



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Making Wales the best place in the world to grow older

Strategy 2019-22

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

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales protects and promotes the rights of older people throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives. She provides help and support directly to older people through her casework team and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon. The Commissioner's role is underpinned by a set of unique legal powers to support her in reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The Commissioner is taking action to end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

The Commissioner wants Wales to be the best place in the world to grow older.

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Introduction

It is an honour to be the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, a post that I took up in August 2018. For over 30 years I have been working with older people, seeking to improve the experience of ageing and being an older person, and like most of us I also have experience of knowing and caring about older people in my own family and amongst my friends.

Growing older and living in an ageing society is something most of us will experience and improving this experience benefits us all.

Wales has much to be proud of in terms of its work to improve the lives of older people, and growing older has been a positive experience for many of the people I have met and spoken with since I took up post, offering them a wide range of new opportunities.

But this is not the case for everyone, particularly those who are most vulnerable, and much more needs to be done so that all older people can have the best possible quality of life, remain active and engaged, access the services and support they may need, and do the things that matter to them.

In 2006 Wales led the world by bringing in legislation to establish an independent Older People's Commissioner with a range of unique legal powers. We have the opportunity to lead the way again and in this strategy I set out the priorities that need to be taken forward to make this happen, as well as the part that I will play in making Wales the best place in the world to grow older.



Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

“A society that does not value its older people denies its roots and endangers its future.”

Nelson Mandela

My role as Commissioner

The role of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales is to protect and promote the rights of older people and is underpinned by legal powers to review and scrutinise public bodies and support older people.

As set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006, which established the role, the Commissioner's 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

Supported by a small team, I scrutinise and influence a wide range of policy, legislation, guidance and regulations, to help to ensure that policy and decision makers, at both a national and a local level, understand older people's needs and the importance of upholding their rights. Alongside this, I engage with and monitor the work of public bodies, holding them to account where necessary, and highlight and promote good practice that is making a positive difference to older people's lives.

I also provide a casework service, providing help, advice and support on a wide range of matters to hundreds of older people every year, helping them to understand and exercise their legal rights, and challenge poor practice and decision making. The support provided by my casework team provides useful insights into the challenges being faced by older people, helping to guide and shape my work and identify the issues that I need to work on or raise with others.

Engagement with older people is another key part of my work, and my team and I regularly meet and speak with older people throughout Wales to hear directly from them about their experiences and concerns, and see the wide range of projects and initiatives that are providing essential services and support within our communities. Throughout my term as Commissioner, I will continue to engage and have day-to-day contact with a diverse range of older people and ensure that their voices, experiences and ideas inform and guide my work.

Older People in Wales

We are an ageing society, with 877,000 people aged over 60 in Wales, just under 30% of the population. This is set to increase to over 1 million by 2030, and the number of people over the age of 85 is expected to grow significantly in the years ahead, more than doubling by 2040.

Older people are vital members of our families and communities, making a huge contribution to Wales – through working, volunteering and unpaid caring – worth over £2bn to the economy every year.

There are, however, significant inequalities between individuals and communities throughout Wales, as demonstrated by increasing levels of poverty amongst older people and the fact that gaps in healthy life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas of Wales vary by as much as 18 and 19 years for women and men respectively.

Furthermore, I hear from older people that they feel that their voices are not always heard or listened to when decisions are being made that affect their lives, and that the services available to support them as they grow older often do not always reflect their needs or the increasing diversity of older people in Wales.

**There are significant
inequalities between
individuals and
communities
throughout Wales**

Older People in Wales

Facts and stats



877,000

Number of people aged over 60 in Wales
// just under 30 percent of the population



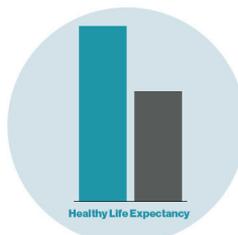
Set to reach over
1 million

by 2030
// Number of people aged over 85
expected to double by 2040



80.15 years

Average life expectancy in Wales
// 82.2 for women, 78.1 for men



Up to
19 years

Gap in healthy life expectancy
between the least and most
deprived areas of Wales



£2.19bn

Value of the contribution made by older
people to the Welsh economy every year
// Up from £1bn in 2012



20%

Of older people in Wales live in
relative income poverty
// £170m of pension credit went
unclaimed in 2016-17



74%

Of older people feel positive about
growing older in Wales



34%

Of older people do not
understand their legal rights

My vision

I want Wales to be the best place in the world to grow older.

This means celebrating the fact that we are an ageing society and ensuring that we are all able to enjoy the opportunities it brings. It means being equipped to meet the challenges we may face as we grow older and ensuring that older people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, can access the support and services they need.

It means welcoming and promoting innovation and good practice to inspire action, whilst holding people to account when necessary.

And it means empowering older people by ensuring they understand their legal rights and how they can exercise them to make their voices heard and challenge poor practice.

I want Wales to be the best place in the world to grow older

Achieving my vision

It is right that we have an ambitious vision to work towards. It means we not only focus on making things better and dealing with the difficulties that older people can experience, but also fundamentally changing the experience of growing older for all of us, dealing with the root causes of the problems we may encounter as we get older and working across society to deliver change.

Achieving the vision will not be easy as many of the issues faced by older people are entrenched and have persisted for many years. We must therefore work together to deliver the required change.

As Commissioner, I am committed to working with others – older people, government, public bodies, other Commissioners, voluntary and third sector organisations, researchers, and businesses – to improve the lives of older people throughout Wales. This will include using evidence of what works, or developing it where it doesn't exist; sharing and celebrating learning and good practice, both within Wales and internationally; and identifying and using the full range of levers for change, including my own legal powers.

By working together we have the opportunity to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older.

Developing my priorities

When I took up post in August 2018, my team and I began an extensive programme of engagement with older people throughout Wales – visiting 82 groups and engaging with over 3,000 people – to hear about their experiences of growing older, both positive and negative, and the changes they would like to see that would make Wales the best place in the world to grow older.

Alongside this, I also engaged and consulted with a range of organisations and other stakeholders, as well as reviewing, and identifying gaps within, current evidence and policy, and drawing upon 10 years of knowledge, experience and research from the work of my office.

This work helped me to identify three priorities, against which I will deliver a wide range of work over the next three years. In determining the priorities I will focus on as Commissioner, I used the following criteria:

- The issue is within my remit, as stated in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006.
- My office is particularly well-placed to take the issue forward because of the nature of the role and profile, or of the issue.
- There is a need for me to champion the issue, without which there is a risk that older people's voices won't be heard.
- My office is not duplicating work – there is no major programme of work on the issue being led by another individual or organisation, or if there is, it is clear how my work will add value.
- It is feasible to achieve the goal, or make tangible progress towards it, within a 3-4 year time frame.

In addition to using the criteria above to determine each individual priority, I also considered the following criteria, that my priorities must:

- Seek to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable, those who are least heard, and those who are at risk.
- Be capable of producing positive outcomes for all older people.
- Assist older people in ageing well, recognising the contribution that older people can and do make to our society.
- Respond to the issues that we hear from older people and/or are evidenced in research.
- Recognise and respond to the diversity of the older population, and the inequalities within it.

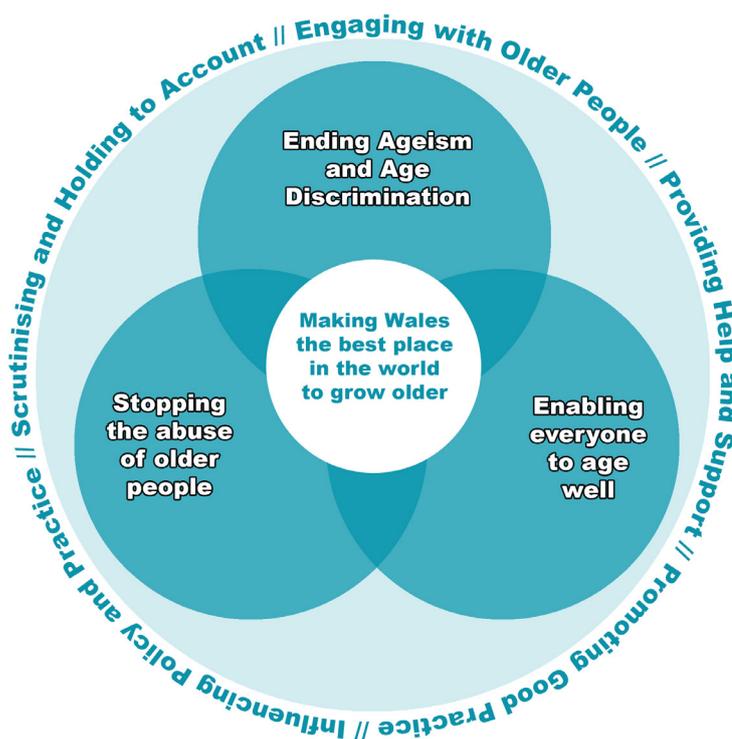
My priorities as Commissioner

My work during the next three years will be focused on three priorities that will help to transform the experience of growing older in Wales. I will take action to:

- End ageism and age discrimination
- Stop the abuse of older people
- Enable everyone to age well

As Commissioner, I have a unique role to play in taking forward these priorities, and I will deliver a wide range of work against each of them. But my role is also to encourage others to take these issues on and work together to deliver the changes that are needed, something that will only be achieved by a concerted and consistent effort across society.

I will use an extensive series of indicators to assess the progress being made to achieve these priorities, and will publish an annual update as part of my State of the Nation report (see page 19). The indicators I will use to measure progress are set out in Annex A.



Commissioner's priorities

End ageism and age discrimination

Ageism is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's age and is still very prevalent within society.

Ageism underpins many of the issues currently faced by older people and results in negative stereotypes, older people being treated unfairly and their rights not being respected and upheld. Ageism can also negatively influence the decisions made by society, meaning that the services, facilities and opportunities that people need to help them to age well can be inadequate and discriminate against older people.

A growing body of research indicates that ageism has a wide range of negative impacts upon older people, affecting their physical and mental health, recovery from illness, levels of social exclusion and even life expectancy.

Tackling ageism and age discrimination is therefore essential to support older people's health and well-being and ensure that they have equality, are treated with dignity and respect, and that the contribution they make to society is both recognised and celebrated.

It is also essential to tackle ageism if we are to make sustainable improvements in other aspects of older people's lives.

“The NHS should be equal for all. I recently heard that [people] living longer is costing the NHS. That comment made me feel guilty for being alive.”

I will take action to:

- Increase the recognition and understanding of the impact of ageism upon older people and society
- Empower people to challenge ageism and age discrimination
- Make sure that older people's voices are listened to and acted upon, and that their legal rights are upheld
- Improve older people's access to training and employment
- Tackle discrimination against older people in the workplace
- Improve older people's access to high quality health, care and other public services

Outcomes

In order to end ageism and age discrimination, we need to achieve the following outcomes:

The impact of ageism upon older people and society is recognised and understood

Older people have equitable access to high quality health, care and other public services

People are empowered to challenge ageism and age discrimination

Older people's voices are listened to and acted upon and their legal rights are upheld

Older people have access to training and employment

Older people are not discriminated against in the workplace

Stop the abuse of older people

Thousands of older people in Wales experience abuse – a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, which causes harm or distress – and crimes committed against older people are under-reported. The types of abuse against older people may include physical abuse; domestic violence; sexual abuse; psychological or emotional abuse; financial or material abuse; organisational or institutional abuse; neglect or acts of omission; and coercive control.

Whilst there is a growing understanding of the scale and nature of abuse and crimes against older people, there is still a lack of meaningful data about the levels of abuse in Wales, and awareness of these issues is still far too low across our public services and society in general.

I will work to stop this abuse by increasing awareness across society, improve preventative actions across public bodies and secure access to justice for those who are or at risk of being abused and help them to feel safe.

“A number of people who have been abused never report it or refuse to confirm suspicions for a variety of reasons... but most importantly, the fear that reporting the abuser will result in worse treatment in the long run.”

I will take action to:

- Increase the awareness of the abuse of older people amongst professionals and across wider society
- Improve the access to support services for older people at risk of or experiencing abuse
- Enable more older people who experience abuse to access legal justice
- Prevent incidences of abuse of older people

Outcomes

In order to stop the abuse of older people, we need to achieve the following outcomes:

Professionals and wider society are aware about abuse of older people

Older people at risk of or experiencing abuse can access support services

Older people who experience abuse have access to legal justice with accountability for those who abuse

Incidences of abuse of older people are prevented

Enable everyone to age well

Ageing well – ‘adding life to years, not just years to life’ – is important for each of us, and for our country as a whole. It is something everyone in Wales should be able to do. Older people should be seen as a vital part of society and should be able to have more opportunities to participate in and contribute to our economy and our communities.

But many people find themselves unable to do the things that matter to them as they get older. Problems with public transport, for example, mean that some older people are prevented from getting about and about – to volunteer, spend time with friends and family, care for loved ones or get to medical appointments. Many older people – 60% of people over the age of 75 – do not have access to the internet and are at risk of being left behind as services increasingly move online.

Some of the poorest older people are also not receiving the financial support they are entitled to that could make a positive difference to their lives, such as Pension Credit, £170 million of which went unclaimed in Wales in 2016-17.

I will work to make Wales a nation of age-friendly communities where older people feel valued, included and respected and can:

- get out and about
- afford to do things they want to do
- lead healthy and active lives
- stay informed
- have their voices heard

“A lifetime of work experience and skills is often going to waste, when with a little help and support retired people could enjoy being a part of their community.”

I will take action to:

- Encourage and support age-friendly communities to be established throughout Wales
- Enable more people to get where they want to go and do the things that matter to them
- Improve the access to advice and support to age well
- Improve older people's access to the health services they need to age well
- Improve the access to financial support older people need to age well
- Enable more older people to be empowered to effect change

Outcomes

In order to enable everyone to age well, we need to achieve the following outcomes:

Age-friendly communities that support people to age well and do things that matter to them are established throughout Wales

Older people can get where they want to go, when they want to get there and can do things that matter to them

Older people can access the advice and support they need to age well

Older people can access the health services needed to age well

Older people receive the financial support they need to age well

Older people are empowered to effect change

Delivering my work programme

In order to determine the work that will be delivered against each of the priorities within my strategy, I consulted older people and stakeholders throughout Wales to hear their ideas about the work I should focus on during 2019-22 and the ways in which change could be delivered

There was a very positive response to the consultation, with over 260 responses received in total. Alongside the consultation, my team and I also captured the views and ideas of older people at a series of engagement events throughout Wales, and held meetings with stakeholders to ensure they could also contribute to the consultation and development of my work programme.

Each April, I will publish my work programme for the year ahead, setting out the projects and objectives I will be taking forward. I will also continue to respond to and speak out on the issues that older people raise with me; analyse, scrutinise and influence proposed policy and legislative changes; support and promote the work of individuals and organisations working to improve the lives of older people; and champion older people's rights in all of my work.

My work programme will focus on making the changes needed to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older.

To read my work programme for the year ahead, visit: <https://bit.ly/2JYc6tJ>

Each year, I will publish a work programme, which sets out the wide range of work I will deliver under each of my three priorities

Reporting

Each year, I will publish an annual report that sets out the work I have delivered to drive change for older people and improve their lives.

In addition to this, I will also publish an annual 'State of the Nation' report, which will provide a comprehensive overview of the experience of growing older in Wales and the progress being made against my priorities and other key areas that impact upon older people's lives.

The report will use a wide range of measures and indicators (Annex A) to identify the things that are working well and the good practice that is making a positive difference to older people's lives, as well as identifying areas or issues where further work is needed.

Annex A: Measures and Indicators

Ending ageism and discrimination					
Older People have access to training and employment	Older people are not discriminated against in the workplace	The impact of ageism upon older people and society is recognised and understood	Older people's voices are listened to and acted upon and their legal rights are upheld	People are empowered to challenge ageism and age-related discrimination	People are empowered to challenge ageism and age-related discrimination
<p>To evidence Wales' progress in achieving this priority, we will be measuring the extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people have equitable access to work-based learning opportunities • Older people have equitable access to education • Older people have equitable access to opportunities for employment • Older people are not forced to stop working against their will • Older people are able to work in accessible workplaces that understand their needs • Older people have equitable access to health treatments and services • Older people have equitable access to care and support • Older people are treated with dignity and respect by health and care professionals • Older people understand their rights and are able to access the support they need to have their voices heard • Older people feel in control of decisions made about their lives and can do the things that matter to them • Older people and the wider society are aware of the prevalence and impact of ageism and age discrimination against older people and how to challenge it • Older people are less likely to experience ageism and age discrimination • Older people and the wider society are able to benefit from opportunities for intergenerational activities 					

Stopping the abuse of older people

Professionals and the wider society are aware of the abuse of older people	Older people experiencing abuse have access to support services	Older people who experience abuse have improved access to legal justice with accountability for those that abuse	Incidences of abuse of older people are prevented
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To evidence Wales' progress in achieving this priority, we will be measuring the extent to which:

- Older people that experience abuse are recognised by professionals and appropriate action is taken to address it
- Older people and the wider society are aware of the abuse of older people and know how to report it
- Older people at risk of, or experiencing, abuse know how to access the support services they need, including advocacy services
- Older people that experience criminal abuse are able to access justice
- Older people are less likely to be at risk of, or experience, abuse

Enabling everyone to age well

Age-friendly communities that support people to age well and do the things that matter to them are established throughout Wales	Older people are empowered to affect change	Older people can access the advice and support they need to age well	Older people can access the community health services needed to age well	Older people can get where they want to go, when they want to get there	Older people receive the financial support they need to age well
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To evidence Wales' progress in achieving this outcome, we will be measuring the extent to which:

- Older people live in communities that are recognised as age-friendly by the Commissioner and the World Health Organisation
- Older people can travel to the places they want to go
- Older people feel safe in their local area
- Older people are able to do the things that matter to them in their local area
- Older people are able to influence decisions about their local area
- Older people can access the information and advice they need
- Older people are living healthier lives and can access the health care they need
- Older people are satisfied with the health care they receive
- Older people can access the financial support they are entitled to
- Older people are not living in poverty or in unmanageable levels of debt
- Older people are able to afford to heat their homes, maintain a healthy diet and pay their bills



