



Older People's Commissioner for Wales  
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

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# Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

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An update from the  
Older People's Commissioner  
for Wales

Summer 2018

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Appointed

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# New Older People's Commissioner for Wales taking up post in August

**Following six years of working tirelessly to improve the lives of older people across Wales, Sarah Rochira's term as Older People's Commissioner for Wales has now come to an end.**

As a result of Sarah's work since 2012, there have been significant shifts in policy, legislation, regulations and practice, with a much greater focus on quality of life, wellbeing and delivering person-centred care.

As Commissioner, Sarah published many hard-hitting reports, which covered a wide range of issues - such as quality of life in care homes, access to GP services, protecting community services, the experiences of people affected by dementia and access to advocacy - and made clear the change that public bodies in Wales needed to deliver on behalf of older people. Our work since 2012 is captured in our Legacy report, which was published in May and is available here: <https://bit.ly/2KayKOE>.

Deputy Commissioner, Kelly Davies, said: "We would like to thank Sarah for everything she has done on behalf of older people as Commissioner during the past six years to change policy and practice, hold public bodies to account and ensure that the huge contribution that older people make to our lives in so many ways is recognised.

"Sarah's hard work has made a real and meaningful difference to the lives of older people across Wales and we wish her all the very best for the future."

New Commissioner Heléna Herklots, who is currently Chief Executive of Carers UK, will be taking up post at the end of August.

Speaking about Heléna's appointment, Kelly Davies said: We welcome the announcement that Heléna Herklots will be the next Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

"Having spent her career working to improve the lives of older people and carers across the UK, Heléna brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience, along with a fresh perspective on how the issues that affect the lives of older people in Wales can and should be addressed.

"We look forward to working with Heléna to continue to drive change for older people across Wales to ensure that they can live healthy, happy and independent lives and access the services and support they need as they grow older."

**In the meantime, we're continuing our work to make Wales a good place to grow older for everyone, so read on and find out more about our work over the past few months.**

# Commissioner strongly welcomes appointment of Minister for Older People

**In May, we strongly welcomed the announcement from the First Minister that Wales will have a Minister for Older People for the first time in 15 years, something that will raise the profile of older people's issues significantly within the Welsh Government.**

Alongside the First Minister's announcement, the Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies AM, also announced that the Welsh Government would be taking action in a number of areas to protect and promote older people's rights, in response to calls made by the Commissioner.

Welcoming the announcement, the Commissioner said: "I am absolutely delighted that, for the first time in over a decade, older people will be formally recognised within a Ministerial portfolio, which will raise the profile of the issues that affect their lives significantly within Welsh Government.

"I also strongly welcome the Minister's announcement that a range of action will now be taken by the Welsh Government in response to my calls to protect and promote older people's rights in Wales."

The Minister announced that action would be taken to enhance the use of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons across public services in Wales, alongside action looking at how to improve safeguarding, advocacy and the way in which services for older people are commissioned.

The Commissioner added: "I am hugely proud of what my team and I have achieved on behalf of older people during the past six years, but there is still much more to be done. The Welsh Government's announcements are therefore a significant step forward.

"The announcements will also mean a huge amount to older people across Wales and demonstrates a real commitment from the Welsh Government to take action to improve older people's lives and make Wales a good place to grow older – not just for some, but for everyone."



**The announcement was made at the launch of the Commissioner's 2017-18 Impact and Reach Report**

# Care Home Review follow-up

In January, the Commissioner published 'A Place to Call Home: Impact and Analysis', the findings of a programme of follow-up work undertaken during 2017 to assess whether public bodies have delivered upon the commitments they made when the Commissioner published the findings of her Care Home Review in 2014, which showed that too many older people living in care homes in Wales have an unacceptable quality of life.

The report showed that while some positive progress has been made, with a wide range of activity now underway, more work is still needed to provide assurance that the change required to improve the quality of life of older people living in care homes will be delivered.

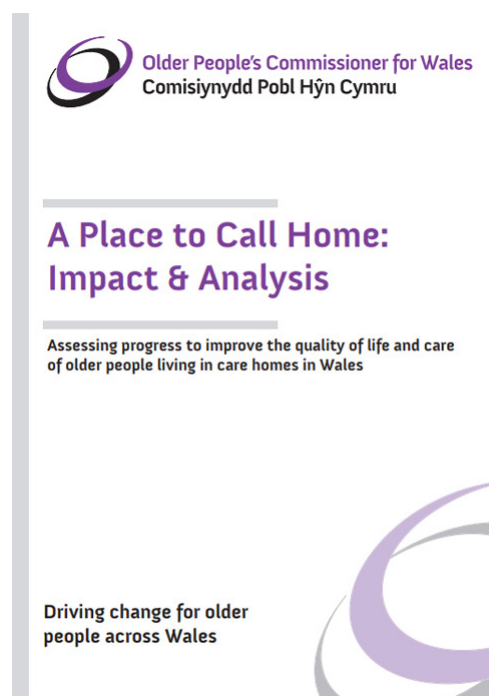
The Commissioner focused on 15 of the areas of concern identified by her Care Home Review – including falls prevention, the use of anti-psychotic medication, dementia training, inspection processes and workforce planning – areas that have fallen outside of legislative developments or relate to ongoing issues that have been shared with her casework team. Public bodies submitted written evidence setting out the progress made against the Requirements for Action set out in the Commissioner's Care Home Review, which were analysed by the Commissioner and her team.

The Commissioner has provided detailed feedback to all of the bodies subject to this follow-up work and now expects further action, with oversight at board level, to improve the quality of life for older people in the key areas highlighted in her follow-up report.

Commenting on the report, the Commissioner said: "There must be a renewed focus from the Welsh Government, Health Boards and Local Authorities on taking meaningful action to deliver upon the commitments they made in response to my Care Home Review.

"A failure to do so will mean that our care home system is unable to meet the changing care and support needs of older people and, more importantly, will mean that too many older people living in care homes continue to have an unacceptable quality of life."

To read 'A Place to Call Home: Impact and Analysis', visit <https://bit.ly/2yiP0s8>





# Rethinking Respite for People Affected by Dementia

**The Commissioner has called for a fundamental change in the way that respite services in Wales are thought about and delivered, following the publication of a new report highlighting the respite experiences of people affected by dementia.**

The Commissioner's Rethinking Respite report, published in April, makes clear that traditional respite services often lack the flexibility that people affected by dementia want and need, and often do not deliver positive outcomes. In the worst cases, respite services that do not meet people's needs have a negative impact upon their health and well-being, and can strip them of their independence.

The report also shows, however, that flexible and person-centred respite brings a range of benefits to carers and people living with dementia, and that innovative approaches can often deliver better outcomes whilst offering better value for money.

The report's findings are based on academic research and evidence gathered during a series of engagement sessions held across Wales with people affected by dementia, who shared their experiences of using respite services and gave their views on how respite services should be improved.

Discussing the report, the Commissioner said: "Whilst my report did identify a number of examples of good practice in delivering respite, too often it is focused on separation, on providing a 'break from the burden of care'.

"But these traditional approaches often fail to meet people's needs effectively, which is why we need to see a fundamental shift in thinking about the ways in which respite is delivered.

"Respite services need to be easy to access, flexible and responsive, and should support people affected by dementia to maintain relationships, remain independent and engaged with their communities, and retain and develop new skills."

The report sets out a range of action that is needed to improve respite, and the Commissioner has begun discussions with key organisations – including Social Care Wales and the Carers Learning and Improvement Network – to explore how the issues she has identified will be addressed. The Welsh Government has also made a commitment to use the findings of the Rethinking Respite report to inform the development of action that will be delivered under the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022 and the Commissioner will work with the Cabinet Secretary to ensure this commitment is taken forward in a meaningful way.

**To read 'Rethinking Respite for People Affected by Dementia', visit:**  
**<https://bit.ly/2yhBCUW>**

# Making Voices Heard: Older People's Access to Independent Advocacy in Wales

In May, the Commissioner published her 'Making Voices Heard: Older People's Access to Independent Advocacy' report, based on extensive evidence gathered across Wales from older people and carers who have been supported by independent advocates, advocacy providers, those commissioning services and stakeholders working with and for older people.

The report found that older people across Wales are often unable to access advocacy services, which play a vital role in helping people to make their voices heard and ensuring that their rights are upheld.

The report also found that people's legal rights to advocacy in certain circumstances are not always understood by health and social care professionals and that shortcomings in current legislation and the way in which it is applied can prevent people from fully participating when decisions are being made about their lives.

Commenting on her findings, the Commissioner said: "Ensuring that older people have a strong voice so they can participate in and guide decisions being made about their lives in a meaningful way is key to delivering high quality services and the outcomes that people want and need.

"For some older people, the only way to achieve this will be with the support of an independent advocate who can represent their views and speak out on their behalf.

"But as my report shows, older people are often unaware that this kind of support is available and are often unable to access it, even in cases when they have a legal right to it, which is simply not acceptable."

The Commissioner is calling on the Welsh Government, Local Authorities and Health Boards to take a range of action to address the barriers older people often face in accessing independent advocacy, including raising awareness about advocacy amongst older people; making an 'active offer' of advocacy to older people living in care homes and those being discharged from hospital, who may be vulnerable; workforce training; and improved planning and data collection to identify and address potential gaps in advocacy provision.

To read 'Making Voices Heard: Older People's Access to Independent Advocacy in Wales', visit <https://bit.ly/2G5ER0r>



# Public Services Boards: Critique of Local Well-being Plans

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory Public Services Boards (PSBs), made up of members including the Local Authority, Health Board, the Fire and Rescue Authority and others.

PSBs are tasked with improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas, and to work together to improve the quality of life of people of all ages, wherever they live.

In May, PSBs published their Local Well-being Plans, outlining their well-being objectives and priorities over the next five years.

The Commissioner's office is now in the process of undertaking a critique of these plans from the perspective of older people, looking at whether the needs and circumstances of older people are understood and reflected in the plans, with our findings due to be published in late July.

## Mental Capacity: An Easy Guide

In June, the Commissioner published a new information booklet, 'Mental Capacity: An Easy Guide', which has been designed to provide a greater understanding of what is meant by 'Mental Capacity', a term often used within health and social care services.

There is often confusion about what the term mental capacity means, and the ways in which it can influence decision-making and the approach that is taken by professionals.

The leaflet provides information on a wide range of topics, including what can cause a person to lack capacity, fluctuating capacity, how capacity is tested, 'best interest' decisions, and lasting and enduring powers of attorney.

The leaflet was welcomed by Baroness Illora Finlay, Chair of the National (UK) Mental Capacity Forum, and will also be used by police forces across the UK as part of their online training resources hub.

To download a copy of the booklet, visit <https://bit.ly/2l40vTF>, or call 03442 640 670 to request a hard copy.



### Mental Capacity

An Easy Guide



# Ageing Well Card Scheme

The Ageing Well Card scheme will shortly be launched throughout Wales. The card has been designed as part of our work to make Wales a nation of age-friendly communities and supports older people to maintain their independence and continue to do the things that matter to them.

The cards include simple messages that can be used to let people know that you might need a little help or support and are provided in an easily-recognisable travelcard wallet.



Ageing Well Cards are designed to be used in a variety of situations and places. They can be particularly useful in shops, cafés, restaurants, banks, pharmacies, and on public transport, where you can use them to let people know that you would like a little additional help or support. We are working with organisations across Wales to make sure the cards are widely recognised.

If you'd like to have a set of cards sent to you, or if your organisation is interested in supporting the scheme, please contact the Ageing Well in Wales team on 029 2044 5030, or email [ask@olderpeoplewales.com](mailto:ask@olderpeoplewales.com).

## Commissioner welcomes Committee report on antipsychotic medication

In May, the Commissioner strongly welcomed the report published by the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on the use of antipsychotic medication in care homes, an issue that highlighted as part of our 2014 Review into the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes in Wales.

Discussing the report, the Commissioner said: "Whilst it can be appropriate to use antipsychotic medication in some cases, the inappropriate use of these powerful drugs can have a devastating impact on older people and is quite simply unacceptable.

"The report reflects and builds upon the findings of my Care Home Review, making clear that a wide range of action is needed to ensure that antipsychotic medication is not prescribed inappropriately to some of our most vulnerable older people.

"I expect, as will older people and their families across Wales, a positive response from the Welsh Government and a commitment to take meaningful action in response to the Committee's recommendations to address the issues identified within the report."

For more information on the Committee's Inquiry, or to read the report, visit: <https://bit.ly/2qtaXwE>



# Spotlight on... Wales Audit Office Review of Social Services for adults

**Find out more about how you can support Wales Audit Office's Review of Social Services for adults.**

## Wales Audit Office Review of Social Services for adults

The Wales Audit Office supports the Auditor General as the public sector watchdog for Wales. Our aim is to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes.

The Auditor General is looking at the work of social services in Wales and how they are meeting the needs of people who may need help and support. The findings of this study will be summarised in a national report that will cover how local authorities provide services in Wales and will identify how services need to be improved to help people.

As part of this review we are keen to speak to carers who have contacted their local authority for help and support and third sector organisations who work with and help people access social services in Wales.

### How you can help

**Carers** - If you are a carer who receives help or support organised by a local authority then the Wales Audit Office would be keen to hear from you on your experience. We want to know your views about local authority social services and how your needs have been assessed and are being met. We would be very grateful if you could contribute to this review by agreeing to participate in a short telephone survey. The telephone interview will take only 15 minutes to complete.

**Third Sector Organisations** - We recognise that third sector organisations play an important role in helping people access the social services they need. Given the key role of the third sector we are keen to find out from organisations on their experience of working with local authority social services and effectiveness of client and carer assessment processes. We would be very grateful if could contribute to this review by completing a brief on-line survey. We estimate this will take no more than 20 minutes to complete.



## What we do with the information you provide to us

Your views will be useful in identifying specific issues that we can investigate in our work.

In all our work we do not name any individual directly and your response will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

We will not attribute responses to any individual in our reports.

## What you need to do next

If you are prepared to help us with our review then we would be grateful if you could contact the study team to register your interest.

You can register your interest to participate in this review by contacting us in Welsh or English by either:

- e-mailing [council.studies@audit.wales](mailto:council.studies@audit.wales); or
- calling us on 02920 320 500

We will simply log some information and add you to our survey list and you will be contacted in the near future to complete the telephone or on line survey. By registering your interest to participate in this review you are agreeing to provide information that will help inform this study. Thanks for your help...

# Engagement Highlights

## Newport Deafblind Group

**In January, we visited the Newport Deafblind Group, run by Deafblind Cymru, which meets on the second Monday of the month at the Salvation Army Citadel on Hill Street in Newport.**



The group provides opportunities for people to get out and about and have fun with friends. Groups are open to anyone with a combined hearing and sight loss, their family, carers and support workers. Members support each other through sharing information and their experiences, and are able to find out more about the community and how to access services and activities.

**For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2tIXDw9> or call 0800 132 320.**

## Kidwelly Lunch Club

In February, we visited the Kidwelly Lunch Club, which is held at the Princess Gwenllian Centre on the last Thursday of every month, with free transport available.

As well as providing those who attend with a hot, tasty meal, guest speakers and entertainers are often invited along. The club also promotes social inclusion and works to tackle loneliness and isolation, as well as connecting members to other activities that happen at the Centre.



**For more information, contact the Princess Gwenllian Centre on 01554 891801.**

## Senior Health Shop, Barry

**In May, we visited the Senior Health Shop in Barry, a drop-in centre for older people run by Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale.**

As well as providing a cafe and a place to socialise and take part in regular activities, older people can access information and advice, including legal advice, check whether they are eligible to claim entitlements and get help with issues such as tax and housing.

This quote highlights what a great community resource the Senior Health Shop is for older people: “I’ve been visiting the centre for the past few years and can’t put in words the level of service, assistance and social activity that happens here. The staff are always welcoming and looking for ways to help. The community spirit of Barry is alive and well at the café. It’s always a pleasure visiting.”



**For more information about the Senior Health Shop, visit <https://bit.ly/2JVYwa4> or contact Nona Hexter on 01446 732385.**

# Our Newsletter

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

If you have received this newsletter via a third party and would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us (details below). We can also provide hard copies of the newsletter or a large print version on request.

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 and her team work to ensure that older people have a voice that is heard, that they have choice and control, that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against and that they receive the support and services that they need.

The Commissioner and her team work to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

## How to contact the Commissioner:

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