



Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales // Sept 2020

A message from Heléna Herklots CBE, Older People's Commissioner for Wales

This is the first newsletter I've been able to publish for a while and I'm glad to have this opportunity to get in touch with you.

I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and well, and that the past few months haven't been too difficult despite the disruption and challenges we have all been facing.

I know that for many older people the pandemic has been a particularly difficult time and if you are struggling I would urge you to contact my casework team, who have been providing help and support to older people from across Wales throughout the pandemic.



Alongside capturing older people's experiences through my casework, I have also arranged many engagement sessions with older people throughout Wales to hear directly from them about the issues and challenges they have faced, and the action needed to tackle them.

These sessions have been invaluable, and it is clear that many older people are concerned about what the future may hold for them. So as we enter a period of further uncertainty I will continue to stand up and speak out for older people throughout Wales and make sure their voices are heard.

I will also continue working to ensure that older people's rights are upheld and that they can get the help and support they need, scrutinising the action and decisions being taken by the Welsh Government and other public bodies, and holding them to account.

I have been greatly encouraged by the commitment, creativity and solidarity we have seen in communities throughout Wales that has made a positive difference to the lives of so many older people. We will need all this, and more, as we navigate the difficult path ahead of us, but by working together and using older people's experiences to guide us we can ensure that no-one is left behind.

Heléna Herklots CBE

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Leave no-one behind: Action for an age-friendly recovery

In August, the Commissioner called for immediate action from the Welsh Government and other public bodies to ensure that older people are not 'left behind' as Wales begins to move towards its recovery from Covid-19.

Her calls came alongside the publication of her 'Leave no-one behind: Action for an age-friendly' report, which examines the significant impact that Covid-19 has had on older people throughout Wales, and sets out the action needed across a number of key areas – including social care and health, the economy, and our communities – that must be delivered as we move forward to ensure that older people can participate fully in Wales's recovery and can access any support they may need.

The report is based on evidence captured through extensive engagement with older people, who have shared their experiences with the Commissioner throughout the pandemic, as well as information and evidence gathered through ongoing engagement with bodies and organisations working with and for older people.

The Commissioner has identified practical action that must be delivered immediately to tackle issues created by the pandemic, as well as longer-term action designed to tackle the wider structural issues that affect older people which have been exacerbated by Covid-19. This action includes:

- Repealing sections of the Coronavirus Act that risk limiting older people's rights to care and support.
- Establishing a rehabilitation programme for older people who have been affected physically and/or mentally by Covid-19.
- Establishing a dedicated programme to support older workers to remain in work or retrain if they are facing redundancy.
- Investing in a targeted campaign and assistance to increase the take-up of Pension Credit.
- Providing older people with tailored support to get them online, including providing user-friendly devices with access to the internet.

The Commissioner has already begun working with the Welsh Government and other key public bodies to ensure that older people's experiences and needs shape their plans as they move forward, and will use the report as a powerful evidence base to drive change for older people.

Discussing the report, the Commissioner said:

"The pandemic has shone a light on many of the issues faced by older people throughout Wales, and we have seen the disproportionate impact that Covid-19 has had on many groups within society, reflecting long-standing systemic inequalities and discrimination.

"After months of disruption that has had a significant impact on older people, we're now seeing a great deal of discussion and debate about the changes that are needed and what the future will look like.



“But many of the older people I have spoken to are concerned that they will be ‘left behind’ as Wales moves into its recovery phase and will not be able to get the support they may need.

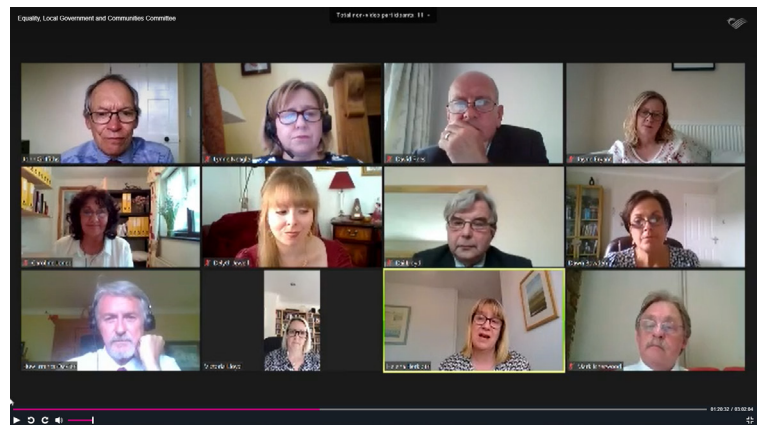
“We have seen many examples of community action throughout Wales that has made a difference to the lives of many older people and as Wales begins to move towards its recovery, we must build upon this – alongside recognising the significant contribution made by older people and promoting intergenerational solidarity – to ensure that the right action is taken and no-one is left behind.”

You can read the **Leave no-one behind** report here: https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/20-08-18/Leave_no-one_behind_Action_for_an_age-friendly_recovery.aspx

Protecting Older People's Rights

Throughout the pandemic, the Commissioner has scrutinised the decisions taken by the Welsh Government and other public bodies, raising concerns and calling for action where she felt that older people's rights were not being sufficiently protected.

In March, the Commissioner established a network of leaders of key organisations that support older people throughout the UK, which includes the Older People's Commissioner for Northern Ireland, Age UK, Independent Age, Age Cymru, Age Scotland, Age NI and Scottish Care. The network has worked together to raise concerns with a powerful, collective voice on issues including older people's rights to treatment and blanket decisions relating to Do Not Attempt CPR notices. Statements issued by the group have received extensive media coverage across Welsh and UK media outlets and have led to changes in approach in Wales and the other UK nations.



The Commissioner gave evidence to the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Equalities Committee, where she raised concerns about older people's rights

The Commissioner also raised a number of concerns relating to older people's rights, and the impact of ageism and age discrimination on older people during the pandemic, when she gave evidence to Senedd Cymru's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, and strongly welcomed their calls for action to reinstate, protect and promote people's rights.

Furthermore, the Commissioner is also working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales to examine the most effective levers, including the use of statutory powers, to undertake further scrutiny of the decisions that have been made by the Welsh Government and other public bodies in order to identify improvements that can be made to ensure that older people's rights are protected.

Protecting and supporting older people living in care homes

From the beginning of the pandemic, the Commissioner called on the Welsh Government to take more action to protect and support older people living in care homes in Wales, in particular the need for testing to be made available to residents and staff in all care homes, something that was initially precluded by the government's testing policy.

The Commissioner called for a published action plan for care homes – covering key issues including access to testing, the supply of personal protective equipment, hospital discharge and financial security – to provide assurance to older people, their families and care home workers that the right action would be taken, at the right time, to protect and support them. This action plan is due to be published in September, and the Commissioner will be closely monitoring its implementation throughout Wales.

In June, the Commissioner also published her 'Care Home Voices' report, as she was concerned that the voices of older people, their families and friends and those working in care homes – 'experts by experience' – were not being sufficiently heard.

The report gives a voice to people living and working in care homes and provides a snapshot of their experiences during the pandemic. Its findings are based on over 120 responses (received during May and June) to a series of questions about people's experiences in care homes during lockdown, the issues and challenges they have faced and the changes and improvements they would like to see.

The report not only highlights issues and challenges, but also some of the good practice that has been making a positive difference to the lives of older people living in care homes in the most difficult circumstances.

The report includes a number of calls for action – based on what older people, their families and friends, and care home staff have shared – which set out what needs to happen, both immediately and in the longer-term, to ensure that older people living in care homes are kept safe and protected, and have the best possible quality of life.

You can read the Care Home Voices Report here: https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/20-06-21/Care_Home_Voices_A_snapshot_of_life_in_care_homes_in_Wales_during_Covid-19.aspx



Supporting older people experiencing, or at risk of, abuse

The Commissioner established an Action Group of over 30 organisations who are working together to ensure that older people can get the support they need to keep them safe and protected from abuse and crime.

The group has been to raising awareness of the things that older people can do to keep themselves safe and protected, and the role the wider public can play in protecting older people. Alongside this, the group has been promoting the services and support available that can help older people, as well as encouraging people to report any concerns they may have about an older person's safety or well-being.

To support this, the group has produced an information pack, which provides useful information and resources about how older people can stay safe and protect themselves from abuse, scams and crime. The group has also issued several proactive statements – relating to identifying abuse and reporting concerns, crimes and scams that have emerged during the pandemic, and staying safe online, and has used social media to quickly and widely distribute key information, messages and resources.

Members of the action group have formed a Steering Group, to ensure a strategic approach to tackle issues that have arisen as a result of the pandemic and a number of long-standing issues relating to safeguarding and protection. They have developed a strategy that will be taken forward by the Action Group, which includes:

- Mapping the wider services and support available for older people who are experiencing or at risk of abuse, identifying gaps and good practice, and use this as a basis for putting in place the services and support required.
- Ensuring that data and evidence on abuse includes older people including by removing the age limit of 74 on England and Wales crime data.
- Enabling and empowering older people to feel confident to share their experiences of abuse encouraging others to speak out.

The Commissioner has called on the Welsh Government to draw upon on the work of the action group to develop and publish an all-Wales action plan to stop the abuse of older people and ensure appropriate resources are available to support its delivery.

Find out more about the work of the Action Group here: <https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/stopping-abuse/action-group.aspx>

We can all play a part in protecting older people from abuse.

Under the current lockdown measures, many of the usual opportunities to identify abuse have been lost.

This means that older people could be missing out on potentially life-saving help and support.

While our contact with others is limited at this time, there are still signs we can all look out for that could indicate someone is experiencing abuse:

- Physical signs, such as unexplained bruising or injuries
- Changes in behaviour
- Becoming withdrawn
- Not leaving the house (even for daily exercise)
- Changes in contact with family or friends
- Changes in the way someone uses social media

If you are concerned that an older person is experiencing abuse or is at risk, contact your Council's Safeguarding Team or call the Police on 101 (in an emergency call 999).



#GetHelpStaySafe
#YouAreNotAlone

You are not alone. We can help you and protect you from abuse.

This is a difficult and worrying time for everyone, but will be particularly worrying for older people living with abuse.

We also know that the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown measures currently in place are affecting relationships and can lead to domestic abuse.

There is no need to suffer in silence. We know that seeking help may be incredibly difficult, but it is important you get help if you need it.

The Hourglass Cymru Helpline offers support specifically for older people and can provide information, help and support, whether you are experiencing abuse or concerned about someone else.

0808 808 8141

For help and support outside of office hours, call the 24-hour Use Fear Helpline on 0808 8010 800. In cases of emergency, dial 999. The police will be there to help you. If you need help but are unable to speak, you can call 999, followed by 55 when prompted and help will be sent to you.



#GetHelpStaySafe
#YouAreNotAlone

Criminals are experts at impersonating others to exploit you

Criminals can contact you by phone, email, text, on social media, or in person and will try to trick you into parting with your money, sharing personal information, or buying goods or services that don't exist.

We can all take action to protect ourselves against crime and scams. If you are contacted unexpectedly, remember to:

STOP. CHALLENGE. PROTECT

STOP: Take a moment to think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

CHALLENGE: Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

PROTECT: Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen victim to a scam and report it to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 2346.



#GetHelpStaySafe
#YouAreNotAlone

Protect yourself from online crime and scams

Make sure you know what to look out for to keep your money and personal information safe and secure online

Would you know how to spot an email scam or fake website?

Do you know how to keep yourself safe on social media?

Could you spot a romance scam?

By knowing what to look out for, you can protect yourself from online crime and scams, and keep your money and personal information safe and secure online.

Visit Get Safe Online and get the information and practical advice you need to protect yourself from online crime and scams.

www.getsafeonline.org



#GetHelpStaySafe

The Commissioner developed a range of resources to raise awareness about abuse and crimes

Engaging with older people throughout Wales

Given the crucial role that engaging with older people plays in helping to guide and shape the Commissioner's work and priorities, the Commissioner has arranged online engagement sessions throughout the pandemic to hear directly from older people across Wales about their experiences and the changes and improvements they would like to see, to ensure that their voices guide the action and decisions taken by the Welsh Government and other public bodies in both the short- and longer-term.

The Commissioner has also met regularly (initially weekly; now fortnightly) with the leaders of the key national older people's organisations in Wales (Active Wales, Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA), National Pensioners Convention Wales and the Welsh Senate of Older People) to hear from them about the experiences of their members, and any issues and challenges they have faced, and to provide information and updates that can be cascaded to older people, particularly those who are not online.

The evidence captured during these engagement sessions has helped to shape the Commissioner's 'Care Home Voices' report and her 'Leave No-one Behind' report, as well as supporting her wider scrutiny and work to influence policy and practice, both nationally and locally.

Providing help and support to older people and their families

The Commissioner has provided help and support to older people and their families on a range of issues relating to Covid-19 through her casework team. To manage the increased demand, the Commissioner redeployed some staff resources and put arrangements in place to ensure that older people contacting her by phone or letter experienced no disruption in the casework service.

Alongside this direct support to individuals, the Commissioner developed a coronavirus information hub and accessible 'Q&A' section on her website to provide older people and their families with up-to-date information and guidance, as well as details about local services and support. To date, the Hub and FAQs section have been visited by over 3,000 individuals, with some visiting multiple times. The Commissioner will continue to update and add to this as new information and guidance becomes available.

The Commissioner also used her social media channels to share the latest information and guidance from the Welsh Government and other key bodies and organisations, and set up a new Facebook group – Together We Are Stronger – which provides a space for older people, their families and professionals to connect and chat, ask questions, post information and find out about help and support available to them.

You can contact the Commissioner's casework team by calling 03442 640 670 or emailing ask@olderpeoplewales.com. You can also write to the Commissioner at the address below.

You can access the Covid-19 information hub by visiting <https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/FAQs.aspx>.

Spotlight on... Flu Vaccine

Public Health Wales highlights why it's important that older people get vaccinated to protect themselves from Flu...

Getting your flu vaccine this year is more important than ever

Every year we see flu circulating in Wales, with people admitted to hospital, and this year we expect to see both flu and COVID-19 circulating so it's really important to get protection against flu this year.

We don't yet have a vaccine to protect against COVID-19, but we do have vaccines to protect against flu. Annual flu vaccine is one of the best ways we can protect against catching or spreading flu, and free flu vaccine is offered to those who are most likely to be very unwell with flu if they catch it. That includes people aged 65 and over in Wales, and care home residents who are all eligible to get a free NHS flu vaccine. It is also offered to the people who care for those most vulnerable to becoming ill with flu, to reduce the risk of them spreading flu to those around them. This group includes care home staff with regular client contact and carers- whether employed or delivering care on a more informal or voluntary basis.

Flu vaccines are now available in GP surgeries and community pharmacies. Eligible adults can get their flu vaccine at their GP surgery, or if it is difficult to get there, ask for advice at the community pharmacy as many give NHS flu vaccines now. Care home staff and domiciliary carers can get their free flu vaccine at a community pharmacy. (Most community pharmacies now participate in the national flu vaccination scheme so can give free NHS flu vaccines to eligible individuals)

Flu vaccination is the single best way to protect against catching or spreading flu so if you are eligible please get vaccinated soon. Flu spreads easily and can cause serious complications. Thousands of people die from flu in the UK in a typical year.

Having your flu vaccine will help to protect you from catching flu, and also help reduce the risks of you spreading flu to the people around you such as family members who may be very vulnerable such as young children, pregnant women, people with long-term health conditions or those older than you.

Last year in Wales nearly half a million people aged 65 and over in Wales got their flu vaccine, and we expect that to increase this year. So make sure you don't miss out.

Visit www.beatflu.org or www.curwchffliw.org for more information

Vaccinations save lives, and flu vaccine isn't the only immunisation recommended for older people. If you are aged 65 or over you should also ask about getting a pneumococcal vaccination, and if you are aged 70 to 79 (inclusive) don't forget to get your shingles vaccine.

Gall y fflw fod yn ddifrifol iawn.
Amddiffynnwch eich hun ac eraill - mynnwch brechiad.

curwchffliw.org



Flu can be very serious.
Protect yourself and others
– get vaccinated.

beatflu.org

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.

How to contact the Commissioner:

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

Phone: 03442 640 670
Email: ask@olderpeoplewales.com

Website: www.olderpeoplewales.com
Twitter: [@talkolderpeople](https://twitter.com/talkolderpeople)

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