



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Impact and Reach

2018-19



**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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Foreword

I was honoured to take up post as Commissioner in August 2018 and it is a privilege to be working to improve the lives of older people throughout Wales.

2018 marked ten years since the role of the Commissioner – the first of its kind in the world – was established, and a huge amount has been delivered for older people, through influencing policy and practice, scrutinising the government and public bodies and holding them to account, formal reviews and guidance, and providing casework support directly to older people.

I would like to thank my predecessors, Ruth Marks and Sarah Rochira for all they achieved for older people in Wales over the past decade, and for laying such strong foundations for my work as Commissioner. I would also like to thank my team for their hard work and support during a time of significant transition. This report covers both the work delivered at the end of Sarah's tenure as Commissioner, and my own work to empower and drive change for older people since August 2018.

Since taking up post, I have travelled the length and breadth of Wales, meeting and speaking with older people from a diverse range of backgrounds, as well as organisations working with and for older people, to hear directly from them about their experiences of growing older in Wales, and their thoughts and ideas about the change needed and the ways in which improvements could be delivered.

This engagement, which included an extensive programme of consultation with older people and stakeholders, helped to develop my strategy – Making Wales the best place in the world to grow older – which sets out the action I will take over the next three years to improve older people's lives.

My work will be focused around three key priorities – ending ageism and age discrimination, stopping the abuse of older people and enabling everyone to age well.

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 change, something that will only be achieved by a concerted and consistent effort across society. I will also continue to work to empower older people and ensure they have a strong voice that is listened to and acted upon and highlight the significant contribution they make to society, alongside protecting and promoting older people's rights and challenging public bodies and services when these rights are not upheld.

As Commissioner, I will make clear where improvements are needed and highlight the issues and failures within policy and practice that have a negative impact on older people's quality of life. But I will also shine a light on good practice, recognising what many individuals and organisations across Wales are already doing to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older. I will encourage and promote innovative and effective approaches that make a positive difference to the lives of older people so they can be delivered more widely across Wales.

Whilst growing older is a positive experience for many people, 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.

That's why it's so important for us to be ambitious in what we want to achieve for older people and why, as Commissioner, I will be working to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older.



Helena Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

“I was honoured to take up post as Commissioner in August 2018 and it is a privilege to be working to improve the lives of older people throughout Wales.”

Engaging with older people throughout Wales

Engagement with older people throughout Wales remained a key part of the Commissioner's work during 2018-19, and during the year the Commissioner and her team visited 188 groups to meet and speak with over 5,300 older people.

Visits were made to every local authority in Wales, with the groups visited varying from informal community-based initiatives, to larger, more formal groups such as older people's forums.

In determining the groups to engage with, there was a particular focus on reaching as diverse a range of groups as possible and engaging with older people with protected characteristics, whose voices often go unheard.

This engagement provided a wide range of opportunities to hear directly from older people about their experiences and the changes they would like to see that would improve their lives.

The engagement sessions and events also allowed the Commissioner and her team to distribute useful information to older people, as well as highlighting the Commissioner's role and work, and the ways in which she provides support directly to older people through her casework team.

Concerns highlighted and information shared by older people at engagement events were taken forward by the Commissioner's casework team, in cases where an older person needed help and support, or were used to guide and shape the Commissioner's work and priorities, and identify areas in which change and improvements are needed.

Engagement and consultation: developing the Commissioner's priorities and work programme

When the new Commissioner took up post in August 2018, engagement opportunities were used to hear older people's views and ideas about what would make Wales the best place in the world to grow older and how the changes needed could be delivered.

This essential work helped to shape the Commissioner's priorities and the action she will take over the next three years, as set out in her 2019-22 strategy, which was published in April 2019.

The Commissioner also consulted with older people to help to determine the work she would deliver from 2019-20 onwards. The consultation ran from January to March and over 250 older people and stakeholders from across Wales shared their views and ideas.

During the year the Commissioner and her team visited 188 groups to meet and speak with over 5,300 older people

Following the consultation, the Commissioner published a report that provides a summary of the responses received from older people and stakeholders, and the views and ideas they shared about how to make Wales the best place in the world to grow older.

To determine the priorities she will focus on, the Commissioner used the following criteria:

- The issue is within the Commissioner's remit, as stated in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006.
- The Commissioner's office is particularly well-placed to take the issue forward because of the nature of the Commissioner's role and profile, or of the issue.
- There is a need for the Commissioner to champion the issue, without which there is a risk that older people's voices won't be heard.
- The Commissioner's office is not duplicating work – i.e. 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 the Commissioner's 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, the Commissioner also considered the following criteria, that, taken together, her 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 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.

The Commissioner's work programme consultation ran from January to March - over 250 older people and stakeholders from across Wales shared their views and ideas

Engagement with stakeholder organisations

As well as extensive engagement with older people throughout Wales, the Commissioner and her team also engaged with a wide range of organisations across the public and third sectors, meeting with key individuals, delivering keynote speeches at a variety of conferences and events – for organisations including Alzheimer’s Society, Care and Repair Cymru, National Pensioners Convention and several 50+ Forums – visiting frontline services and running information stands at key stakeholder events throughout Wales.

This engagement provided opportunities to share information and intelligence, highlight and promote good practice, identify opportunities for partnership working, and discuss concerns when necessary. In addition, it helped the Commissioner to develop her three-year strategy, shaping her priorities through identifying areas where further work to improve older people’s lives is needed and issues that the Commissioner is uniquely placed to take forward through her work.

The Commissioner will continue to engage with a wide range of public bodies and stakeholders throughout Wales, and plans are in place to meet with every health board and local authority to discuss the work, projects and initiatives they are delivering for older people, and highlight any potential areas of concern.

Working with the media

The Commissioner maintained a strong media presence throughout 2018-19, to highlight her work and comment on a wide range of issues that affect the lives of older people.

The Commissioner’s work was covered across television, radio and newspapers, as well as being featured in several more specialised publications such as the Institute for Welsh Affairs’ Agenda Magazine and Care Forum Wales’ Forum Magazine.

During 2018-19, the Commissioner and her work was mentioned 127 times across a wide range of printed and online articles. This coverage meant that there were over 1.5bn ‘Opportunities to See’ stories or articles relating to the Commissioner, which had an Advertising Value Equivalent of over £11,880,342.

Working with the media has been invaluable in raising awareness of the Commissioner and her role, as demonstrated in polling data that showed that 42% of older people had heard of the Commissioner, up from 37% in 2017.

Engagement with stakeholder organisations provided opportunities to share information and intelligence, highlight and promote good practice, identify opportunities for partnership working and discuss concerns when necessary

Casework: providing support to older people

The Commissioner's powers under the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006 allow her to provide assistance and support directly to older people, which is delivered through her dedicated casework team.

“Excellent! So glad you were there! I didn't think I was going to find anyone who could help me!”

- Casework feedback from an older person

The casework team provides information, assistance and guidance to empower older people and their families and help them to understand and claim their rights.

The team provides support so that older people and their families can challenge the decision-making and practice of public bodies and services and are able to navigate what are often complex systems, policies and processes, often in the most difficult and distressing of circumstances. In some cases, the casework team intervenes on behalf of an older person (subject to their consent).

During 2018-19, the Commissioner's casework team provided assistance and support to 397 older people (or family members acting on an older person's behalf). This was a slight increase compared to 2017-18, where support was provided to 366 older people (or family members). Many of the cases the team worked on related to complex issues that had been ongoing for considerable periods of time.

The circumstances of everyone who contacts the Commissioner are unique, so the assistance and support provided by the casework team is tailored to reflect people's individual needs.

“My caseworker has been a ‘voice of reason’ during a very stressful few months. She is a very good listener and has been a great help to me at a time when I have I have felt at my wit's end. She has helped me have the strength to continue the fight against a failing system.”

- Casework feedback from an older person

The Commissioner's casework team provided assistance and support to 397 older people during 2018-19

Case Study: Unacceptable delays for home adaptations

The Commissioner was contacted by Mrs E, who had made repeated requests, via the Occupational Therapy team in her local authority, for a stairlift to be installed at her home so she was able to remain living independently.

Mrs E was advised that she was on the waiting list for the adaptations, but that it could take up to a year for the stairlift to be fitted. She was told that in the meantime, she should move her bed downstairs and to 'strip wash' as she would be unable to use her bathroom.

Mrs E was frustrated and upset by this, concerned that she would have to rely on her family for support as she 'already felt like a burden'.

After a month had passed, Mrs E's family contacted the local authority for an update and were told that she hadn't been placed on the waiting list. Furthermore, there were no records of previous conversations with the Occupational Therapist.

The Social Services Manager agreed to investigate what had caused this significant error, alongside looking at whether the timescales provided to Mrs E could be reduced. However, Mrs E and her family did not receive any updates or information from the local authority and they were again left frustrated by the lack of communication and the fact that the installation of the stairlift was likely to be further delayed.

With Mrs E's consent, the Commissioner's Casework Team intervened, liaising with the social services department to ensure that a thorough investigation was undertaken to determine what had gone wrong, as had been promised previously, and to ensure the essential adaptations were completed as quickly as possible.

Following the Casework Team's intervention, Mrs E's case was made a priority and a full care needs assessment was undertaken within a couple of weeks. Six weeks later, the stairlift was fitted in Mrs E's home, together with additional support services, including an emergency call button.

Mrs E is now able to live independently at home and said she is 'extremely pleased' with the outcome following the Commissioner's intervention.

Whilst older people and their families contact the Commissioner about a wide range of matters, the most common issues related to health services, housing, care and safeguarding and abuse. Further details of the kinds of enquiries the casework team dealt with are set out below:

Health services

Issues relating to health were varied, but many related to accessing GP services and mental health services. Many cases related to complaints about the care and/or treatment an older person had received, or the withdrawal of services. The casework team also provided support to individuals who were unclear about the application process for Continuing Health Care Funding.

Housing

Many of the housing enquiries received by the casework team related to social housing, in particular issues around maintenance and repairs, management and leasehold costs, and the antisocial behaviour of other tenants. The team also provided advice to older people and their families about the process for arranging home adaptations and applying for social housing, particularly eligibility criteria.

Care

A large number of care enquiries related to care homes, in particular choosing a care home, the lack of care home availability in certain areas, increasing care home fees and top up fees. A number of issues were also highlighted about standards of care, including personal care and hygiene, and concerns about the misplacement of residents' belongings.

Safeguarding and Abuse

The casework team provided support to older people and their families in several cases relating to financial abuse, often where a family member was alleged to have been the perpetrator. Support was also provided in complex cases where domestic abuse had occurred as a result of behavioural changes linked to dementia and restraining orders had been put in place. Despite these restraining orders being in place, the abused parties still wanted contact with their partner so the casework team worked with and provided advice to Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) to secure a safe and effective solution.

“You were very helpful and gave a clear and decisive answer to my question and able to give advice regarding what I could do in order to sort out my ongoing problems.”

- Casework feedback from an older person

Whilst older people and their families contact the Commissioner about a wide range of matters, the most common issues related to health services, housing, care and safeguarding and abuse

Case Study: Ensuring access to justice

Mr J contacted the Commissioner's office on behalf of his mother (Mrs J) who had been the victim of theft. Mrs J had given a close friend Third Party Authority over her bank account so money could be withdrawn for shopping and bills, but the friend withdrew large sums of money on several occasions that could not be accounted for.

Mr J had contacted the police, but was concerned that the case was not being investigated properly and that vital opportunities to obtain evidence to prosecute the perpetrator were being lost.

The Commissioner's Casework Team contacted the police's Public Protection Unit to highlight the family's frustration and concerns with the investigation. In response, a senior officer apologised for the lack of progress, stating that the standard of the investigation was below what should be expected. He advised that the case would be reassigned to a member of CID, in order to expedite the investigation.

The Casework Team maintained contact with Mrs J's family, to keep updated with the progress of the case, and after several months had passed they shared further concerns that the case still hadn't progressed, saying that there seemed to be a 'lack of interest' from the investigating officer.

Following further interventions from the Casework Team, who escalated the matter to the Assistant Deputy Chief Inspector, the case began to move forward and the perpetrator was subsequently charged, tried and convicted of 12 counts of fraud, which led to a custodial prison sentence.

The family said that they felt the conviction would not have happened without the Commissioner's intervention, and that they were 'extremely grateful' for all of the support that was provided to them throughout the process.

The experiences of the older people and families that contact the Commissioner's casework team, and the information they share, provide the Commissioner with evidence of the ways that policy is being translated into practice on the ground, helping her to identify potential issues in terms of service delivery and examples where older people's rights are not being upheld. This not only allows her to raise concerns with public bodies and public services, but also helps to guide and shape the Commissioner's work.

Furthermore, the Commissioner's casework helps her to identify opportunities to empower older people by developing information guides on key issues that are distributed throughout Wales.

Driving change for older people

Making Rights Real for Older People

Protecting and promoting older people's rights continued to be a key part of the Commissioner's work during 2018-19. Whilst calls for an older people's rights bill were unsuccessful – the Welsh Government has instead committed to look more widely at how the rights of all Welsh citizens could be enhanced – the Commissioner set out a number of areas where action was needed to protect older people's rights and secured commitments from the Welsh Government to take these forward:

- Co-producing practical guidance for local authorities on making the UN Principles for Older Persons real for older people under their duty to pay due regard when discharging social services functions. The Welsh Government confirmed that this guidance would initially focus on commissioning, safeguarding and advocacy.
- Developing a national framework for commissioning independent advocacy for adults and look into the possibility of extending an "Active Offer" for advocacy to older people living in care homes or being discharged from hospital.
- Revising escalating concerns guidance to ensure that no older person is put at risk due to the closure of the place they call home and to uphold their rights when a care home closure is necessary.
- Making the UN Principles real for older people using NHS services, including reference to how Health Boards are paying regard to the Principles in their Annual Quality Statements.
- Integrating the UN Principles into the Welsh Government's impact assessments.

The Welsh Government has begun to take the action the Commissioner called for, and she will continue to monitor and scrutinise their work in this area to ensure they are delivering against the commitments they have made

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Know Your Rights: An Easy Guide

In response to polling figures that indicated that around a third of older people in Wales – over a quarter of a million people – do not understand their rights, the Commissioner published an information guide to empower older people and ensure they have the information they need to access the rights they have under a range

of legislation and challenge public bodies and service providers if they feel their rights have been breached.

The guide sets out the rights that older people have in a range of key areas, such as employment, healthcare and housing, as well as making clear the rights older people have to be treated with dignity and respect, to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and to be safeguarded and protected.

The guide also includes details of organisations that can provide older people with help, support and advice relating to their rights.

To date, over 4,000 copies of the guide have been distributed to older people at events throughout Wales and via organisations working with and for older people.

Rethinking respite for people affected by dementia

One of the key issues highlighted in the Commissioner's Dementia: More Than Just Memory Loss report, published in 2016, was the importance of older people living with dementia and their carers being able to access high-quality, flexible respite that provided a positive experience for both the carer and the person being cared for.

Given the importance of respite, and its links to other key issues such as safeguarding and health and well-being, the Commissioner subsequently began a programme of work to look at issues related to respite in more detail, publishing her findings in her 'Rethinking Respite for People Affected by Dementia' report in April 2018.

In addition to reviewing respite-related research and good practice, the report also captured evidence from people living with dementia, and their carers, at a series of discussion sessions held throughout Wales.

A wide range of topics were discussed at these sessions – which were held in Briton Ferry, Cardiff, Chepstow, Llandrindod Wells, Pontypridd, Porthmadog and St. Clears – including the quality, flexibility and choice of respite services; accessing information, advice and advocacy; the activities available within respite services; and other issues such as safeguarding, positive risk taking, building and maintaining relationships, diversity and transport.

The report made clear that people affected by dementia often found it difficult to access information about the respite options available to them and that traditional respite services often lack the flexibility that they want and need, often not delivering positive outcomes. Furthermore, in the worst cases, respite services that do not meet

The Commissioner's Rethinking Respite report made clear that people affected by dementia often found it difficult to access information about the respite options available to them and that traditional respite services often lack the flexibility that they want and need, often not delivering positive outcomes.

people's needs have a negative impact upon their health and wellbeing, and can strip them of their independence.

However, the report also demonstrated 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.

Publishing the report, which set out a range of action that was needed to improve respite, the Commissioner called for fundamental change in the way that respite services in Wales are thought about and delivered, and worked with key organisations - including Social Care Wales, the Carers Learning and Improvement Network and Carers Trust – to explore how the issues identified could be addressed.

The Commissioner also shared her findings with the Welsh Government, who made a commitment to use the evidence within the report to inform the development of action that will be delivered under the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-22.

A guide to respite for people affected by dementia

As described above, the Commissioner's 'Rethinking Respite' report highlighted that people affected by dementia often struggled to find information about accessing respite and the options that may be available to them.

To ensure that people living with dementia and their carers could easily access this information, the Commissioner published 'A Guide to Respite for People Affected by Dementia' in November 2018, which covers a wide range of subjects including the different types of respite available and how they can be accessed, potential financial support and the rights people have under social care legislation. Whilst the guide focuses on people affected by dementia, much of the information included is useful for all older people and carers who may need to access respite.

The guide was developed with support from people with dementia and their carers from across Wales, who helped to shape the guide's content by sharing their ideas about the kinds of information that should be included and what would be most useful based on their experiences.

The guide has been widely distributed to older people and carers throughout Wales through engagement events and via a wide range of third sector organisations including Alzheimer's Society, Age Connects Wales and Age Cymru. In addition, the Commissioner also delivered a workshop at the Association of Directors of Social Services National Social Care Conference, to grow knowledge

The Commissioner's respite guide was developed with support from people with dementia and their carers from across Wales

about respite and its benefits amongst social care professionals and highlight innovative approaches to respite that are making a positive difference to the lives of people affected by dementia.

Making Voices Heard: older people's access to independent advocacy

Advocacy plays a vital role in supporting older people to have their voices heard and play a meaningful role in decision-making, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

However, the Commissioner's work across a number of areas, along with information gathered through engagement with older people and stakeholders, identified a range of issues relating to older people's access to advocacy and the ways in which it was being delivered and promoted.

To determine what issues were preventing older people from accessing advocacy, how the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 had affected the delivery of advocacy services, and the ways that services could be improved, the Commissioner gathered extensive evidence from older people who had been supported by advocates, advocacy providers, those commissioning services and a range of organisations working with older people.

The Commissioner found that older people across Wales are often unable to access advocacy services and that people's legal rights to advocacy in certain circumstances were not always understood by health and social care professionals.

The Commissioner also identified a number of shortcomings in current legislation and the ways in which this is applied, which prevented people from fully participating when decisions are being made about their lives.

Alongside her findings, the Commissioner's report – 'Making Voices Heard: Older People's Access to Independent Advocacy' – included a series of recommendations for the Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards, calling for a range of action to ensure that people's rights are upheld, that long-term planning is more effective and workforce training is improved, and that an 'active offer' of advocacy is made to older people living in care homes or those who ready to be discharged from hospital.

The Welsh Government, health boards and local authorities responded positively to the report and its findings, and provided assurances that they would take a wide range of action to deliver the improvements needed. The Commissioner has therefore monitored the changes being delivered since the publication of her report and will publish an update on progress during 2019.

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Advocacy awareness raising video and resources hub

One of the key findings of the Commissioner's 'Making Voices Heard' report, was that there is often a lack of awareness of advocacy services, the support they can provide and the positive difference they can make to people's lives.

In order to raise awareness of advocacy amongst older people and professionals, the Commissioner worked in partnership with Age Cymru to produce a video to highlight the ways it can support older people.

The video was widely shared across social media and with members of the Commissioner's Ageing Well Network, and will be shown at events and seminars for professionals and volunteers working with and for older people. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board have also uploaded the video to the training section of their intranet pages so that health board staff are able to easily watch it.

Alongside the video, the Commissioner also launched an advocacy resources hub, which provides a range of useful information and resources for older people and professionals, including information leaflets, factsheets and training resources.

The Commissioner published a guide that provides answers to commonly asked questions about care homes to support and empower older people and their families

Care Homes in Wales: Your Questions Answered

Since publishing the findings of her review into the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes in Wales in 2015, the Commissioner has continued to monitor, scrutinise and provide ongoing feedback to health boards and local authorities to ensure they are delivering on the action they stated they would take in response to her recommendations, alongside ongoing engagement with care providers throughout Wales.

In addition to this work, the Commissioner also wanted to support and empower older people and their families by providing a wide range of information they would find helpful when moving into or living in a care home.

The Commissioner published a guide that provides answers to commonly asked questions and is helping to ensure that older people and their families throughout Wales have a better understanding of people's rights when living in a care home, and includes information on finding a suitable care home, paying for care, having a say in decisions, activities and socialising, and what someone can do if they are unhappy with the care and support they are receiving.

To develop the guide, the Commissioner’s team met and spoke with older people at a series of engagement events throughout Wales, to hear directly from them about the questions they had about moving into or living in a care home. The Commissioner also worked with care providers and other stakeholders to ensure that the information included within the guide would provide answers to questions they were often asked by residents.

To date, over 7,000 copies of the guide have been distributed to local authorities, health boards and third sector organisations – including Age Cymru, Alzheimer’s Society and RNIB Cymru – to ensure they can be easily accessed by older people and their families.

NHS Wales winter pressures

In December 2018, the Commissioner requested detailed information from the Welsh Government and Health Boards about the plans they had in place to cope with potential winter pressures and additional demand, as well as any specific action being taken to improve the experiences of older patients, who were significantly impacted by the issues created by winter pressures during 2017-18.

The information within their responses and published winter preparedness plans have been examined against an internal scrutiny framework to allow the Commissioner to consider, from an all-Wales perspective, what further improvements could be delivered to improve older people’s experiences.

The Commissioner will publish her findings in 2019-20 and will highlight examples of good practice shared with her by health boards to support their preparations and the development of their plans for next winter.

Improving engagement and consultation with older people

Older people often tell the Commissioner that they feel that there are limited opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives or their communities in a meaningful way and that engagement and consultation with them could be improved significantly.

Following a number of enquiries from older people about proposed changes to services in which concerns were raised about engagement and consultation, the Commissioner wrote to all local authorities in Wales to remind them of their duties around engagement and consultation and the requirement for them to have regard to the formal guidance published using the Commissioner’s legal powers under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006.

Older people often tell the Commissioner that they feel there are limited opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives and communities in a meaningful way

The Commissioner subsequently met with several local authorities to discuss how they carry out engagement and consultation with older people, as well as other issues.

Safeguarding and protecting older people

Crown Prosecution Service age-related hate crime panel

During 2018-19, the Commissioner continued to raise concerns relating to older people's access to justice, particularly the barriers within the justice system that lead to disproportionately low prosecution and conviction rates when crimes are committed against older people.

The Commissioner shared her concerns with the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), highlighting gaps in the law, and issues relating to investigations, evidence gathering and the evidential bar.

In response to the concerns raised by the Commissioner, the CPS acknowledged that crimes against older people have a significant impact and that there are a number of potential issues that need to be looked at, and established the first ever scrutiny panel focused exclusively on crimes against older people.

The panel provided a unique opportunity for organisations that work with and for older people to get a better insight into the crimes committed against older people and some of the issues that the police and CPS must consider when decisions are being made about whether to prosecute or not.

Furthermore, perhaps more importantly, the panel also provided an opportunity for the police and CPS to consider the views and advice of participants about how investigations could be enhanced to increase the chances of taking forward a successful prosecution.

Awareness raising conferences

The Commissioner worked in partnership with Social Care Wales and the Dewis Choice Project to deliver two conferences that provided delegates with a wide range of practical information to grow their knowledge and understanding of how to safeguard older people from abuse, with a particular focus on how they could be more effective in supporting the rights and choices of older people who experience abuse.

The conferences, which included a mixture of keynote presentations and workshop sessions, were held in Llanrwst and Newport in February 2019 and were attended by over 100 delegates working across health and social care.

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Feedback from the conferences was very positive, with many delegates stating that their knowledge about abuse had increased and that they had a far better understanding of the ways they could support older people who had experienced abuse.

Awareness raising events and presentations

Building upon work that began in 2014, the Commissioner's Safeguarding Lead has continued to deliver awareness raising presentations to professionals working across health and social care, highlighting the scale and impact of abuse, how to recognise the signs of abuse and the help and support available for older people.

Awareness raising sessions were delivered to over 1,100 professionals working across a wide range of organisations, including health boards, local authority social services and safeguarding teams, regional safeguarding boards, the Royal College of General Practitioners and Crown Prosecution Service.

In addition to delivering these sessions, the Commissioner's Safeguarding Lead also participated in a wide range of engagement events to raise awareness of abuse amongst key stakeholders, including a roundtable safeguarding event with the Public Guardian, NHS Wales Safeguarding Network Meetings, and South Wales Police crime and accountability meetings.

Awareness raising sessions were delivered to over 1,100 professionals working across a wide range of organisations

Research into police and Crown Prosecution Service decision-making in safeguarding cases

As highlighted above, data relating to crime and the criminal justice system demonstrates that prosecution and conviction rates for crimes against older people are disproportionately low when compared with the population as a whole, particularly in cases relating to safeguarding, abuse and neglect in care homes and hospitals.

The Commissioner therefore commissioned research to examine the ways in which decision-making by the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) may impact upon investigations relating to safeguarding and subsequent access to justice for older people.

Working with the police and CPS, the research team will review data and outcomes relating to over 400 safeguarding cases across the four Welsh police forces.

The aim of the research is to identify the challenges and barriers that may lead to low levels of prosecution and potential ways in which safeguarding investigations could be enhanced. The research will also consider whether there is consistency in

decision-making throughout Wales and identify potential training requirements and limitations in existing legislation.

The findings of the research, as well as any recommendations for the police and CPS, will be published in 2020-21.

Mental Capacity: An Easy Guide

Whilst the term ‘mental capacity’ is often used within health and social care services, older people and their families have told the Commissioner that there is often uncertainty about what it means and the ways in which it can impact upon older people’s lives.

To help older people and their families to have a better understanding of mental capacity, the Commissioner published *Mental Capacity: An Easy Guide* in June 2018.

The guide covers a wide range of topics, including what may cause a person to lack capacity, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, how capacity is tested, best interests decisions, advance decisions and Lasting Power of Attorney.

To date, over 4,000 copies of the guide have been distributed to older people throughout Wales.

Older people and their families have told the Commissioner that they are often uncertain about what the term ‘mental capacity’ means and the ways it can impact upon people’s lives.

Ageing Well in Wales

In 2014, the Commissioner established Ageing Well in Wales to inspire action and drive change, at both a strategic level and within communities throughout Wales, across five key areas: age-friendly communities, dementia supportive communities, falls prevention, opportunities for learning and employment, and loneliness and isolation. Since its launch, the Ageing Well in Wales network has grown to over 1,700 members, representing over 500 organisations. Network members lead on a diverse range of activities to make where they live better places to grow older and are helping to establish age-friendly and dementia-supportive communities throughout Welsh villages, towns and cities.

Throughout 2018-19, Ageing Well in Wales continued to support network members to create positive changes in their communities, with a focus on the five key themes.

The Ageing Well in Wales website provides a wide range of resources and publications and has continued to be a popular and practical way for people to find out more about the five priority areas, and to assist network members in their own projects.

Alongside this, Ageing Well in Wales held a range of events throughout Wales to provide opportunities for learning, sharing good practice and connecting network members, which were attended by over 600 delegates, and supported partners to deliver a range of well-attended events focused on the principles of ageing well.

At a strategic level, Ageing Well partners from across the public, private and third sectors have continued to work on delivering the commitments set out in the Ageing Well in Wales Action Plan.

At a local authority level, Ageing Well plans are being delivered and action is now underway to improve the lives and well-being of many older people. In some areas, steps are underway to incorporate this work into the priorities of Public Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards, something that should ensure that the needs and aspirations of older people are considered within the wider strategic goal of improving the lives and well-being of people of all ages.

Some of the key developments and successes delivered under each of the Ageing Well in Wales themes are set out below.

Since its launch, the Ageing Well in Wales network has grown to over 1,700 members, representing over 500 organisations

Age-friendly communities

- The Commissioner worked with older people and network members to develop the Ageing Well Card, which was launched in August 2018. The card includes simple messages that can be used by older people to let people know they may need a little help and support, and can be used in a variety of places, such as shops, cafes, restaurants, banks, pharmacies and on public transport. The card has been distributed to older people throughout Wales, and the Ageing Well team worked with businesses and organisations throughout 2018-19 to promote the card and increase its recognition.
- The Commissioner published an updated version of 'Making Wales a nation of age-friendly communities', which provides practical support for groups looking to make their communities more age-friendly. The revised version of the guide incorporates feedback from working with communities and older people across Wales.
- In March 2019, the Commissioner held two large-scale Celebrating Communities events, which were attended by over 200 delegates. The first event, which was held in Caernarfon, was delivered in partnership with Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn and Gwynedd Council and provided opportunities for delegates to consider the ways in which they could make communities more age-friendly, particularly for older Welsh speakers. The second event, held in Newport and delivered in partnership with the All Wales BAME Engagement Programme, BAME Elders Cymru, Diverse Cymru and Newport City Council, focused on highlighting good practice underway to support people from diverse communities to age well and inspire delegates to develop their own initiatives.
- Alongside partners from Age Cymru, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales and the Arts Council Wales, Ageing Well in Wales supported the work of the Age-Friendly Culture Network. In 2018-19, the network ran a series of successful events across Wales encouraging organisations to make better use of our rich culture and heritage to improve the lives and well-being of older people.
- A growing number of town, community and county councils are supporting the development of age-friendly initiatives across Wales, in line with the Dublin Declaration, which all local authorities in Wales have signed up to.
- 2018-19 also saw a rapid growth in interest in initiatives which bring together different age groups, a cornerstone of

Many Ageing Well Network members are now actively involved with intergenerational projects in their communities

age-friendly communities, and many Ageing Well network members are now actively involved with intergenerational projects in their communities.

Dementia supportive communities

- Ageing Well in Wales worked in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to develop a guide to Advance Care Planning for older people. The guide highlights the ways in which Advance Care Planning can help individuals to maintain control and continue to be part of the decision making for their care should their needs change, and contains a wide range of information, including creating an advance statement, lasting power of attorney, writing a will and organ donation.
- In February, Ageing Well held an event in Brecon, in partnership with the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO) and Dementia Matters in Powys, focused on the importance of providing dementia supportive housing and the role this can play in helping people living with dementia to maintain their independence.
- Ageing Well in Wales continued to work closely with Alzheimer's Society Cymru throughout 2018-19, supporting its Dementia-Friendly Community programme. Over 60 communities in Wales are now recognised as working towards becoming dementia-friendly. As well as Welsh villages, towns and counties, a growing number of organisations are also now being recognised as being dementia-friendly within communities across Wales.

The Commissioner's casework team provided assistance and support to 397 older people during 2018-19

Falls prevention

- Ageing Well in Wales continued to play an active role in the National Prudent Healthcare Falls Prevention Taskforce, hosted by the 1,000 Lives Improvement Service, which developed a falls brief intervention training course that is being delivered to staff in a variety of organisations working with older people. The course helps professionals to identify falls risks, to have conversations about falls and to signpost people to where they can get help to reduce their risk of falling. Hywel Dda University Health Board, in conjunction with partners from housing and the third sector, is also using the course as part of a pilot community falls prevention initiative.
- In addition, 2019 saw Ageing Well in Wales partners Age Connects Wales, Age Cymru and Care & Repair Cymru collaborate on a second annual falls awareness week in

Wales, encouraging professionals in health and the third sector to talk to older people about falls.

Loneliness & isolation

- The work of several Ageing Well partners, such as the Campaign to End Loneliness, ensured that public awareness and concern over the prevalence and impact of loneliness and unwanted isolation continued to grow throughout 2018-19.
- Ageing Well also worked with network members to encourage them to respond to the Welsh Government's consultation on its forthcoming national strategy on tackling loneliness and isolation, which is due to be launched in 2019.
- At a local level, a growing number of community connector and local area coordination schemes, many of which are Ageing Well network members, are providing direct support to older people at risk of becoming socially isolated and helping them to make meaningful connections within their communities.

Throughout 2018-19, Ageing Well in Wales and its partners continued to raise awareness about the crucial contribution older workers make to the Welsh economy

Opportunities for learning and employment

- Throughout 2018-19, Ageing Well in Wales and its partners continued to raise awareness about the crucial contribution older workers make to the Welsh economy, and supported the Welsh Government's 'No Best Before Date' campaign, which aimed to encourage more employers to recognise the importance of retaining, retraining and recruiting older workers.
- Ageing Well in Wales also worked with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to support the development of a toolkit for older workers, which is due to be published in 2019.
- Ageing Well also supported the Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research at a series of public events held across Wales during 2018-19 to capture the experiences of older workers and job seekers. The Centre is planning on following up this work with a conference later in 2019 that will highlight the experiences of older workers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Influencing policy and practice

Throughout 2018-19, the Commissioner continued to meet regularly and engage with Welsh Government Ministers and officials, which provided opportunities to influence policy and practice, highlight any concerns and make clear where improvements are needed.

The Commissioner also continued to work with the National Assembly for Wales, providing briefings to members ahead of debates relating to issues that affect older people.

In addition, the Commissioner continued to work closely with National Assembly Committees, in particular the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, sharing information and evidence, and highlighting potential areas for scrutiny and investigation. During 2018-19, the Commissioner provided evidence to the following committee inquiries:

- Cost of Caring for an Ageing Population – Finance Committee, April 2018
- Welsh Draft Budget Proposals 2019-20 – Finance Committee, September 2018
- Impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers – Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, September 2018
- Future Development of Transport for Wales – Economy, Infrastructure & Skills committee, January 2019
- Community and District Nursing Services – Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, March 2019

Following concerns raised by the Commissioner, the Welsh Government agreed to review its Strategy for Older People and publish an updated version to ensure more effective approaches to meeting older people's needs

Updating the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People

Following concerns raised by the Commissioner in 2017 that the Welsh Government's third Strategy for Older People was not delivering all that it should for older people, the Welsh Government agreed to review and publish an updated strategy to ensure more effective approaches to meeting people's needs would be delivered across a range of policy areas and government portfolios.

Throughout 2018-19, the Commissioner worked with the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing (MAFA), which was tasked with advising the Welsh Government on what should be included within the strategy, participating in a range of working groups covering matters including living in the community, participation, preparing for the future, transport and making rights real. The Commissioner has been clear that the new Strategy for an Ageing Society must be

bold in its ambition and recognise the impact of ageing across all of society. The Welsh Government should lead the way in seizing the opportunities and meeting the challenges presented by an ageing population and work with others to deliver positive outcomes for older people now and in the future.

Additional work to influence policy, legislation and practice

To ensure that older people's needs are understood and reflected in the work of public bodies and services, the Commissioner and her team continued to influence policy, legislation and practice through membership of, and working with, a wide range of expert groups, advisory boards and panels, 29 in total, including: Welsh Government Strategy for an Ageing Society working groups

- Welsh Government Loneliness and Isolation Strategy Development Board
- National Assembly for Wales Cross-Party Group on Ageing
- NHS Wales Safeguarding Network
- Public Guardian Safeguarding Roundtable Group
- Dementia Oversight and Implementation Group (Welsh Government)
- Carers Ministerial Advisory Group (Welsh Government)
- Social Care Wales – Care and Support at Home Implementation Group
- Welsh Government Technical Group on Advocacy
- Care Inspectorate Wales – National Advisory Board
- Welsh Government Making Rights Real working group

The Commissioner and her team influenced policy, legislation and practice through membership of, and working with, a wide range of expert groups, advisory boards and panels

Consultation responses

The Commissioner also responded to consultations undertaken by the Welsh Government and other key bodies and stakeholders during 2018-19, which covered a broad range of topics and issues. The Commissioner used the experiences of older people, captured at engagement events and via her casework team, alongside the expertise of her team and evidence captured through her ongoing work to shape her responses, which set out how policy and practice should be shaped to reflect older people's needs and deliver positive outcomes for them.

During 2018-19, the Commissioner responded to the following consultations:

Welsh Government Consultations:

- Local Toilets Strategies Statutory Guidance Local Authorities, April 2018
- Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for people, June 2018

- National Development Framework, July 2018
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016: Phase 3 implementation – Regulated Advocacy Services, August 2018
- Adult Learning in Wales: Consultation on the delivery and funding structure of adult learning in Wales, September 2018
- Independent Affordable Housing Review, September 2018
- Amendments to Partnership Regulations under Part 9 of the Act (SSWB) 2014, October 2018
- Housing Adaptions Service Standards, December 2018
- Effective Engagement with BAME Communities, December 2018
- A united and Connected Wales: Tackling Loneliness and Isolation, January 2019
- Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence national indicators, February 2019
- Improving Public Transport, March 2019

During 2018-19, the Commissioner responded to a wide range of consultations, covering a variety of topics and issues

UK Gov Consultations

- Transforming the response to domestic abuse, May 2018
- Improving Assisted Travel, Office of Road and Rail, December 2018
- House of Commons Committee Inquiries
- Prison Population 2022: planning for the future inquiry - Justice Committee, March 2018
- House of Lords Committee Inquiries
- Enquiry into the reform of DoLS - Joint Committee on Human Rights, March 2018

Other Consultation Responses:

- New and updated RCGP curriculum, Royal College of General Practitioners, June 2018
- Public Consultation on Crimes Against Older People Policy Guidance, Crown Prosecution Service, October 2018
- Towards a future vision for General Practice, Royal College of General Practitioners, October 2018
- Concessionary TV Licence consultation, BBC, February 2019

Forward look

Many of the issues faced by older people are entrenched and have persisted for many years. It is therefore essential that there is not only a focus on making things better and dealing with the difficulties older people experience, but also fundamentally changing the experience of growing older for all of us by dealing with the root causes of the problems we may encounter as we get older and working across society to deliver change.

The Commissioner is uniquely placed to drive change across a number of key areas and in April 2019 published her strategy – Making Wales the Best Place in the World to Grow Older – which sets out her priorities and the action she will take to improve older people’s lives over the next three years. The Commissioner will take action to:

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

The action taken against these priorities will be strongly focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for older people and securing lasting and meaningful change.

Work planned for 2019-20 includes:

- Delivering a campaign to highlight and challenge the ‘everyday’ ageism faced by older people.
- Publishing new resources that will empower older people to challenge ageism.
- Undertaking research examining the portrayal of older people in the media.
- Working with local authorities to review the Information, Advice and Assistance services they provide to identify and promote good practice
- Working with stakeholders to identify what motivates individuals to abuse and neglect older people.
- Identifying, mapping and highlighting services that provide support to older people experiencing abuse.
- Delivering safeguarding training to staff working across public services, to raise awareness of the scale, nature and impact of abuse, and information about the help and support available to older people who are the victims of abuse.

- Publishing new resources to empower older people to effect change within their communities.
- Working with communities, local authorities and businesses throughout Wales to make them more age-friendly.
- Reviewing whether current transport options create barriers to accessing health services.
- Working with older people and transport providers to make transport services more age-friendly.

In addition to the work set out above, the Commissioner will continue to work to promote the importance of older people's rights and ensure that their rights are upheld; work with a wide range of partners to identify, celebrate and promote good practice; monitor and scrutinise the work of public bodies and hold them to account when necessary; influence policy and practice at both a national and a local level; engage with older people in all their diversity; and provide help and support to older people through her casework service.

In October, the Commissioner will also publish her first 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 her priorities and other key areas that impact upon older people's lives.

