



Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales // Mar 2021

A message from Heléna

It's incredible to think that it's almost a year since the first lockdown, since the world around us changed so dramatically, and I know that the past 12 months have been particularly difficult for many older people.

But amongst the sadness and loss we have experienced and the difficulties we have faced, we have also seen some of the best of who we are – the compassion and support within our communities, a renewed sense of solidarity between generations. Holding onto this will be crucial as we move forward together.

The end of 2020 brought with it some positivity, as older people began to receive their vaccinations. Thanks to the hard work of vaccination teams, medical staff and volunteers throughout Wales, over 1,000,000 people have now received their first dose of vaccine, which is a huge step forward.

There is still a long way to go, of course, and more potential uncertainty ahead. So I will continue to make sure that older people's voices and concerns are heard, call for action from the Welsh Government and other key bodies, and scrutinise the action and decisions they are taking.

And with the Senedd elections in May just around the corner, it is crucial that the next Welsh Government takes the action I am calling for (see below) to deliver meaningful change for older people and ensure that older people are not left behind as we look towards the future.

As ever, if you need information and advice, or would like to raise any issues and concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Sending you all my very best wishes.

Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales



Manifesto for the 2021 Senedd Election

The choices and decisions of the next Welsh Government will dramatically impact upon older people's lives, both as we recover from the pandemic and into the future.

So it's crucial that the next Welsh Government takes the right action to ensure that older people can live healthy and fulfilling lives, that their rights are upheld, and the significant contribution older people make is both recognised and valued.

In her 'Manifesto for the 2021 Senedd Election', the Commissioner has set out the action that is needed immediately to enable older people to recover from the pandemic and be at the heart of our society, as well as the legislation, policy and resource commitments needed to drive longer-term change and improve older people's lives.

This action includes ensuring people can access the rehabilitation and support they may need following the pandemic, as well as action to make our communities more age friendly and support for older people to remain in or return to work.

The Commissioner is also calling for wider action to support healthy ageing, tackle the abuse of older people, eliminate age discrimination in the workplace, reduce levels of poverty and fuel poverty, and provide greater support for unpaid carers.

In addition, she has identified new legislation that is needed to deliver meaningful change in key areas, which includes legislation to protect and promote older people's rights; a new social care act to increase investment in our social care system, including growing the social care workforce and improving terms and conditions for current and future staff; and legislation to establish a right to digital connectivity for all.

It's crucial that the next Welsh Government uses the voices and experiences of older people across its work to shape policy, practice and decisions.

By taking forward the action the Commissioner is calling for, the next Welsh Government can build on the new partnerships and initiatives now underway, inspire and support new action, and work with and for older people to deliver meaningful change as it leads us in meeting the challenges and seizing the opportunities ahead of us.

You can read the Commissioner's Manifesto for the 2021 Senedd Elections here:

https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/21-01-26/Manifesto_for_the_2021_Senedd_Election.aspx



The Commissioner is calling for a range of action from the next Welsh Government

Commissioner strongly welcomes announcement that powers in the Coronavirus Act to limit older people's rights relating to social care will be suspended

In January, the Commissioner strongly welcomed the announcement from the Welsh Government that powers in the Coronavirus Act to limit older people's rights will be suspended.

The Act, which was passed in the Senedd at the beginning of the pandemic, gave local authorities the power to limit older people's rights to access the social care they require and to have their needs assessed. Whilst assurances have been provided that no local authority has enacted these measures, their existence within the Act put older people's right to care and support at risk.



Changes to the Coronavirus Act to ensure older people's rights are better protected will be made before the end of March

In her response to the Welsh Government consultation held at the end of 2020, the Commissioner re-iterated the concerns she has raised throughout the pandemic about the risk that the Act presented to older people's rights, alongside making clear the crucial role that social care plays in supporting older people throughout Wales.

Discussing the announcement, the Commissioner said:

"I strongly welcome the announcement that provisions within the Coronavirus Act that give local authorities the power to limit older people's rights to have their needs assessed and access the social care support they require will be suspended.

"I have consistently called for these powers to be removed, given the vital support that social care provides to many older people throughout Wales, and the risks these provisions create in terms of potentially limiting older people's rights.

"I would like to thank everyone who added their voice to mine in calling for this crucial action to ensure that older people's rights are protected and upheld at this most challenging of times."

You can read the Welsh Government's statement here:

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-coronavirus-act-2020-suspension-local-authority-care-and-support-wales>

Protecting older people from abuse: removal of upper age-limit for data collection

The Commissioner also strongly welcomed the announcement in January that the upper age limit for data collection relating to crimes against older people will be scrapped.

Until now, the Crime Survey for England and Wales has only collected data for those up to the age of 74, which means there have been concerning gaps in the data available, particularly data relating to older people's experiences of abuse.

This also means that older people are in danger of being rendered invisible to policy- and decision-makers, as there is not a full understanding of the specific ways that abuse can affect older people and the support they may need.

In response to the announcement, the Commissioner said:

"It is estimated that thousands of older people experience abuse in Wales every year, but there is a lack of robust data to help us understand its true scale and impact.

"I have been working with stakeholders and politicians to ensure that gaps in this data are addressed, so I strongly welcome this announcement.

"Improving the data available will help to provide a clearer picture of the ways that older people are affected by abuse, which is crucial to ensure that resources and support can be targeted more effectively.

Following the announcement, the Commissioner met with Prof. Sir Ian Diamond, the UK's National Statistician at the Office of National Statistics, to discuss the plans in place to take this forward. He confirmed that work to improve the data will begin immediately, with the first full set of 'all-ages' data available in 2023.

You can find out more about the Commissioner's work to stop the abuse of older people here: <https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/stopping-abuse/action-group.aspx>



Office for
National Statistics

The Commissioner has met with the UK's National Statistician to discuss plans to close key data gaps relating to abuse

New series of engagement sessions to ensure older people's voices are heard

The Commissioner and her team will be meeting (online) and speaking with older people throughout Wales as part of a series of new engagement sessions taking place throughout March and April.

Eight sessions are planned in total – including a session targeted at older people from BAME communities – building on our engagement with older people during 2020 to capture their voices and experiences of the pandemic, which provided crucial evidence for the Commissioner's Leave No-one Behind report and her Manifesto for the 2021 Senedd Election.



The engagement sessions will give the Commissioner a chance to hear directly from older people about their experiences

The older people who took part last year have been invited back so the Commissioner can hear more from them about their experiences over the past few months, including any issues or challenges they have faced and things that have made a positive difference to their lives.

The sessions will be particularly focused on the impact that the pandemic is having on older people's mental health, as well as the action that can be taken locally to make our communities more age-friendly and accessible for older people.

The information and experiences shared at these sessions will help to guide and shape the Commissioner's work both in the short-term – influencing the action and decisions being taken by the Welsh Government and other key public bodies during the pandemic – and in the longer-term as she develops her work programme for 2021-22.

Taking Action Against Ageism Information Booklet

Would you be able to recognise ageism or age discrimination? Would you know what to do if you were treated differently because of your age?

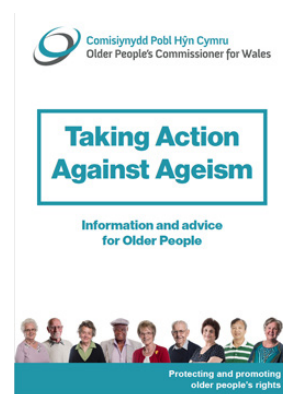
Our Taking Action Against Ageism information booklet provides older people with a range of useful information to help them to identify ageism and empower them to take action to challenge it.

The booklet highlights the ways that ageism and age discrimination can present themselves in a range of settings – such as the workplace, health, care and other services, and within the media – as well as the ways that ageism and discrimination can be challenged.

The booklet also includes information about the legislation that can be used to challenge ageism, as well as details of the organisations that can provide information, advice and support if someone sees or experiences ageism.

You can download a copy of the booklet here: <https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageism/action.aspx>

Or call us on 03442 640670 to request a paper copy.



Spotlight On... Save a Life Cymru: CPR Skills

Would you know what to do if someone you love suffered a cardiac arrest?

Save a Life Cymru is asking people across Wales to learn or refresh their lifesaving CPR skills online so that they are confident of the steps they need to take when a person has a cardiac arrest.

Every year in Wales, over 6,0000 people will suffer a sudden cardiac arrest in the community.

Figures from a Wales Omnibus Survey show that less than half of Welsh adults are confident in giving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Further data shows that one of the main reservations behind not performing CPR is that the people are worried that they would make matters worse.

A person's chance of surviving a cardiac arrest either at home or in the community will decrease by 10% with every passing minute if CPR is not performed. So, having the confidence to act immediately whilst waiting for the ambulance is critical.

From the same research, it has been shown that that only 23% of respondents reported to have undergone any training to use a defibrillator.

Defibrillators are easy to use and will give simple to follow audio and visual commands. But more importantly they will only defibrillate a patient who is in cardiac arrest.

Not many understand the importance of CPR and defibrillation training more than 76-year-old ex-detective Gwyn Roberts. After suffering a cardiac arrest in Llandudno last February, local people rushed to help and performed CPR and applied a defib, saving Gwyn's life.

Gwyn said: "As I crossed the road, my vision blurred, and I felt as though I was going to lose consciousness. In a bid to steady myself, I took one step to my left, leant on a concrete bollard and everything went dark."

"I am incredibly lucky to have been in the right place, at the right time, surrounded by the right people. To each and every person that helped save my life, may I extend my eternal gratitude.

Save a Life Cymru is committed to improving the chances of survival for people who suffer a cardiac arrest in the community, by providing people in Wales with an opportunity to learn lifesaving CPR skills online.

Len Nokes, Emeritus Professor and Chair of Save a Life Cymru said: "Each and every one of us has the power to save a life. Performing CPR and using a defibrillator can make the difference between a full recovery and someone not leaving the hospital. Too many of us have either never learned these life-saving skills or don't have the confidence to use them if we needed to."

By taking a few minutes to learn the basic CPR skills, you can Touch Someone's Life and give them the best possible chance of survival with a good quality of life.

If you would like to learn CPR, visit the Save a Life Cymru website and watch this short training video: <https://gov.wales/save-a-life-cymru>

Our Newsletter

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

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

Please contact us if you would like to be removed from our newsletter distribution list.

Your comments, feedback and stories

We welcome your feedback about our newsletter so please feel free to contact us to share any thoughts or comments that you have.

We also welcome suggestions about potential content for the newsletter, so if you have any information that you would like us to include in future editions, please get in touch.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales 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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