Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Strategic Equality Plan 2026-30

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people throughout Wales.

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

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Accessible formats

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

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Foreword

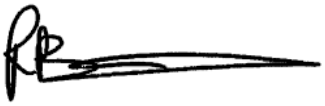


As Older People's Commissioner for Wales, my role is rooted in promoting and protecting the rights of older people and ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard and acted upon.

Equality and human rights are central to my role. Older people are not a single, homogeneous group: our experiences of ageing are shaped by many factors, including age, disability, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, the Welsh language, socio-economic circumstances, where we live, and other aspects of identity and lived experience.

My Strategic Equality Plan sets out how I will use my statutory functions, influence, services and role as an employer to help reduce inequality and advance the rights of older people in all their diversity. It connects our equality objectives with my wider strategy and explains the outcomes and evidence we will use to understand whether we are making a meaningful difference.

The Plan is focused and proportionate to my remit and the resources available to my office. But it is also clear about my expectations: equality must inform every decision, project, service and working relationship. We will continue to listen to older people, act on evidence, work constructively with others and be open about our progress, the challenges we face and the areas where more needs to be done.



Rhian Bowen-Davies
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

About the Commissioner

The role of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales is to protect and promote the rights of older people aged 60 and over throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives.

The Commissioner provides help and support directly to older people through the Advice and Assistance service and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon.

The Commissioner's remit is set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2026, which established the role.

The Commissioner's statutory remit is to:

- Promote awareness of the interests of older people in Wales and of the need to safeguard those interests
- Promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older people in Wales
- Encourage best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales
- Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law affecting the interests of older people in Wales

Values and Behaviours

Our organisational values describe the culture we want to build and the change we want to lead. They have been shaped by who we are and what we believe in.

They provide a foundation that guides how we work together and with others on behalf of older people, supporting us to act with integrity, compassion and purpose.

Our values:

- **Bold and Ambitious**
- **Adaptable and Responsive**
- **Fair and Inclusive**
- **Person-centred and Respectful**
- **Open and Accountable**



Our legal and policy framework

The Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires public authorities, when exercising their functions, to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The general duty covers the following protected characteristic:

- Age
- Sex
- Race – including ethnic of national origin, colour of nationality
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion of belief – including lack of belief
- Marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination in employment)

Welsh specific equality duties

The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 required listed bodies to set and review equality objectives; prepare and review a Strategic Plan; engage with people who represent protected groups; use relevant equality information; assess impact; collect and publish employment information; consider equality in procurement; provide training; and report on progress.

Equality in context

Population

The latest estimates show that there are 908,728 people over the age of 60 living in Wales, a figure projected to rise to 993,000 by 2030. The current estimate is that there are 331,023 people over the age of 75, 179,635 over 80 and 86,057 over 85. The number of over 75s in Wales is projected to rise to 361,000 (11.2% of the population) in 2026 and to 384,000 (11.8% of the population) by 2031.

Sex

Across the older population, 53% are women and 47% men. Between the ages of 60-69, the split is almost equal (51% and 49%) but this changes for older groups. The 85-89 and 90+ age groups are comprised on 59% and 67% women respectively.

Ethnicity

There is currently little ethnic diversity in the older population, with 97.8% of older people identifying as White British, However, projections indication this will change over time: 98.8% of over 75s identify as White British, compared with 97.2% of 60-74 year olds.

Sexual Orientation

87.8% of over 65s identified as heterosexual in the 2021 census. 0.5% of over 65s as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other, and 11.7% chose not to answer. People aged 75+ were less likely to identify as LGB+ than 65-74s (o.2% v 0.7%), and were less likely to answer the question (14.9% v 8.9%).

Gender identification

In the 2021 Census, 1,276 people aged over 65 in Wales identified as a gender different from sex registered at birth.

Welsh language

In the 2021 Census, 116,788 people over the age of 60 can speak Welsh. This is equal is 13.6%. 28% of fluent Welsh speakers aged over 65 – an estimated 21,00 older people, feel more comfortable speaking Welsh than English.

Neurodivergence

There are no statistics that break down how many older people are neurodiverse in Wales. Based on global estimates of prevalence, between 15% and 20% of older people in Wales (174,00 people) could be neurodiverse.

How we developed the plan

The Commissioner's Equality Objectives for 2026-30 builds on the work undertaken in previous years and the commitment to advancing the rights of an increasingly diverse group of older people.

To ensure that equality is embedded throughout the Commissioner's work, the Equality Objectives closely reflect the organisation's vision and values, and the strategic objectives of the organisation.

Engagement with older people in Wales plays a key role in shaping the Commissioner's work and priorities. In March 2025, the Commissioner's 'Have Your Say' consultation received over 400 responses, with focus group sessions held with older unpaid carers, people living with dementia, and the Windrush Elders.

During 2025-26, the Commissioner and the team visited 114 groups across Wales, enabling us to engage with over 4,000 older people from a variety of backgrounds and communities. This engagement included visits to social and activity groups and clubs, support groups (such as those for carers and people living with dementia), extra care housing schemes and care homes. We also met with older people's forums across Wales, as well as other groups such as the Women's Institute, Men's Sheds, and Merched y Wawr.

The Commissioner holds regular meetings with the Chairs of national older people's organisations – Active Wales, Cymru Older People's Alliance, National Pensioners Convention – to examine key issues, hear about the experiences of their members and share key information and updates.

The Commissioner and team engage with a wide range of stakeholder organisations throughout Wales, the UK and more widely to influence policy and practice, highlight issues being raised by older people and share information, intelligence and evidence. This helps to ensure older people's experiences are heard, understood and responded to.

There has been regular engagement with key public bodies and organisations such as the Welsh Government, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Public Health Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Social Care Wales, the Welsh NHS Confederation and the Welsh Local Government Association.

The following steps were taken:

- A review of the previous Strategic Equality Plan and annual equality monitoring reports
- A review of census data from the Office for National Statistics
- Learning from our own work undertaken and reports produced; such as 'Growing older in Wales: Perspectives from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic older people'
- Engagement with older people
- Engagement with stakeholders
- Consultation with the organisation

Our approach

Rights-based

We will advocate that older people have rights and that public bodies have a duty to uphold them. We will use human rights principles in our work.

Intersectional

We will consider how age combines with other characteristics and circumstances, rather than treating each issue in isolation.

Accessible by design

We will plan accessibility from the outset, offer meaningful alternatives and not create digital exclusions.

Evidence led

We will combine data, Advice and Assistance intelligence, research and lived experience.

Collaborative

We will work with older people, representative organisations and public services, while retaining our independence.

Proportionate

We will match activity to our remit and resources.

Equality Objectives

Objective 1: Increase accessibility, inclusion and influence

Intended outcome

Older people in all their diversity understand the Commissioner's role, can access the Commissioner's information, and can influence work priorities.

Priority actions

- Increase awareness and reach among older people and communities less likely to know about or engage with the Commissioner
- Identify and use effective communication channels for different audiences
- Maintain and develop accessible, bilingual information, including formats beyond the standard offer where evidence shows a need
- Provide a range of inclusive ways for older people to share lived experience and knowledge
- Review the diversity and geographic reach of engagement

How we will know we are making progress

- Reach through targeted channels and partnerships
- Availability and use of accessible formats
- Diversity and geographic spread of engagement
- Examples showing how lived experience changed priorities, recommendations or practice
- Feedback from older people

Objective 2: Increase the reach and impact of advice and assistance

Intended outcome

More older people are aware of and able to use the Advice and Assistance Service, and learning from enquiries strengthens the Commissioner's wider evidence and influence.

Priority actions

- Increase awareness of the service among older people, families, advocates and professionals throughout Wales
- Work with statutory and third sector partners to reach communities and groups less well represented among enquirers
- Improve equality data capture and explain clearly why information is requested, how it will be used and that disclosure if voluntary
- Analyse information to identify barriers, recurring issues and possible inequalities in access, experience and outcomes

- Redesign and implement systems and processes that improve data quality and operational efficiency
- Use information gathered to inform wider influencing and policy work

How will we know we are making progress

- Referral and awareness routes
- Enquirer profile and disclosure rates
- Themes and equality issues identified through enquiries
- Process and capacity improvements

Objective 3: Promote equality of opportunity for all

Intended outcome

Public bodies recognise and address age related inequality

Priority actions

- Maintain organisational understanding of equality, human rights, anti-racism, disability inclusion, and intersectionality through continuous learning.
- Strengthen proportionate equality impact assessment through development of work areas
- Promote the Commissioner's ageism e-learning resources across public services and monitor uptake and completion
- Use evidence and influence to reduce inequalities in older people's access, experience and outcomes

How we will know we are making progress

- Completion and evaluation of relevant learning
- Quality and timelines of equality impact assessments
- Use and reach of ageism learning module
- Examples of policy and practice change influenced by the Commissioner

Objective 4: Promote and support diversity and inclusion in our workforce

Intended outcome

All staff feel supported, valued, treated fairly and are able to contribute fully. Our employment practices are inclusive, transparent and informed by evidence.

Priority actions

- Keep under review effectiveness of all HR policies and procedures

- Review recruitment and selection practices to identify and remove unnecessary barriers and widen reach
- Monitor and publish required workforce and gender pay information
- Use staff feedback and the annual people survey to identify priorities and monitor culture
- Continue to support an agile way of working that meets organisational needs and recognises different circumstances
- Maintain accessible routes for staff to raise concerns, seek support and contribute ideas
- Ensure fair access to learning and development opportunities

How we will know we are making progress

- Staff survey findings and evidence of resulting action
- Diversity monitoring from recruitment processes shows a diverse range of applicants
- Effectiveness of workplace adjustments
- Staff positively engage in the annual people survey
- Learning and development is promoted and requests are agreed

Delivery, governance and accountability

Delivering on the Equality Objectives requires a whole team approach. All members of staff will therefore contribute towards achieving the objectives.

Whilst recognising this broad accountability within the organisation, the progress against the Commissioner's Equality Objectives and on the identified actions will be formally monitored by the Chief Operating Officer.

Measuring progress and reporting

We will publish an annual equality report describing progress, evidence, and workforce information, which will combine qualitative and quantitative evidence.

This will be published on the Commissioner's website, be available in alternative formats and be made available on request.

Appendix 1: Workforce profile data

As required by the Equality Act 2010, the Commissioner will continue to collect data in the profile of her workforce in relation to the areas listed below.

Headcount information

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of people employed by the authority on 31 March each year by protected characteristic:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour of nationality
- Religion or belief – including lack of belied
- Marriage and civil partnership

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of men and women employed, broken down by the following categories:

- Job
- Pay and Grade
- Contract Type
- Working Pattern

Recruitment

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of people who have applied for jobs within the organisation over the last year.

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of employees who have applied to change position withing the authority, identifying how may were successful in their application and how many were not.

Learning and Development

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of employees who have applied for training and how many succeeded in their application.

A listed not in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of employees who completed the training.

Grievance Procedures

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of employees involved in grievance procedures either as a complainant or as a person against whom a complaint was made.

Disciplinary Procedures

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of employees subject to disciplinary procedures.

Leavers

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of employees who have left an authority's employment.

Gender Pay Gap

A listed body in Wales must collect and publish on an annual basis data on the gender pay differences.