



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

An independent voice and champion for older people
across Wales.

**Making Wales a good
place to grow older not
just for some but for
everyone.**

Working Document

**FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
2013 - 17**

Introduction

As Commissioner, I am here for and because of older people. I speak on behalf of older people and make sure their voices are heard and are responded to. This Framework for Action sets the context within which I will be operating and how I, as Commissioner, will be making my contribution to improving the lives of older people across Wales over the next four years.

We have much to be proud of in Wales: our heritage, culture and language, our commitment to social justice, equality and fairness, our communities, long standing political support to improving the lives of older people, a strong third sector and many wonderful public service staff who help and support thousands every day. As Older People's Commissioner I am most proud of our older people, who do so much for so many by caring, volunteering, helping others and making such a difference. Older people bring significant economic benefits to the Welsh economy. They are one of our greatest assets.

There are over 710,000 older people in Wales and they are our largest demographic group, with parts of Wales having the highest levels of older people in the UK. The number of older people living in Wales is expected to increase significantly in the decades to come.

Older people are not, and must not be treated as, a group apart. Many do not recognise themselves as being 'older'. The way we perceive and treat older people should reflect the values we hold dear. Equality and social justice are at the centre of the Government of Wales Act 2006 and must underpin not only our aspirations for older people, but also our public services and our delivery of care and support.

We should not make assumptions about the quality of life for older people. We need to ask ourselves 'is Wales a good place to grow old, not just for some but for everyone?' Whilst many older people feel positive about the lives they lead, growing older is simply not what it should be for many. Too many still live in poverty, are isolated, feel

vulnerable and don't have anyone to turn to if they need help. Many older people feel that they don't have access to the information that they need to make major decisions, that they don't have choice or control, or find it just too hard to obtain the support they need. We are regularly presented with negative images of ageing and older people, who often do not feel valued or are discriminated against.

The significant financial challenges we face mean that the operating environment is uncertain, difficult and rapidly changing. Older people are already directly feeling the impact of the current economic climate and the impact of financial constraints upon our social and community support and amenities. However, this is also a period of opportunity, to be smarter in the design and delivery of public services, to work with the energy and creativity of older people to meet their own challenges and to shift patterns of service so that they prevent dependency far more effectively. Older people's voices, knowledge and experience are key to meeting the challenges Wales faces. If we get it right for older people, we get it right for all generations, it is not 'either or'.

We want Wales to be a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone. Older people tell us they want a life that has value, meaning and purpose. We have therefore arranged our four-year Framework for Action around the key themes or outcomes that are central to delivering a life that has value, meaning and purpose.

The themes are:

- I feel listened to and respected
- I can do the things that matter to me
- I get the help I need, when I need it, in the way I want it
- I live in a place that suits me and my life

Under each of the four individual themes we have identified the context, the challenges and the broad areas on which we are proposing to focus. These will, in turn, guide our rolling annual work programme. Each year we will produce an operational work programme, linking specific work to these four themes. In this way we can be confident that our work is actively improving the lives of older people in Wales.

The Commission will continue to work in partnership, to grow our knowledge and thinking across Wales and we will continue to provide practical support. We will also continue to review, hold to account, issue guidance and scrutinise legislation, as well as raise key issues with both the Welsh and UK Governments. In this way I will discharge my statutory responsibilities as set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006. This is how I will play my part in raising the performance of Wales and the way in which it addresses the needs and aspirations of older people.

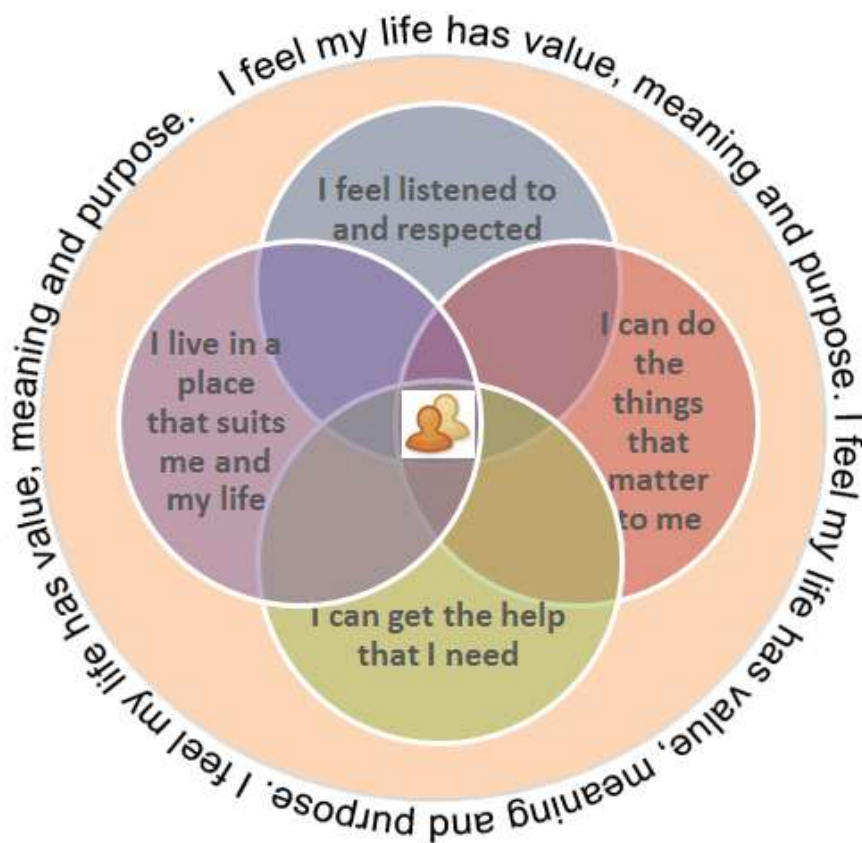
Wales has led the way in establishing the world's first Older People's Commissioner and has a longstanding commitment to improving attitudes, policy and practice. In achieving this we need to aspire to the highest standards, not the lowest. Older people are the backbone of our communities and one of our greatest assets and I look forward to working with and for them over the next four years, playing my part to make sure that within Wales we not only protect and support those who are the most vulnerable, but that we also make Wales a great place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Rochira". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Sarah Rochira, Older People's Commissioner for Wales

What older people say matters to them

Figure 1: Our themes are based on what older people say matters most to them.



All of our work is driven by what older people say matters to them. We launched our new Engagement Roadshow in June 2012, engaging with older people across Wales. We asked what the good and bad things are about growing older and what older people want us to focus on on their behalf.

As a result of their responses, together with discussions with a wide range of organisations and the results of research commissioned by us to give voice directly to older people, we identified four key themes that underpin a good quality life, a life that has value, meaning and purpose. These themes are:

- I feel listened to and respected
- I can do the things that matter to me
- I can get the help I need
- I live in a place that suits me and my life

These are therefore the proposed themes for our new four-year action framework. We are currently developing performance metrics that will measure progress in the four areas and will be seeking views on these at a later date.

Our four themes together describe the major challenges for all of us in public service to improve the lives of older people in Wales. The need for life to have value, meaning and purpose is a uniting thread that should run through all public services. This is because it is the ultimate outcome, the end point of strategies, policies and plans. It is the ultimate commitment in Wales to older people. We must constantly test whether our aims and actions across public services are contributing positively to these outcomes and use older people's voices as the ultimate test of achievement.

Older people are one of the greatest resources Wales has, valued by WRVS at £1 billion per annum; we must maximise their potential to contribute, to be involved, to be valued and have a sense of fulfilment.

Theme: 'I feel listened to and respected'

Context and challenge

All too often, older people are not treated in the way that they should be by our public services and their contribution and their value to life in Wales is insufficiently recognised.

Often older people have limited voice, choice and control. These are important to all of us: they are about identity, self-determination, self-expression and human rights. A lack of these damages confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing.

Age discrimination continues to be a major problem experienced by, and raised by, older people. Age discrimination can lead to low expectations, social isolation and a failure to receive services, treatment or care. Older people have very few specific rights in law, and it can be difficult to challenge poor quality and failures in service delivery as a result.

Older people are most likely to be victims of abuse, with over 43,000 alleged victims in 2009/10ⁱ.

It is essential that older people have effective rights and that these rights can be used by them and those that represent them. New legislation must make a real difference to the lives of those who need protection from harm so they are able to live in dignity and security and be free of exploitation and abuse.

Public and professional attitudes play a vital role in how older people are seen, see themselves, and in behaviour towards them. We must challenge wrong and negative assumptions about age and the ageing process. We need to recognise far more effectively the vital role older people in all their diversity play in all aspects of life in Wales.

All services must be more responsive to the needs of older people so that they are listened to, respected and so that their voices drive service

design, development, delivery and continuous review of service accessibility, quality and impact.

The Older People's Commission will:

- Raise awareness of the contribution of older people, challenge stereotypes and improve understanding of ageing and the ageing process.
- Drive improvements in the ways in which public bodies engage with older people by encouraging and sharing good practice and holding bodies to account.
- Help to challenge and address the unfair discrimination faced by older people. We will seek evidence of unfair treatment and of good practice, hold bodies to account and assess the effectiveness of the ban on age discrimination in goods, facilities and services.
- Continue to drive improvements in the treatment of older people in relation to dignity and respect.
- We will push for strengthened rights that have real potential to drive improvements in the day-to-day experiences of older people.

“Everything is put down to old age; my doctor doesn’t listen properly to me.”ⁱⁱ

“I am a useful member of this community and I very much resent being referred to as a burden. I resent it very much.”ⁱⁱⁱ

“Society today is neglecting older people ...we are put on the scrap heap.”^{iv}

“Some people treat old people with no respect.”^v

Theme: 'I can do the things that matter to me'

Context and challenge

The opportunities that older people have to remain active, learning, working and engaged are currently too limited. This has a direct impact on the mental and physical health of older people, undermining their individual wellbeing and independence and placing an unnecessary cost on services. Reasons for this limited opportunity include discrimination, low expectations, lack of support to individuals and insufficient financial and other support for too many of the activities that are available. It is a tribute to the energy and determination of so many older people that there are, nonetheless, so many inspiring examples of people continuing to work and to learn as they get older. There are groups and projects all over Wales that harness the energy and enthusiasm of older people to join together, tackle loneliness and isolation, and address some of the challenges of their communities.

The average spend on education is £86 for individuals aged 50-75 and just £60 for those aged over 75^{vi}. Poverty and inequality remain the major issues for many older people in Wales, limiting opportunities to do the things that matter and impacting upon quality of life. We must get better at addressing these issues. Helping people to claim their entitlements and providing good quality information and advice have an important part to play in this.

The support given to older people through health and social care needs to be built on the basic principle that it is there to enable quality of life that includes rewarding activity and should help to reduce isolation.

The Older People's Commission will:

- Drive loneliness and isolation higher up the agenda of public services and hold bodies to account if their decisions fail to support communities and to mitigate against loneliness and isolation.
- Champion and support the right of older people to be able to participate fully in the life of Wales, whether as part of the workforce, as volunteers, or as contributors to community and civic life.
- Press for improvements in transport. We will seek evidence about the effectiveness of community transport and improve the understanding of older people's needs in wider transport planning.
- Seek to maintain, improve and extend the opportunities that exist for older people for participation in learning, the arts, sports, community and as volunteers. We will scrutinise decision making for fairness and an understanding of the value of such opportunities.
- We will drive a debate amongst employers around what needs to happen to support an older workforce. This will include pushing for improved access to basic skills training for older people and a more responsive approach to career planning that supports older people to move into different jobs and stay in work for as long as they need or want to.
- We will seek greater understanding of the impact of poverty and inequality on older people with the Welsh and UK Governments and for there to be effective action to address them.
- We will push for greater protection for older people from disproportionate impact as a result of financial challenges facing public bodies. We will take action if necessary to hold bodies to account for the way in which they are allocating resources across services and geographical areas. We will emphasise the need not to pit generations against each other and will instead promote a life-

course approach to tackling poverty that recognises the links between poverty in childhood and older age.

- Assess and increase the extent to which key public service strategies and plans reflect the issues relating to older people.

“Just because we are getting older doesn’t mean we can’t do things.”^{vii}

“There’s a slow creep of isolation into older people’s lives, it’s something that’s not looked at. . . . There is no structure there for people to go to if you like, you know, because isolation is not like you’re a fully integrated citizen one day and the next day you’re isolated, it takes many years and a whole load of different factors.”^{viii}

“I don’t know how those on state pensions can cope.”^{ix}

Theme: ‘I can get the help I need, when I need it, in the way I want it’

Context and challenge

There is much good practice in the support provided to older people by public services and the third sector. However, we need much greater emphasis on preventing dependency and giving older people the right help at the right time, particularly to stay independent.

Carers provide invaluable support to their loved ones. Many struggle with the complex needs of those they care for, often with little support and training. Older people and carers need help and support to be provided in a way that suits their needs and recognises what really matters to them.

An important factor in how well people are supported is the information and advice available to them: people should receive information and advice at the right time, in the right way and as close to home as possible. It needs to be given in a way that offers voice, choice and control. It needs to be sustainable and affordable.

People should be supported in a way that is targeted and tailored to their individual circumstances. Dementia, for example, is not well understood and assumptions are often made, both about the disease and its impact, based on inadequate knowledge. Approximately 42,000 people in Wales have dementia^x. It is essential that all those working with older people are well informed regarding the impact of dementia and awareness amongst the general public is improved.

The Older People's Commission will:

- Increase the voice, choice and control older people have over their lives, especially when they are in situations of vulnerability.
- Continue to scrutinise policy and the law to ensure that older people's needs are adequately reflected. We will share good practice and information so that the most is made of the opportunity for improvements to services and the better protection of older people offered by new social services legislation in Wales. We will assess the effectiveness of this legislation.
- Drive change in practice that recognises how vital timely, good quality and accessible information is. We will hold bodies to account for how effectively they provide advice. We will work with older people to assess the quality of these services.
- Work in partnership to improve public attitudes towards, and understanding of, dementia, to increase awareness in public services and press for more effective training.

- Assess the effectiveness of the Social Services (Wales) Bill in supporting quality of life and making the needs and wishes of older people central to service provision.
- Drive debate and action to address the need for major change in the way in which public services are designed and delivered. We will seek an end to unjustifiable variation across Wales in service quality and availability.
- Work with carers organisations to build the evidence base to improve the support for carers in Wales.

“Make it easier to access service providers; it is a bit of a minefield to find out about benefits or other help when required.”^{xi}

“I would appreciate some help with the little things.”^{xii}

“Apparently they specialise in dementia. You wouldn’t know it. They each write in the record book that is left at Mum’s comments like ‘...had made herself a cup of tea and some toast and marmalade before I arrived.’ No she hadn’t – she has dementia – she has no idea how to make toast...Mum will say anything not to be a nuisance.”^{xiii}

Theme: 'I live in a place that suits me and my life'

Context and challenge

The places where people live are vital in supporting quality of life and the range of opportunities available to them. Achieving improvements in housing is a key means of addressing poverty and inequality. There is currently limited availability and choice of housing which that fully meets the needs of older people. There are many homes in need of improvement and a lack of sufficient information and support. We need to address unjustifiable variation in quality of provision.

Forward planning in Wales needs to recognise the needs of an ageing population and that addressing these not only makes communities better for older people but for everyone.

Community planning needs to fully reflect the views and needs of older people. We will help to drive an approach across Wales that makes cities and communities better places for older people to live.

We must make sure that new legislation makes a real difference to the lives of older people who need protection from harm so that they are better able to live in dignity and security, free of exploitation and abuse.

The Older People's Commission will:

- Improve the sense of security older people have in their own community through improving awareness and arrangements for preventing and tackling abuse and improving adult protection. We will build on the work we have already carried out on rights, financial abuse, advocacy support, whistleblowing and access to justice.
- Promote and defend the rights of older people to be fairly treated within the arrangements for paying for care, in the provision of residential care, including in care home closure and in the provision of home care.

- Promote the practical adoption of the steps needed for cities and communities in Wales to become 'Age Friendly'. This includes good forward planning, ensuring the provision of community halls, bus stops and public toilets.
- Influence policy and legislation on housing and planning to ensure the interests of older people are adequately reflected.
- Drive a debate and action on the current and future housing needs of older people, seeking to ensure that full account is taken of the diversity of needs, wishes and expectations of current and future generations of older people, and that the issues of rural communities and of towns and cities are taken into account.
- Promote the use of the concept of 'wellbeing' (which includes overall satisfaction with life, fulfilment and the ability to function well) as a driver for policy and practice that is truly centred on the needs and wishes of older people and as a means of measuring progress in Wales.

“There are not enough (local) facilities for older people.”^{xiv}

“People live in all sort of different places. Some people live with their family. Some people live with other people. Some people live alone. Where you live is very important to you.”^{xv}

The purpose of the Older People's Commission

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people in Wales, standing up and speaking out on their behalf.

The work of the Commission is driven by what older people tell us matters to them. On-going, direct engagement with older people, and with those who represent and support them, ensures that the Commission's work reflects the issues that matter most and have an impact upon the lives of those aged 60 or over in Wales.

The Commissioner is independent of government and heads up the Older People's Commission for Wales.

The Commission's functions, as laid down in the legislation that established the Commission in 2006 are to:

- Promote awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales.
- Challenge discrimination against older people in Wales.
- Encourage best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales.
- Review the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

The Commission will take forward its work by:

- Ensuring that the issues that matter to older people are understood by, and reflected in the work of, policy makers and service providers across Wales.
- Bringing together organisations and stakeholders that have influence to develop new ways of working to create better outcomes for older people.
- Recognising that which is working and promoting best practice, but also where necessary reviewing, scrutinising and setting out expectations and standards relating to service delivery.

We work to make sure that Wales is a good place to grow older, not just for some, but for everyone. The Commission is a catalyst for change. We carry out specific pieces of work in our own right but we also press for transformational change across Wales for older people. The Commission can and will bring people together, act as an 'honest broker' for debates that need to be had, help to drive effective outcomes from discussions and ensure the identification of the actions needed.

We work with a range of organisations from the third sector, as well as political and statutory bodies. We will continue to maintain effective partnerships. We do so to encourage a cohesive approach across Wales for older people. This is because the challenges to improve services for older people cannot be met by just one organisation; we all have a role to play.

If we all start to take innovative action by working together, listening to those in our communities and stimulating joined-up services then Wales can be a good place to grow older. Together we need to learn from, and build upon, good practice in Wales, as well as break down the barriers that prevent improvements.

Values

Our values define the culture of the Commission.

Older people driven: Older people are at the heart of the Commission. All our work is driven by what older people tell us matters to them. Our work is focussed on delivering real change that has meaning to older people.

For all Wales: The Commission is relevant and accessible to older people across Wales, regardless of location, race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion or belief.

Independent: The Commission conducts its work to further the interests of older people in Wales in a way that is independent of government or any other bodies.

Authoritative: We are an organisation with integrity and purpose, clear about our evidence base, strongly connected to the wishes and interests of older people and prepared, when necessary, to challenge.

Communicative: We communicate regularly and effectively with older people, those that represent and support them and with our key stakeholders about issues affecting older people, our work and our progress.

Collaborative: We work in partnership with older people themselves to give them a direct voice and with other bodies to avoid unnecessary duplication, make the best use of knowledge and skills and maximise the impact of our work.

The Commission is committed to the UN Principles for Older Persons. They should be considered by all organisations and regarded as a framework for their treatment of older people.

Reporting progress

The Commission has undertaken a wide variety of work under its first strategic plan. Details of the Commission's work, achievements and the subsequent positive outcomes for older people are included in the Commissioner's Report, a document that is published annually and widely distributed to older people and stakeholders, including the First Minister of Wales and the National Assembly.

Copies of the Commissioner's report are available from www.olderpeoplewales.com or by contacting the Commission.

Contact us

Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff
CF10 5FL

Telephone: 08442 640670 (a local rate number)

Email: ask@olderpeoplewales.com

Online: www.olderpeoplewales.com

Accessible formats

If you would like a copy of this document in Braille, large print or audio format, please contact the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. Contact us by emailing ask@olderpeoplewales.com or by telephone on 08442 640670.

This document is also available on our website in both Welsh and English, visit www.olderpeoplewales.com. If you would like a copy in any other languages, contact us by emailing ask@olderpeoplewales.com or by telephone on 08442 640670.

References

- ⁱ Care and Social Services Inspectorate (2011) Protection of vulnerable adults monitoring report 2009-2010.
- ⁱⁱ Quote taken from response to the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2012) Questionnaire.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Quote taken from Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2012) Age Discrimination Stories Research. Page 24
- ^{iv} Quote taken from response to the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2012) Questionnaire at the National Eisteddfod of Wales.
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- ^{vi} Estyn (2012). Skills for older learners: the impact of adult community learning on the wellbeing of older learners - January 2012
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- ^{vii} Quote taken from JRF (2012) Perspectives on ageing with a learning disability. Page 9
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- ^{ix} Quote taken from response to the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2012) Questionnaire at the National Eisteddfod of Wales.
- ^x NHS Wales website www.wales.nhs.uk/healthtopics/conditions/dementia
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