



COMMISSIONER'S NEWSLETTER

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales

September
2026

A MESSAGE FROM RHIAN

As we head towards the end of summer, I wanted to take some time to reflect on the range of action my team and I have taken forward over the past few months to deliver positive change for older people.

Most recently, I published the findings of my research into older people's experiences of social care, highlighting that the realities of care and support for many individuals seem to be falling short of the ambitions set out in policy and legislation.



In June, I also launched a new learning course designed to empower participants across Wales to recognise and challenge ageism, developed in partnership with the Open University in Wales, which hundreds of professionals and practitioners working across the public sector have already completed.

Following the recent Senedd election, I wasted no time in calling on the new First Minister to deliver urgent action to protect the rights, safety and well-being of older people across Wales, including action to end the 'corridor care' crisis in Welsh hospitals and greater support for individuals who are struggling financially.

I've also been focused on ensuring that the voices of older people living in rural areas are heard, launching my Rural Voices project in June. I'm inviting older people to get in touch to share their experiences so I can understand the best things about rural life, as well as the challenges and barriers people are facing. There's already been a great response with hundreds of postcard surveys already returned and below you can find out more about how you can get involved and have your say.

As always, please remember that 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.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer weather and manage to stay cool, and I look forward to updating you again in the Autumn.


Rhian

‘Fragmented’ social care system in Wales putting older people’s wellbeing, quality of life and independence at risk



Recent research undertaken by the Commissioner has revealed that the reality of many older people’s experiences of social care in Wales seems to be falling short of the ambitions set out in policy and legislation, impacting on people’s wellbeing, quality of life and independence in a number of ways.

The Commissioner’s briefing paper, published in July, highlights a ‘fragmented’ system often characterised by poor communication, delays and a lack of coordination, which leaves individuals and their loved ones facing significant responsibilities and pressures, often under very challenging circumstances.

The Commissioner’s findings are based on experiences shared by 268 individuals from across Wales, which include older people receiving social care, as well as family and friends who in many cases provide significant amounts of unpaid care and other support. Several individuals also took part in more detailed interviews, which provided opportunities to explore their responses and experiences further.

The Commissioner has shared her findings with key organisations with responsibilities for social care, including the Welsh Government, local authorities, health boards and Regional Partnership Boards. She wants to see decisive action across a number of key areas that would improve people’s experiences and the quality of care and support provided without the need for significant reform of social care, something that, while important in the long term, will take a considerable amount of time.

Discussing her findings and recommendations, the Commissioner said:

“My findings highlight that while many of the participants greatly value care and support staff, a number of common issues appear to be impacting on the wellbeing, quality of life and independence of older people receiving social care in Wales.

“These issues include information and communication gaps, which often result in delays and duplication, as well as the significant demands and financial pressures placed on unpaid carers and family members, some of whom described supporting their loved ones as a ‘continual battle’.

“I will continue to ensure that the voices of older people receiving social care are heard, alongside scrutinising the action and decisions taken in response to my findings, to drive positive change across Wales.”

To read the Commissioner’s briefing paper, please visit - <https://olderpeople.wales/resource/older-peoples-experiences-of-social-care-in-wales/>

Commissioner launches a new learning course to inspire action against ageism in Wales



In June, the Commissioner launched a new learning course designed to empower people to recognise and challenge ageism, which is still seen as acceptable despite the significant harm it causes.

The interactive course, developed in collaboration with the Open University in Wales, draws on a wide range of evidence and older people's lived experiences to help participants understand the scale of ageism and its impact – both on individuals and society more widely.

The course covers a number of key areas where ageism and age discrimination are common, including access to services, employment and recruitment, and within the media and advertising.

As well as growing knowledge and understanding, including about key legislation such as the Equality Act, the course also offers practical information about how to take action against ageism, together with links to other helpful resources and organisations that can provide information and support.

The course has already been completed by more than 400 individuals, and can be accessed for free by anyone who wants to learn more about the role they can play in tackling ageism and age discrimination.

Speaking about the launch of the course, the Commissioner said:

“Ageism underpins many of the issues faced by older people, and also means that growing older is often only viewed only in negative terms, presented as something to be feared and associated with decline and dependence.

“So I’m delighted to be launching this learning course to help provide participants with the practical information they need so they can recognise ageism and feel empowered to call it out or challenge it, which is a crucial part of making ageism unacceptable and bringing it to an end.”

“It is essential that ageism and the damage it causes is recognised and that we all play our part by standing up and speaking out against it, something my learning module will help to support.”

To complete the Commissioner’s Ageism and Age Discrimination course, please visit - <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/ageism-and-age-discrimination/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

Commissioner launches formal review into effectiveness of advocacy support in Wales



The Commissioner is undertaking a formal review into independent advocacy, examining whether current arrangements are effective in ensuring older people can make their voices heard.

The review has a particular focus on the use of advocacy where there may be concerns about safeguarding, as older people without a voice in these situations often find themselves especially vulnerable.

The Commissioner is gathering evidence and data from local authorities and health boards, as well as from the Welsh Government and Regional Safeguarding Boards, who all play a crucial role in the planning and delivery of independent advocacy support for older people.

The review is looking at a range of key areas relating to the availability and accessibility of independent advocacy support, including how this is commissioned, delivered and monitored, as well as consistency of practice, practitioner awareness, training, and governance arrangements.

Hundreds of pieces of evidence will be scrutinised as part of the review, forming the basis of a report due to be published in the New Year that will set out the Commissioner's findings.

Alongside her report, the Commissioner will publish a series of required actions, setting out the improvements needed and timescales for delivery, which the bodies subject to the review will have a duty to respond to.

The Commissioner said:

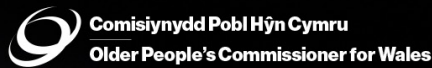
"Independent advocacy plays a crucial role in ensuring that older people's voices are heard in situations where they may be unable to speak up for themselves, particularly when an individual is vulnerable or where there are safeguarding concerns.

"That's why I am reviewing key areas that impact upon the availability and accessibility of advocacy support, to understand how effective current arrangements are in supporting older people across Wales."

"Given the importance of independent advocacy, I am undertaking this review using my statutory powers as Commissioner, which means public bodies have a duty to provide me with the evidence I require and respond to any recommendations I make alongside the publication of my findings.

"This will help to ensure that meaningful action is taken forward both locally and nationally to deliver the change and improvements needed so that older people can make themselves heard."

Spotlights on Ageism: Highlighting the impact of ageism on older people's everyday lives



Sylw i Oedraniaeth Spotlights on Ageism

In June, the Commissioner published Spotlights on Ageism, which brings together contributions from public service leaders and other experts to shine a light on the realities of ageism in Wales, increase awareness and inspire action.

The contributions covered a number of key areas where people may face exclusion or discrimination due to their age – including mental health services, transport and the built environment – drawing both on people's lived experiences and the latest research and evidence to highlight a number of common themes and issues.

The evidence captured through Spotlights on Ageism will strengthen the Commissioner's calls for action and recommendations for public bodies, as well as supporting her wider calls for a national conversation about ageism and its impact here in Wales, with the voices of older people at its heart.

This action will provide a strong platform for raising the profile of these issues, highlighting the injustice of ageism and age discrimination, and – ultimately – changing attitudes and behaviours.

Discussing her report, the Commissioner said:

"When I launched Spotlights on Ageism earlier this year, I wanted to shine a light on the realities of ageism for older people in Wales and the ways it manifests in people's everyday lives.

"The contributions shared paint a vivid picture of some of the challenges and barriers older people are facing and highlight a number of common themes and issues which provide helpful insights into the action required to tackle ageism and how this might be prioritised effectively.

"I'd like to thank everyone who contributed for sharing their extensive knowledge, expertise and insight, and for providing such impactful, thought-provoking pieces."

To read the Commissioner's Spotlights on Ageism report, please visit - <https://olderpeople.wales/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Spotlights-on-Ageism-Highlighting-the-impact-of-ageism-on-older-peoples-everyday-lives.pdf>

Have your say: Living in Rural Wales



If you're growing older in a rural area, the Commissioner wants to hear from you!

The Commissioner is inviting older people to get in touch to share their experiences of growing older in rural Wales.

Through her Rural Voices Project, the Commissioner wants to learn more about the challenges and barriers older people living in rural areas often face when trying to access services and support, and the ways this affects their lives.

The Commissioner wants older people to share their views about the best and most difficult things about living in a rural area, as well the changes that would have the biggest impact.

It's really easy to get in touch with the Commissioner:

- Visit the Commissioner's website to fill out a quick questionnaire - www.olderpeople.wales/rural-voices/
- Call 03442 640 670 if you'd like a paper version to complete, which can be returned via Freepost (or if you'd prefer to speak with a member of the Commissioner's team).

By sharing your experiences you can help to influence policy, support positive change and shape a better future for older people in rural Wales.

**DO YOU LIVE IN A RURAL AREA?
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

We want to hear from older people living in rural communities to understand the challenges you face and what needs to change.

Share your experiences and help shape a better future for older people in rural Wales.

GET IN TOUCH
Scan the QR code to complete the Commissioner's quick questionnaire:



Or call us on:
03442 640670

www.olderpeople.wales

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Your voice
Your experiences
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Forward

Health and
social care

Transport
mobility

Digital
media and
technology

Landmarks
and tourism

Housing and
living costs

Access to
information
and services

Skills,
learning and
community

Commissioner calls for urgent action from the new Welsh Government to protect the rights, safety and well-being of older people across Wales



The Commissioner has called on the new Welsh Government to deliver urgent action in a number of key areas to protect the rights, safety and well-being of older people across Wales.

Writing to the First Minister following the election, the Commissioner highlighted that while many older people in Wales have positive experiences and strong community support, significant challenges remain that require immediate attention from the Welsh Government, much of which is aligned to the commitments in the Government's 'First 100 Days' paper.

The Commissioner is therefore calling for the following as a matter of urgency:

- An action plan to end to so-called 'corridor care' (where treatment is provided in non-clinical environments) as this has a disproportionate impact on older people (as the main users of hospitals) and creates significant risks for patient safety and dignity.
- Greater support for older people who are struggling financially by establishing a new 'Resilience Fund' to provide assistance to older people who do not qualify for other forms of financial support.
- Further action to proactively identify and help older people to claim the financial support they are entitled to, which is worth over £3,900 a year on average.
- A review of the guidance available to public bodies and organisations to enable them to navigate a rapidly changing digital landscape and ensure the services they develop are accessible and inclusive, so older people are not excluded as a result of 'digital ageism'.

The Commissioner also emphasised the significant contribution older people make to Wales through work, volunteering and unpaid care, which is worth billions of pounds every year, calling for greater support to enable older workers to remain in or return to employment, which could boost the Welsh economy by a further £1bn.

The Commissioner said:

"There is still much to do to ensure older people can access the services and support they need to live and age well, and that their rights are protected and upheld. And while much of the change required to enable this will need to be delivered over the longer-term, it is my view that action must be prioritised in a number of key areas.

"That's why I'm calling on the First Minister to take urgent action to end the corridor care crisis, ensure older people can access cost of living support if they need it and to prevent exclusion in an increasingly digital world. I look forward to meeting with him soon to examine these issues and how to resolve them in more detail."

Meeting and speaking with older people across Wales

In addition to taking forward the range of action highlighted above, the Commissioner and her team continue to attend a variety of engagement events in communities across Wales to meet and speak directly with older people and learn more about their experiences of growing older.

These visits also enable the Commissioner to better understand the issues older people are facing and the changes that would help ensure they can live and age well. Engagement events also provide opportunities to share helpful information and resources, and offer advice and assistance on a range of matters.

Everyone we visited gave the Commissioner and her team a very warm welcome, and we thank everyone who spoke to us for sharing their experiences so openly and honestly, helping us to identify common and emerging issues which guide the Commissioner's work to influence policy and practice.

We've got lots more engagement planned, but if you'd like the Commissioner to visit your group, please get in touch on 03442 640 670 or email ask@olderpeople.wales.

Here is a snapshot of the engagement events attended over the past few months:

- Bethel House, Dementia Week Event, Gwynedd
- Llantwit Major Dementia Open Day Event, Vale of Glamorgan
- Dementia Friendly Barry, Vale of Glamorgan
- Forget Me Not Friday Group, Torfaen
- Coytrahen Tea and Comfort Group, Bridgend
- Age Without Limits Day Event in Bridgend, Bridgend
- Pontardawe Old Age Group, Neath Port Talbot
- Rainbow Foundation Art Group, Wrexham
- Community Wellbeing Event at Codi Housing Group, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Vale of Glamorgan Rural Pop-up Event, Vale of Glamorgan
- Ageing Well Swansea Celebration Event, Swansea
- Ageing Well Anglesey, Anglesey
- Anglesey Agricultural Show – Sioe Mon, Anglesey



Additionally, the summer months are filled with opportunities to promote the work of the Commissioner at national events, and hear directly from older people about what matters most to them.

This summer, the Commissioner's team attended the Royal Welsh Show, where they joined Transport for Wales on their information stand and spoke with older people about what it's like to live in rural areas of Wales. The team also attended the National Eisteddfod, joining Llais and the Farmers Union of Wales on their information stands, to hear directly from people about their experiences of growing older.

The Commissioner's team have also contributed to a wide range of stakeholder events and conferences across Wales and more widely during the past few months, to shape discussions and influence policy and practice, in many cases delivering speeches or presentations or taking part in Q&A sessions as part of an expert panel.

Want to find out more about our engagement with older people and stakeholders across Wales? Follow us on X / Facebook / LinkedIn or visit the Commissioner's Engagement Diary: <https://olderpeople.wales/engagement-diary/>

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.

LEAP study – LGBTQ+ Inclusive Home Provision for older people.

Are you an LGBTQ+ person aged 60+ with recent or current experience receiving home care?

The Centre for Adult Social Care Research (CARE) - working in partnership with the University of Kent - want to know more about the home care experiences of LGBTQ+ people who are 60 years and older, in order to better understand how prepared people working in home care are to support older LGBTQ+ people.



Many LGBTQ+ adults hold a lot of worries about having to receive social care support in later life, such as concerns about receiving hostile discriminatory treatment from care workers, having their care needs, identities and relationships disregarded or not receiving good quality care that is fully inclusive.

It is important to understand whether home care workers have the right skills, knowledge and confidence to support the LGBTQ+ population, so that they are able to provide inclusive and personalised care. To achieve this, the LEAP study is conducting a survey of people working in home care to gather their views and experiences with regards to supporting to older LGBTQ+ people. They will also be interviewing a number of survey respondents, to learn more about the views and opinions they expressed. Older LGBTQ+ people will also be interviewed about their experiences of receiving home care.

There are two ways for you to get involved with the project:

- Participate in an interview (in English or Welsh) – Lasting about 1 hour. Interview participants will receive a £20 high street store voucher.
- Write a letter – Write about what it's been like to have care workers in your home, whether you have shared your LGBTQ+ identity with them, or anything else. (Letters can be posted to Shannon O'Rourke The Registry, University of Kent Canterbury CT2 7NZ).

To get involved with the study, please visit: <https://research.kent.ac.uk/leap-study/thestudy/>

For more information or questions, contact: Shannon O'Rourke (Research Associate), by emailing s.orourke-11@kent.ac.uk, or calling 07907 878293.

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. You can also [unsubscribe here](#).

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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Email: ask@olderpeople.wales

Website: www.olderpeople.wales

X: @talkolderpeople

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