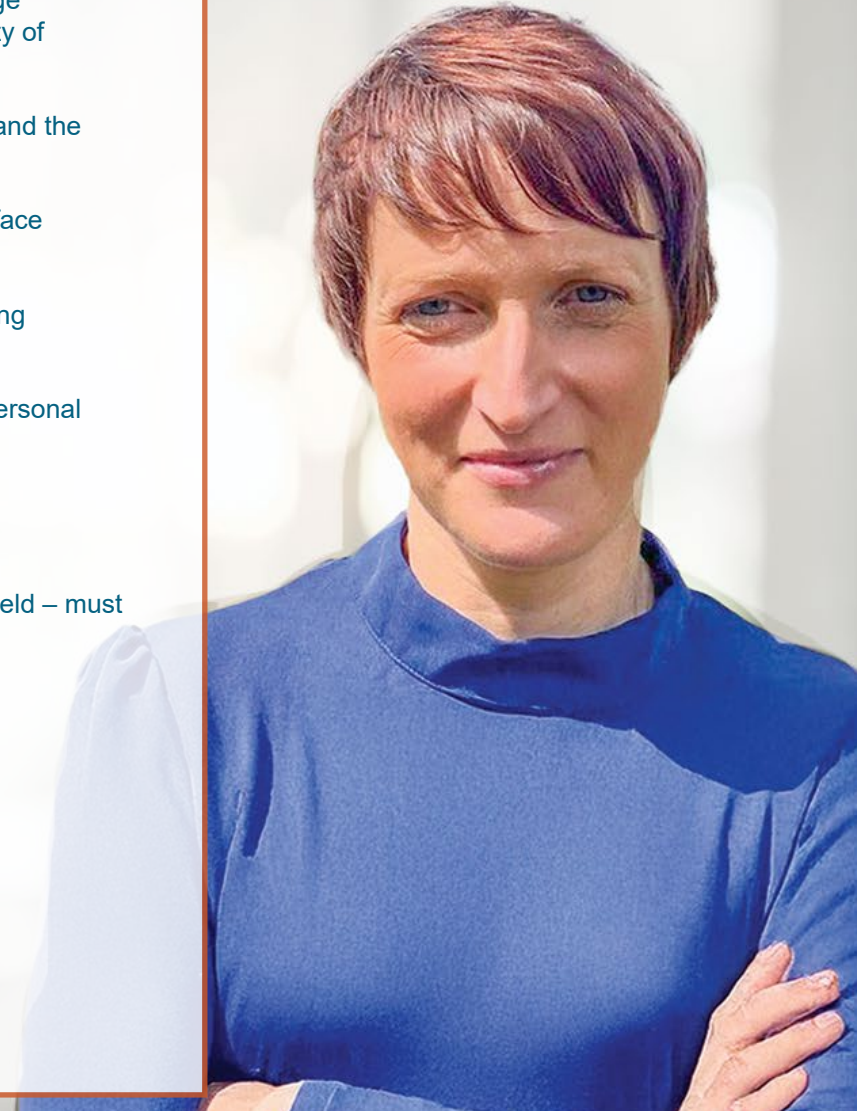
This means older people are missing out on services, support and protections that should be available, increasing the risk that they will face challenges or find themselves in crisis, particularly if they are already vulnerable.

Furthermore, these kinds of gaps risk creating deeper inequalities between and amongst different groups within society, while also eroding confidence in public bodies, services and institutions when people's experiences fall short of what has been promised.

These issues bring significant costs, not only in terms of creating pressures on services that could be avoided, but also in terms of the personal costs people face when failures impact on their health, independence and quality of life.

Closing the gap

Tackling gaps between policy and practice – to ensure that public bodies are fulfilling their duties and older people's rights are being upheld – must be a priority and is a key focus of my 2026-27 Work Programme. This will include:



WORK PROGRAMME PRIORITIES



An independent voice and champion for older people

Reviewing the delivery of key services and support for older people

***Improving access, driving up standards
and ensuring rights are upheld***

As we grow older, being able to access services and support often plays an increasingly important role in supporting us to live and age well.

However, as highlighted above, many older people have described the challenges they often face when trying to access the services and support they need – which in many cases they have a right to – while also sharing concerns about increasingly poor standards.

FORMAL REVIEWS

In 2026-27 I will use my legal powers as Commissioner to commence formal Reviews in key areas:



**OLDER PEOPLE'S
ACCESS TO MENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES**



**PROVISION OF
INDEPENDENT
ADVOCACY SERVICES
TO OLDER PEOPLE**



Reviewing the delivery of key services and support for older people

SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH FINDINGS

I will be making public the findings of my research into older people's experiences of social care, based on evidence captured from over 260 individuals, which examined whether the quality of the social care support people are receiving in Wales reflects the standards set out in policy and legislation.

Alongside my findings, I will present a series of recommendations to the new Welsh Government, as well as other relevant public bodies, calling for action to address the issues identified and deliver the improvements older people need to see.



OLDER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

I will analyse data on homelessness collected from local authorities, examining patterns, trends, and key contributing factors that affect older individuals experiencing housing insecurity.

Alongside this, I will map the processes, services, and support available, including statutory and third sector provision, to understand how individuals access help and move through the system.

Through this work, I will identify gaps and barriers, as well as areas where improvements are needed, to enable the development of more effective, accessible and responsive approaches to preventing and addressing homelessness amongst older people.



SPEEDING UP DELIVERY OF HOME ADAPTATIONS

I will work with the new Welsh Government and local authorities to ensure that required action is taken forward following the publication of my recent report on the delivery of home adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

The report identified that older people in many parts of Wales are facing significant waits for crucial adaptations to be made to their homes.

These kinds of delays put older people's health, safety and independence at risk and can lead to avoidable hospital or care home admissions.



Influencing policy and practice across Wales and more widely

Sharing insight, strengthening practice and enabling meaningful change

Responsibility for delivering the changes and improvements that older people want to see – and for ensuring that practice reflects policy and legislation sits across a range of public bodies, which can create barriers to effective scrutiny and accountability

That's why throughout 2026-27 I will work with governments and key public bodies at all levels to ensure older people's voices are heard, their experiences are understood and the action needed is delivered.

INFLUENCING THE NEW WELSH GOVERNMENT

The formation of a new Welsh Government following the elections in May 2026 will create opportunities for a wide range of new action, and I will engage with the First Minister and Cabinet members to shape their priorities and plans – both immediately through the Programme for Government and in the longer term.

This will include:

- Calling for a published action plan focused on tackling the corridor care crisis in Wales to provide assurance that protecting the safety and dignity of older people – who make up the majority of hospital patients and preventing harm – is a priority.
- Presenting the findings and recommendations from my research into older people's experiences of social care.
- Using evidence and data from recent research and reports published by my office, to call for action to tackle other key issues affecting older people – including poverty, home adaptations, dentistry and digital ageism.



INFLUENCING THE NEW WELSH GOVERNMENT

“Alongside responding to my calls for action, the Welsh Government must also show leadership through establishing effective partnerships and ways of working that will drive forward change and improvements at the pace required.”

ENABLING GREATER SCRUTINY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE SENEDD

The intake of an increased number of Senedd Members will offer opportunities for greater scrutiny and accountability, and I will work with MSs across all parties to enable this.

I will provide data, evidence and other key information to shape discussion and debate and ensure that responding to issues impacting on the lives of older people remains high on the political agenda in Wales.

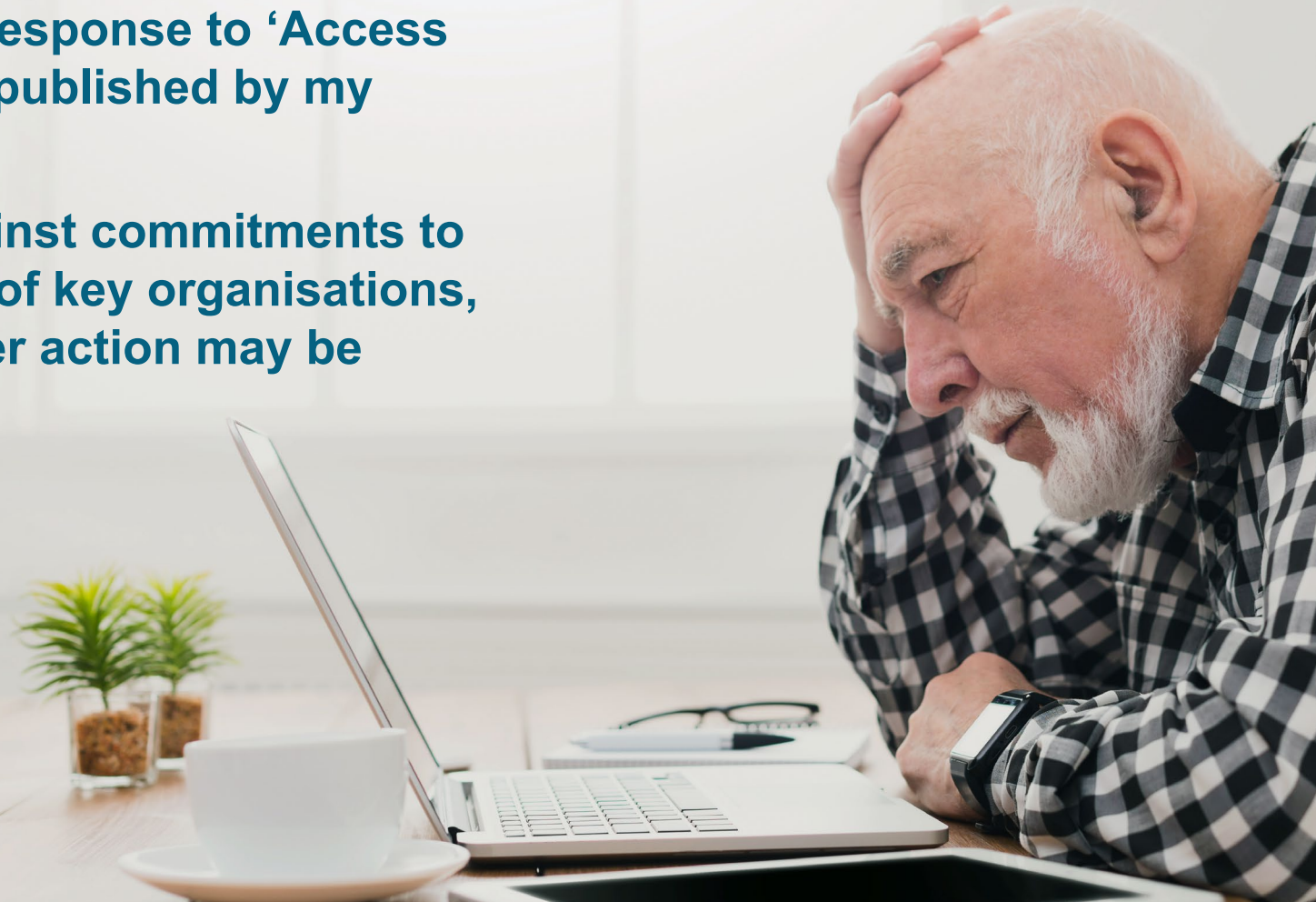


Influencing policy and practice across Wales and more widely

MAPPING PROGRESS ON TACKLING DIGITAL EXCLUSION

Working with Welsh public bodies more widely, I will publish a further update on action delivered in response to 'Access Denied', the report on digital exclusion published by my office in January 2024.

This will include mapping progress against commitments to deliver improvements made by a range of key organisations, as well as examining areas where further action may be required.



MAKING WALES AN AGE-FRIENDLY NATION

Making communities across Wales age-friendly is crucial to support older people to live and age well, and we have seen good progress in recent years – 67% of older people now live in local authorities that are members of the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities, recognising the action they are delivering or have planned to enable and support older people across key areas of their lives.

Building on this throughout 2026-27, I will continue to work with local authorities as they develop and deliver their plans to make communities across Wales more age-friendly. This will include supporting local authorities and their partners who are yet to join the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities to develop their age-friendly plans and applications.



MAKING WALES AN AGE-FRIENDLY NATION

I will also press the next Welsh Government to maintain investment in age-friendly infrastructure and activities across Wales. Investment to date has already made a positive impact, but there is potential to deliver even more, particularly with greater certainty around funding in the longer-term, something I will continue to call for.

In addition, there are significant opportunities to showcase the positive impact age-friendly practice is making here in Wales, and I will work with a wide range of partners – including internationally through the Global Network – to highlight examples of Wales leading the way in making communities age-friendly and encourage greater engagement and participation from individuals and organisations.



Growing knowledge and understanding across the public sector

Improving services, tackling ageism and protecting older people's rights

Older people's experiences of accessing and engaging with services that support their health and wellbeing, independence and quality of life are shaped by many factors that impact on the ways that services are both designed and delivered.

A key element of this is the knowledge and understanding of staff working at all levels across public bodies and services. This is crucial in terms of ensuring that older people's needs, as well as the issues and barriers they may face, are recognised and responded to effectively and that people's rights are upheld.

Similarly, older people's experiences can also be shaped by ageist assumptions or attitudes which are still highly prevalent – 1 in 2 people globally holds ageist views, according to the World Health Organization.

I will therefore provide a range of training opportunities and helpful resources designed to increase knowledge and understanding in key areas and support practical action to improve practice.

TAKING ACTION AGAINST AGEISM TRAINING MODULE

I will launch a new online training resource, open to all but targeted predominantly at public sector staff, which will help them to recognise and challenge ageism in its various forms. The training also aims to empower staff to take steps within their own organisations to ensure policy and practice is not unfairly discriminating against older people, whether directly or indirectly.

I will work with key public bodies and organisations to roll out the training as widely as possible to staff at all levels, which will be hosted on the Open University's OpenLearn platform to maximise accessibility.



UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF NEURODIVERGENT OLDER PEOPLE

While the needs of neurodivergent people are relatively poorly understood within society in general, there is growing evidence that older people who are neurodivergent often experience greater barriers in terms of diagnosis and support.

I will therefore bring together experts on neurodiversity, older people with lived experience and key staff working across the public sector for a webinar event to explore the issues neurodivergent older people are currently facing, as well as future challenges, and how we can respond to these effectively to ensure individuals are better supported.

Alongside this, I will also reach out more widely to public sector leaders and practitioners across Wales, sharing a summary report that includes the latest evidence and research on neurodivergent older people's experiences, as well as recommendations for action.



PREVENTING DIGITAL AGEISM

Age-based disadvantage, prejudice and stereotyping within digital contexts create barriers in many aspects of older people's lives, including accessing services, recruitment and employment, learning opportunities and even social activities.

Ultimately, digital ageism leaves older people at significant risk of wider exclusion, as highlighted in my recent report on this issue.

I will therefore be hosting a webinar event to grow further knowledge and understanding about this important emerging issue and inspire action to help ensure digital equality for people of all ages.

In addition to insightful contributions from a panel of expert speakers, delegates working across the public sector will have an opportunity to explore practical issues and solutions in more detail, and the ways we can work together to ensure that older people's rights to access services and information are upheld.



Ensuring older people's voices are heard

Translating evidence into action, driving change and improving outcomes

Older people frequently tell me they feel their voices go unheard because of their age, which can leave them feeling powerless and unable to influence the decisions affecting their lives or communities.

Some individuals, particularly those with protected characteristics, may also face additional barriers to making their voices heard, which means their needs, experiences and wishes can be rendered invisible to policy- and decision-makers.

As Commissioner, I have a key role to play in helping to ensure that all older people have an opportunity to make their voices heard, so that their experiences can be used to shape policy and practice and to ensure services and resources are targeted fairly and effectively.

ENGAGING WITH OLDER PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS WALES

Meeting and speaking with older people in community settings and spaces throughout Wales – including support groups, social clubs and other activities, extra care housing and care homes – will remain a key priority for me and my team during 2026-27.

This engagement enables me to hear directly from older people, providing valuable insights and critical evidence about the challenges and barriers affecting people's lives, the improvements people want to see – both locally and nationally – and good practice that is making a positive difference.

This not only guides and informs my own work but also allows me to share key information and intelligence with other public bodies alongside calls for action, change and improvements.

Last year, my team and I visited over 100 groups and events across Wales, meeting and speaking with over 4,000 older people.

And we'll continue to engage with older people across Wales throughout 2026-27 to ensure they have opportunities to make their voices heard.



Ensuring older people's voices are heard

LIVING IN RURAL WALES

Working collaboratively with partners, I will reach out to older people living in rural communities across Wales, capturing their lived experiences to learn more about the particular ways they are affected by key issues and the additional barriers they often face, relating to accessing services, transport, social isolation, and digital connectivity.

This work will provide helpful insights into people's experiences of growing older in rural Wales, enabling me to call for action to address any issues I identify, to ensure older people's needs are met and their rights are upheld.



SPOTLIGHTS ON LGBTQ+ VOICES

LGBTQ+ people will reflect on their own experiences, as well as those of their loved ones and chosen families, to explore the ways in which support and services could be more inclusive and how we can ensure no-one faces discrimination due to their sexual orientation as they grow older.

Senior leaders from LGBTQ+ groups and organisations will also examine how gaps between policy and practice are impacting the people they support, as well as exploring solutions to the issues they face.



PROVIDING ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO OLDER PEOPLE

Empowering older people, standing up for rights and improving experiences

Every year my Advice and Assistance Service provides help, support and information to hundreds of older people and their loved ones across Wales.

The team often deal with complex and/or sensitive issues, offering confidential advice and assistance on a wide range of matters to reach the best possible outcomes for older people and ensure their rights are upheld.

Feedback from older people is consistently positive and shows they really value the support they've received from the team. Many older people have also told me that they really value being able to speak to someone who takes them seriously and really listens to their concerns to understand an issue and identify potential solutions.

In addition to supporting individuals, the information and evidence captured from older people is invaluable in highlighting the challenges and barriers people are facing, as well as emerging issues that need to be addressed, helping to guide my work and calls for action.



PROVIDING ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO OLDER PEOPLE

I want to ensure that even more older people across Wales know about the help and support available from my office and throughout 2026-27 I will be working with community partners to promote my Advice and Assistance Service, particularly targeting areas from which the team currently receives the fewest calls. I will also work with newly elected Members of the Senedd to promote the service amongst their constituents.

My Advice and Assistance Team will engage with older people in their communities, attending a wide range of events and information days to provide face-to-face support and distribute useful information leaflets and other resources, alongside providing information in community spaces and working with local media to reach out to individuals who are not online.



MEASURING IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

As highlighted in my 2025-2028 Strategy, I will use a combination of methods to track the progress being made against the national outcomes set out at the beginning of this document, as well as the impact of my own work as Commissioner.

This will include examining available data, as well as older people's lived experiences. A key measure will be the extent to which policy and practice across Wales reflect the rights and needs of older people.

This includes scrutinising legislation, guidance, decisions and service delivery across areas including health, social care, transport and community-based services.

Part of this will include scrutinising the visibility and inclusion of older people's voices in policy- and decision-making to ensure there is meaningful co-production.

Hearing directly from older people will be at the heart of my approach to measuring impact and outcomes, through ongoing engagement across Wales, as well as special events, focus groups, surveys and consultations.

MEASURING IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Information captured through my Advice and Assistance Service will also provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by older people, their access to essential services, whether people's rights are being upheld and how supported they feel within their communities.

In addition, I will continue to undertake research on specific matters, examining older people's experiences, issues affecting their lives and the impact of action being delivered to identify potential gaps and areas where further work may be needed.

I will also capture information, evidence and intelligence from partners and stakeholders, particularly organisations with a good understanding of the situation 'on the ground', such as third sector organisations and service providers.

More widely, I will monitor attitudes towards older people and growing older within the media and across the discussion and debate that underpins public discourse.

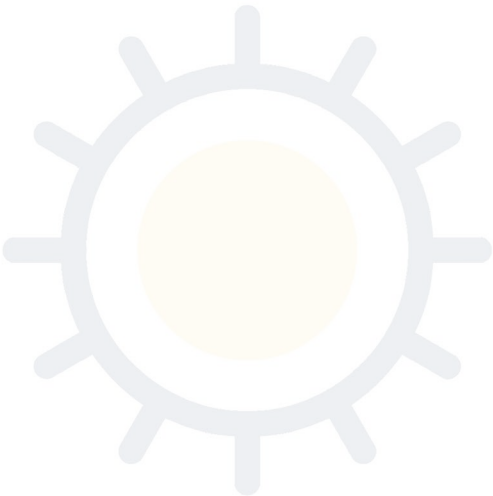
All of these approaches will help me to measure the impact of my work, and the extent to which Wales is empowering older people, tackling inequality and enabling everyone to live and age well.

TIMELINE OF KEY ACTION & DELIVERABLES



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- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December
- January
- February
- March



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Older People's Commissioner for Wales

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 wants Wales to lead the way in empowering older people, tackling inequality and enabling everyone to live and age well.

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