
MAKING WALES A GOOD PLACE TO GROW OLDER, NOT JUST FOR SOME BUT FOR EVERYONE

An independent voice and champion
for older people across Wales

**Older People's
Commissioner for Wales**
The Commissioner's Report
2011/12

An independent voice and champion for older people across Wales

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**Older People's Commissioner
for Wales**
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru



Foreword

In June 2012 I took up post as the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. For the next four years I am responsible for championing the cause of older people across Wales, for standing up and speaking out on their behalf. Supported by my team, the Commission, our role is to be a source of information, advocacy and support for older people and to ensure that their interests are taken into account and addressed by the work of public bodies across Wales, such as the Welsh Government, Local Government, the NHS and other regulated services.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to my predecessor Ruth Marks MBE, who established the Commission in 2008. This annual report is a reflection of the work that she led, but for which I am now accountable as the current Commissioner. I would also like to thank the staff of the Commission for their commitment and dedication to improving the lives of older people within Wales.

This annual report is an opportunity for me to outline what the Commission has been doing to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, but more than that, it is also an opportunity for me to demonstrate how we have been representing and standing up for older people over the past year. It reflects the impact our work has had and highlights some of the issues that I believe Wales must focus on. It also enables me to outline our priorities and work for 2012/13.

Any annual report from a public body should begin with the people that we are here to serve. There are over

700,000 people aged 60 and over in Wales, the age group that I represent. They are the backbone of our nation, our communities and our families. They give to Wales an immeasurable sum of knowledge, experience and practical help. Through volunteering, acting as carers, providing support as grandparents and in so many other ways, they are the unseen workforce of Wales. Research by WRVS (formerly Women's Royal Voluntary Service) shows that older people are worth £1 billion a year to the Welsh economy, almost £3 million a day.¹ The value of childcare and volunteering alone is £750 million per year. All of us within Wales must recognise older people for the valuable asset that they are, an asset that we must invest more in.

It is important that we understand who older people are: they are not a group apart, nor do they all have the same needs. Many require very little support, whilst others require extensive support and care and can be amongst the most vulnerable in our society. Older people very rarely recognise themselves as 'older' and age alone is not the best way to define people. It is the circumstances in which people find themselves, and the extent to which they have voice, choice and control over their lives, that often lead to people needing support and care.

Older people are our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents, those we love and care about. Sometimes, however, they are also without family, friends or anyone to turn to. Remembering this should drive us all, within public service in Wales, to set the very highest possible standards in respect of support and care.

Within Wales we have, from the Welsh Government and across the political spectrum, a long standing commitment to listening to and supporting older people. The evidence of this can be seen in initiatives such as free prescriptions,

concessionary bus passes, the fair charging cap on home based social care, our Older People's Strategy, our Older People's Champions, our network of 50+ Forums and 50+ Strategy Co-ordinators and the establishment four years ago of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, the first in the world. We also have some excellent public services, many dedicated public service staff and our Third and Voluntary sectors are a credit to Wales. I would like to publicly give credit to the work that so many others do, those in public service, carers and volunteers, to support older people. I know we share the same aspiration, to make Wales a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

However, we cannot be complacent. Whilst we have much that we can and should celebrate about our work in Wales, for too many older people the lives that they lead are simply not good enough.

110,000 older people live in poverty² and concerns around debt and being able to pay for essential needs are growing amongst older people. Approximately 34,000 older people are victims of abuse every year³, yet abuse of older people is still not being sufficiently addressed and many older people are not able to access the support and justice they need and should have. Only 10% of older people are actively engaged in basic skills training⁴ and digital literacy levels amongst older people are a particular concern, given that access to vital services and support are increasingly only available online. Half of people over 65 and two-thirds of people over 85 have a chronic health condition, with half having a disability that impacts upon their life.⁵

Too many older people don't have the basic information they need to make important decisions. Too many older people feel

discriminated against, don't feel they are listened to and have no control over the support they receive. Often, older people ask for 'just a little bit of help' to stay independent, but too frequently it's not made available. All too often a crisis has to happen before support is provided. Many of our carers feel unsupported and struggle to cope, often at great personal cost. None of us in public service should feel that the above is acceptable.

Whilst we have made significant progress in a range of areas, we must speed up the pace of change. Those of us in public service must set ourselves challenging targets, which lead to significant and tangible improvements in the quality of life of older people in Wales. We must maintain our focus and commitment, despite the difficult times in which we all live, to making Wales a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

Sarah Rochira

¹ Source: WRVS (2011), 'Gold age pensioners: Valuing the Socio-Economic Contribution of Older People in the UK'

² Joseph Rowntree Foundation report 'Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2011'

³ The UK Study of Abuse and Neglect of Older People (2006), Prevalence Survey for the Department of Health and Comic Relief, found that the prevalence of mistreatment in Wales was 6% of those aged over 65. The 2011 Census reports that there are 563,000 people aged 65 and over in Wales.

⁴ Age Alliance Wales response to Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry into residential care for older people (2011)

⁵ *ibid.*





Our work over the past year

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

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

This section of the report provides an overview of what the Commission did over the past year to both discharge these statutory responsibilities and stand up for and speak out on behalf of older people across Wales.

1. Listening to and directly supporting older people

Our priorities are set by what older people tell us matters most to them. Over the past year, the Commission met with many older people across Wales to hear about the issues and concerns affecting them to help inform our work, to raise awareness of the work of the Commission and to ensure that older people are aware of the ways in which we can support them and, in doing so, help to make a difference to their lives.

The Commission has a dedicated Enquiries and Support Team who provide specific support to older people and those who support them, such as carers, family members and others, in the following ways:

- putting older people in touch with organisations who can help them access the support they need or provide assistance in resolving issues
- providing direct support, which can include advocacy, if an older person has been experiencing difficulties with a service provider
- supporting an older person to make a formal complaint and monitor how their complaint is dealt with

The Commission's Enquiries and Support Team was contacted by 754 people last year, seeking advice and assistance on a wide range of issues. The five most common issues we were contacted about were Care (26.3%), Health (16.7%), Transport (9.6%), Financial Issues (8.2%) and Housing (7.8%).

We do not duplicate services provided by other agencies and organisations, such as advice lines run by the Third sector or Citizens Advice Bureaux or Local Authority services.

The issues raised with our Enquiries and Support Team provide us with valuable information on the issues of concern to older people and, alongside our direct engagement with older people, help to guide our work.

Case Study - Transport

Good public transport is absolutely vital for many older people, not only as a means for those without their own transport to access essential services, but also as a way to maintain independence through getting 'out and about' on a regular basis and keeping in touch with friends and family. Social contact reduces loneliness and isolation and is a key aspect of older people's health and overall wellbeing.

A large number of older people contacted the Commission last year to raise concerns, both about transport generally and specifically about the Welsh Government's announcement that it was to cut funding for Community Transport projects across Wales. Older people were concerned that this proposed funding cut would have left them, particularly those living in rural and remote areas of Wales, without any means of transportation.

Information gathered from the large number of letters and telephone calls we received over a period of several months was used as evidence to present to key decision-makers. The Commissioner met with the Welsh Government Minister with responsibility for transport and presented accounts from older people about the impact of being left without any means of transportation and, effectively, unable to leave their homes.

The Welsh Government considered this evidence, together with information provided by other groups, and shortly afterwards informed us that its decision to cut community transport funding had been reversed while a thorough evaluation of each of the services under threat was undertaken.

Giving voice directly to older people is one of the most powerful ways that we can ensure that their concerns are addressed and their needs are met.

Case Study - Community Services

Budgetary constraints are having an inevitable impact on a range of public services across Wales. These alone should not be used to justify reductions in the services provided to older people. It is important that older people are not disproportionately affected by the difficult choices that have to be made by public service providers.

Many older people and their representatives contacted the Commission to raise their concerns about the actions of their local authorities and the impact of reductions in services. Many told us that they felt they had been left out of the decision-making process. It is vital that older people are involved in decisions that impact on the services they receive, and often rely on, and that this is done in an appropriate and timely manner and at the earliest stage possible.

Particular concerns were raised in relation to the potential closure of day centres across Wales. The Commissioner contacted local authorities across Wales, stressing the importance of older people's voices being heard and the need for older people to be an integral part of consultation processes. These messages were also circulated to the media and published in newspapers in areas affected by imminent day centre closures.

Day centres are not just a place to provide services to older people. They play a vital role in maintaining independence, reducing loneliness and isolation and are, for many, a lifeline.

Issues relating to community services are one of the most frequently raised issues by older people. Continued pressure from the Commission and older people themselves will include scrutiny of local government spending plans, engagement and consultation processes and the development of new Community Plans.

Case Study - Health

Following the publication of its 'Dignified Care?' report in 2011, the Commission received many letters from older people sharing their experiences of healthcare in Wales and raising their own concerns.

One older person contacted us to raise concerns about his brother, who had experienced a lack of privacy and dignity at his local hospital.

Mr. R told us that he had noticed a number of outward facing ground floor windows on wards that enabled passers-by to look directly inside. Staff had changed his brother's clothes in full view of these windows.

The Commission contacted the Health Board to raise this matter, seeking immediate action. The Health Board investigated and undertook to address the situation. We asked to be kept up to date with progress.

The Health Board soon confirmed that all of the windows in question had been covered with an opaque privacy film, allowing for the complete privacy of patients on the ward. They also informed us that all windows on the lower ground floors would be refurbished in the same way.

This case highlights that things that make a difference to older people's sense of dignity while in hospital are often overlooked and that older people's direct voices, reflecting their experiences, are a powerful way in which to drive change and service improvement.

We consider it a priority that the NHS publishes robust patient satisfaction outcomes that include an assessment of dignity and that these are routinely used to evaluate and enhance the quality of patient care.

We know our work makes a difference to older people because they tell us it does.

These quotes are taken from correspondence we have received from older people.

“I am extremely grateful...for all your help and perseverance in this matter and cannot thank you enough. Patients’ dignity and respect has been restored at last.”

“Thank you very much for spending time on this case. It is the point of principle so this will not happen to older people in future.”

“I would like to say thank you for the quality of service. Advocacy services are unavailable to me in my area. Your assistance in contacting social services has been really helpful.”

“It was always reassuring to know that a person in an influential agency was concerned with our case.”

“The Commission is a very much needed service for the older people of Wales.”

“Thank you for all the help and guidance I have received from the Commission for Wales regarding the Equality Bill and Attendance Allowance, a really great service in all aspects.”

Making a difference to the lives of older people, in a tangible way that has real value to them, underpins all of our work as a public service organisation.

Further examples of individuals provided with direct support by us can be found at www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info together with a selection of responses from older people.





2. Encourage best practice in the treatment of older people and the wider promotion of the interests of older people in Wales

Home Care

Over 18,800 people aged over 65 receive domiciliary (i.e. within the home) care services every year.⁶ These services play a vital role in keeping people independent, engaged with and contributing to their local communities. Last year we commissioned research into these care services, asking older people directly what they value about the help they receive and if there were aspects about the care they receive that could be improved.

We received over a thousand responses, which were analysed by the Welsh Institute of Health and Social Care.

We will be reporting on this work later this year and will use it to guide our work in this area for 2012/13, reflecting the increasing priority the Commission is placing on a range of issues relating to social care.

Money

Around 80,000 pensioners in Wales rely solely on the State Pension and other government benefits and have no other source of income.⁷ Around 1 in 5 pensioners (110,000 people) in Wales live below the poverty line.⁸

The Commission worked with Citizens Advice Cymru to further strengthen our evidence base on the type of issues that older people are concerned about. This evidence will be used to develop our own work programme for the coming

year and to support the work of others, in particular the Welsh Government, through its Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

We met with and challenged UK Ministers regarding the concerns of older people in Wales around pension reform, pension credit and welfare benefits. We also raised concerns around the funding of social care and how plans to respond to the Dilnot Commission's recommendations would impact on Wales.

We led, as the only representative from Wales, a discussion at the UK Government's Advisory Forum on Ageing that identified inequality in women's pensions as a priority for the Pensions Minister to address. This prompted the government to cap the increase at eighteen months, helping 250,000 women in their mid-50s across the UK who were facing a two year increase in their state pension age.

Transport

Older people are the biggest users of public transport. Public transport has a significant, but not well enough understood, impact upon the quality of life and health of older people. 40% of people feel that their local bus service fails to meet their travelling needs to the local town, while 65% believe it is inadequate for travel to their local hospital, which may affect older people who are socially isolated more than others.⁹ It is vital, to their health and wellbeing, that older people are consulted when policies are being implemented that will directly affect them and their travel choices.

Many older people, mostly living in rural areas, contacted the Commission raising concerns about the lack of public transport, with particular concerns being raised about the

Welsh Government's plan to cease funding for the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI). They told us that they rely on community transport schemes, not only to access a range of essential services, but also to remain socially active, integrated and connected to friends and family. In response, we wrote to and met with Carl Sargeant, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, expressing our concerns about the impact on older people of the potential closure of community transport services. The Minister subsequently announced plans to extend the CTCFI funding and undertake a further evaluation of these schemes.

Housing

Older people, like all of us, want to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. The quality and suitability of their housing is a significant factor in being able to do so.

Appropriate housing adaptations and timely repairs are of major significance in maintaining independence, helping to prevent falls and other injuries within the home. This is particularly important because 1 in 3 people aged over 65 live on their own, with nearly half of this group aged 85 or more.¹⁰

We worked in partnership with Care and Repair Cymru, Age Cymru and the College of Occupational Therapists to produce a leaflet so that older people have better information about housing adaptations and repairs. As well as being available online, 40,000 copies of the leaflet have been distributed across Wales.

Safe and suitable homes for older people, whether they are owner-occupiers or tenants, will be an ongoing priority for the Commission.

Raising Concerns

We all want older people, especially those who are most vulnerable, to be safe. It is therefore vital to ensure that those who care for older people are able to freely raise concerns about quality of care. We commissioned Cardiff University to research the culture in Wales that surrounds raising concerns in health and social care settings (care homes and domiciliary care), any barriers to raising concerns and the effect of this on the care of older people.

We also asked Public Concern at Work (PCaW) to produce a report for us, examining the information it holds from whistleblowers in Wales on its database. As well as analysing that data, the report contains case studies that provide detailed examples of the experience of whistle-blowing in Wales. The research report will be published in 2012/13 and the PCAW report is available on our website - http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/12-08-08/Raising_concerns_in_the_workplace.aspx.

We will be using evidence from both reports to inform wider discussions in Wales about how workplace culture can support those who want to raise concerns about the care of older people.

Protecting older people who are at specific risk of poor treatment, harm or abuse, must be a priority for us in Wales. We must strengthen our safeguarding arrangements and ensure that those who raise concerns are both listened to and supported.

Information and Advice

Information and advice plays a significant role in supporting independence, making appropriate decisions, maintaining health and maximising income. It also enables older people to find that ‘little bit of extra help’ which is very often available, particularly from Third sector and Voluntary organisations when they need it. Because this is an issue so frequently raised by older people, we commissioned and produced an overview of current information and advice services across Wales. This report found that whilst there is much good practice, it is inconsistent and, for many older people, accessing essential information and advice is a postcode lottery. As a result, many older people simply don’t know about the extensive help and support that is available. This is of major concern.

Following the publication of this report, we met public bodies across Wales to identify areas for improvement and examples of good practice. We held a conference to consult on potential guidance for public bodies.

Building on this in 2012/13, we will issue guidance to the statutory sector, regulated bodies and regulators regarding the effective provision and use of information and advice.

One of the most frequently heard comments from older people is “why didn’t anybody tell me”. A more systematic and outcome based approach to the provision of basic information and advice is one of the most effective things that we can do to help older people maintain their independence.

References

- ⁶ Welsh Government 'Social Services Statistics 2010-11 (31 March 2011)
- ⁷ Older people with no private income. The Poverty Site: the UK site for statistics on poverty and social exclusion, Wales, older people section. February 2009.
- ⁸ Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 - 2006/07. Department for Work and Pensions. 2008.
- ⁹ A Statistical Focus on Age in Wales 2009 Edition (Welsh Assembly Government/Office for National Statistics)
- ¹⁰ A Statistical Focus on Older People in Wales 2008 Edition, Welsh Assembly Government/Office for National Statistics





3. Keeping under review the effectiveness of legislation as it applies to older people and promoting the provision of opportunities for and the elimination of discrimination against older people in Wales

Very few older people are aware of their human rights and also struggle to know how to secure them. The Equality Act 2010, which came into force on 1 October 2010, is a step forward in ensuring that older people who receive services, care or support are not discriminated against and are able to challenge any discrimination they may face. However, we have yet to see the impact of this Act on the lives of older people and it is important that the opportunities presented by this legislation are maximised by those who support older people.

The UK Government initially announced a delay in implementing the provision in the 2010 Equality Act on eliminating age discrimination in the provision of goods, services and public functions. The Commission expressed its dissatisfaction that discrimination on grounds of age had not been implemented. We contacted the Secretary of State for Wales and met with the UK Equalities Minister. The UK Government made a subsequent announcement that the ban will be in force from 1 October 2012.

Promoting age equality and ending age discrimination are critical to enable older people to live fulfilled lives, free from prejudice and negative stereotypes. Many older people in Wales face some form of discrimination on a day to day basis. To give direct voice to the experiences of older people with regard to discrimination, we commissioned research and will be publishing this on the UN International Day of Older Persons in 2012.

Adult Protection

Protecting those who are vulnerable and the victims of abuse is one of the Commission's priorities and must be a priority for Wales. It is unacceptable that approximately 34,000 older people within Wales are the victims of abuse, one of the highest levels in the UK. We continued to call upon the Welsh Government to continue to develop and implement strengthened adult protection legislation in Wales. The inclusion of strengthened arrangements around adult protection in the new Social Services Bill is an important step forward.

In December 2011, we ran an Elder Abuse Conference with Age Cymru to grow our understanding within Wales around issues of abuse, how abuse can be prevented, how victims of abuse can best be supported and to form a consensus on the way forward.

We will continue to advise on how to best support and meet the needs of older people who are victims of domestic abuse. We acted as an advisor to the Welsh Government's Access to Justice for Older People pilot scheme, which ran in Swansea throughout 2011. The pilot scheme is being evaluated by Aberystwyth University and we look forward to the findings of that evaluation.

'Protection of Older People in Wales: A Guide to the Law' was launched on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2011 (June 15) to help health and social care practitioners, occupational therapists, independent advocates, students, lawyers and relatives of older people to navigate the existing law as well as reduce confusion about the law.

Over a thousand copies of the guide have been distributed over the past year and it is regularly downloaded from our website and the websites of other organisations.

4. Scrutinise public bodies and other regulated services

Older people are major users of public services. It is therefore vital that those who provide public services understand the needs of older people and deliver support and care in a way that effectively meets these needs, including cultural needs. Whilst we have many examples of outstanding practice in Wales, too frequently older people are let down by public services. Our work over 2011/12 has focused on:

‘Dignified Care?’ Review

Our ‘Dignified Care?’ Review found examples of ‘shamefully inadequate’ treatment of older people within hospitals in Wales. We made twelve practical recommendations for Local Health Boards, Velindre NHS Trust, Local Authorities and the Welsh Government, aimed at improving the way older people are treated and protecting their dignity.

Over the past year we have been working with the NHS and others in Wales to review progress, share good practice and support improvements in the quality of care. All the Health Boards, the Trust, and the Welsh Government now have explicit action plans in place. As a result of our recommendations, there are now unannounced dignity spot-checks in Welsh hospitals by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, more matrons on wards, dignity and respect is a Tier One priority for the NHS and dementia services are being improved.

In Autumn 2012 we will be holding a Dignity Conference jointly with Age Cymru and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. We will be making public our views on the progress made to date in delivering the action agreed by the NHS and others in Wales.

Review of Advocacy Provision in Care Homes

Advocacy services are highly valued by those older people that have used them. For people that are considering entering a care home, living in a care home, or when a care home is closing, they are particularly vital. However, for many older people this advocacy support is not available. In order to give a voice directly to older people on this issue, the Commission launched a Review into advocacy in care homes in Wales in September 2011, assessing whether, and to what extent, current arrangements are effective in safeguarding and promoting the interests of older people.

We obtained information from a selection of care homes in all Local Authorities and Local Health Boards about the advocacy arrangements in place. We interviewed residents in care homes across Wales (as well as relatives, care home managers and care home staff), ensuring that their voices and experiences are at the heart of our findings.

Following on from our research, we will publish recommendations in Autumn 2012 with the objective of creating lasting change in the way that advocacy is perceived and understood and to improve the consistency and quality of independent advocacy services across Wales.

Welsh Government Guidance on the closure of Care Homes

Older people and their families continually raise concerns with the Commission about the interests of those who are living in care homes, especially those that are closing. Some people are not receiving the support they should have, and need, when the homes in which they live are closing.

We wrote to the First Minister, setting out the limitations of the current guidance and making recommendations for its strengthening. These included recommendations to increase access to independent advocacy services for older people and action to fulfil the legal duty to provide Independent Mental Capacity Advocates in certain circumstances. The report also called for good practice from Wales, and elsewhere in the UK, to be included as part of the updated guidance (www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info).

Agreement has now been reached that enhanced guidance will be published in 2013.

We must remember that care homes are people's homes. For many older people, the loss of their home can cause real distress and fear, particularly for those who are already vulnerable and may be without friends and family to support them. The closure of care homes, as well as the quality of care provided, will be an ongoing issue for the Commission.

Forward scrutiny

Within Wales we have many public services that we can be proud of. However, older people raise with the Commission, on a consistent basis, a number of issues that must be addressed by our public services. These include:

- A frequent lack of joined up service delivery
- Timeliness of services and ease of access
- The extent to which they have voice, choice and control in the way services are delivered.

As part of our ongoing engagement, the Commission has found many examples of good practice in the delivery of public services. However, we must get better within Wales at using the knowledge and the examples of good service that we have, ensuring that good practice becomes standard practice.

Whilst the Commission has a clear role to play in supporting this, we will be increasing our scrutiny of services, both formally and informally and, where we consider it appropriate, laying down explicit expectations in respect of service delivery. Where necessary, this will be using our statutory powers, particularly in relation to the issuing of guidance.





Forward Look

As the new Commissioner, I set five priorities for the Commission for my first four months in office. These are:

- 1 To build on our engagement with older people across Wales and ensure that we are directly talking with and listening to more older people than ever before, including those whose voices are often not heard. Our new Engagement Roadshow began on my first day in office and will continue over the next four years.
<http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Home/Roadshow.aspx>
- 2 To develop and publish an impactful work programme for the Commission that clearly lays out what we will be doing over the coming year. This was published in September 2012 and is our first published work programme. A copy can be found here:
www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info
- 3 To build and further develop effective partnerships with a range of organisations across the Public and Third and Voluntary sectors, with a view to aligning our work, sharing our resources, knowledge and skills and establishing a strong consensus around what we all want to achieve.
- 4 To raise the profile of older people's issues, with a particular focus on combating negative stereotypes of older people within the media.
www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info

- 5 To develop and publish, for debate, the Commission's new four-year Strategic Plan, setting out what I see as the key challenges for all of us within public service in Wales and the Commission's own priorities for the next four years.
www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info

As Commissioner, it is also for me to set the priorities for the work of the Commission for the coming year. These are based on what older people, and those who support older people, have told us matters to them. In 2012/13, our work will be focused around the following areas:

- Challenging age discrimination
- Reducing poverty and financial concerns
- Paying for and access to social care
- Support to unpaid carers
- Developing better public services
- Dementia services and support
- Advocacy arrangements in care homes
- Provision of information and advice
- Adult safeguarding and protection
- Dignity and respect in hospitals
- Ageing Well in Wales

I will also be publishing an evaluation of progress made by the NHS in Wales in respect of improving dignity in care.

In addition to a range of work related to the above, in the coming year we will also be:

- Increasing our direct support to older people through our Enquiries and Support Team and continuing to use the voices of individuals to drive change for greater numbers of older people.

- Developing a new multi-agency partnership programme of work focused on the concept of Ageing Well, to support Wales in planning and preparing better for the needs of an ageing population.
- Leading the development of an integrated approach across Wales to research relating to older people and older people's issues, with the aim of maximising funding available to support research and its practical application.
- Raising awareness of age discrimination and the need for stronger legal rights for older people that can be used to better safeguard older people in Wales and ensure they receive the services and support they need.
- Supporting the development of Welsh legislation to ensure it adequately reflects the needs of older people and is impact and outcome focused.
- Taking forward specific action to ensure that older people have a strong voice when in particular situations of vulnerability, such as care home closures.
- Monitoring the impact of reductions in services on older people, to ensure that there is not disproportionate impact upon older people.
- Strengthening the direct voice of older people in relation to engagement and consultation around future public service provision.

- Working with others in public service to develop a better understanding of the concept of wellbeing and service outcomes that have relevance and make a difference to the lives of older people.

Further information relating to the above can be found in our published work programme for 2012/13

www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info).

My new four-year Strategic Plan will lay down a range of challenges for all of us in public service within Wales. I will be working with and supporting the wider public and Third and Voluntary sectors across Wales to do more. I will also, where necessary, lay down clear expectations in respect of action and seek evidence of their implementation and impact.

We have done much in Wales for older people, but we need to do more. We need to ensure that best practice becomes standard practice, that older people feel valued and receive the support they need, not just when at risk of harm, to help them stay independent and to have a life that has meaning and value. All of us in public service must play our part in making this a reality. This is the challenge I've set, as Older People's Commissioner for Wales, both to myself as Commissioner and to all of us in Wales who care about, care for, or are responsible for supporting, older people.

I look forward to my four years as Older People's Commissioner for Wales and playing my part in making sure that Wales is a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

Sarah Rochira





How we go about our business

Our staff

During the year we employed an average of 25.42 full time equivalent staff (27.04 in 2010/11). More information about the Commissioner's remuneration policy can be found within the Remuneration Report of the Annual Accounts.

We achieved Investors in People status in June 2011. This built upon the success of gaining bronze status in the Small Workplace Health Award the previous year. We are committed to equality of opportunity and seek to employ a diverse workforce.

During 2011/12 the Commission consulted upon its Equality Scheme as required by the Welsh Government and in accordance with the public duties of the Equality Act 2010. A copy of the scheme is available on our website.

Budget

The Commission is funded by, but operationally independent of, the Welsh Government and is accountable to the National Assembly for Wales for the use of resources. In 2011/12 the Commission received funding of £1.747million to fund its activities.

The Auditor General issued an unqualified audit certificate on the 2011/12 Annual Accounts.

Good governance

The Commissioner, as Accounting Officer, is responsible for putting in place appropriate arrangements for the management and control of the resources in the Commission, including sound governance arrangements and the identification and management of risk. These arrangements are included in the Governance Statement within the Annual Accounts.

Our internal auditors' opinion states that, based on the work undertaken for the year ended 31 March 2012, the Commission has a basically sound system of internal control, which should provide substantial assurance regarding the achievement of the Commission's objectives. In the coming year, we will be developing transparent performance indicators to measure the impact of the work of the Commission.

Arrangements have been put in place to safeguard the security of information held by the Commission. This includes personal data held relating to enquiries made on behalf of individual older people in Wales and evidence gathered by the Commissioner in the carrying out of her functions. There have been no breaches of data security in 2011/12.

In 2011/12 there was only one formal complaint to the Commissioner that required investigation under our complaints procedure. The complaint was investigated but not upheld.

We received four requests under the Freedom of Information Act and one subject access request under the Data Protection Act.

We also published our first Annual Report against our Welsh Language Scheme. A copy of the scheme is available on our website (www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/info).

The 2011/12 audited Annual Accounts are available on our website www.olderpeoplewales.com or on request by contacting us by emailing ask@olderpeoplewales.com or by telephone on 08442 640670.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

I would like to formally thank the staff of the Commission, all of our partners and colleagues across Wales who have helped us take forward our work over the past year. Above all, I would like to thank the many, many, older people, and those who support and care for them, who have given so generously of their time, wisdom, knowledge and have at times shared with us their hopes and fears.

Documents

Any documents referred to in this Report are available on our website at www.olderpeoplewales.com or on request.

You can obtain a copy of the full audited annual accounts for 2010/11. Email ask@olderpeoplewales.com or view them on our website.

None of the photographs used in this Report relate to the case studies and contacts mentioned in the Report. However, all of the photographs within this report are of people that we have met and spoken with as we go about our work.

Contact Us

If you would like more information about the Older People's Commission for Wales, have an enquiry, or would like us to come and meet with you, please contact us at:

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



THE OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE AND CHAMPION FOR OLDER PEOPLE ACROSS WALES

Thank you to all the people who took time to meet with us and share their thoughts, hopes, and fears, with particular thanks to those who gave us permission to use their photographs in this report.

If you would like this report in alternative formats
please contact us at:
www.olderpeoplewales.co.uk