



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

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# **Driving Change for Older People**

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**Impact and Reach 2012-18**

**An independent voice and champion  
for older people**

# The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people across Wales. The Commissioner and her team work to ensure that older people have a voice that is heard, that they have choice and control, that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against and that they receive the support and services that they need.

The Commissioner and her team work to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

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## Foreword

I often find it hard to believe that I took up post as Older People's Commissioner for Wales six years ago, in June 2012. The years have simply flown by and I have been proud to stand up and speak out on behalf of older people across Wales as their independent voice and champion.

During the past six years, I have met and spoken with thousands of older people across Wales, who have generously shared so much with me about their lives, their experiences, and their hopes and wishes for the future.

The voices of older people in all of their diversity have guided and shaped the wide range of work I have undertaken as Commissioner during the past six years, which is set out in this Legacy Report, which is being published alongside my annual Impact and Reach Report.

When I took up post as Commissioner, I was clear that the debate around the issues that affect older people was too often being framed incorrectly. There was little focus on quality of life, wellbeing and outcomes, older people's rights were not being fully considered by policy and decision makers, and issues that affect older people that fall outside of health and social care were often not seen as a priority, despite their vital importance.

Furthermore, older people were too often seen as a homogenous group, a group apart who were excluded from society, with negative imagery and language commonly being used that reinforced stereotypes and assumptions, particularly those around frailty, decline and dependence.

As a result of my work over the past six years, and the tireless work of many others across Wales to improve the lives of older people, there has been a significant shift in policy, legislation, regulations and practice based on providing a more person-centred, outcomes-focused and preventative approach.

This is to be welcomed, of course, but there is no room for complacency and still much more to be done. Many of the issues faced by older people that I have highlighted and reported on during my time as Commissioner have developed over considerable periods of time and require significant and ongoing work to resolve. That is why follow-up work and continuous monitoring and scrutiny of policy and practice is essential and has been a key part of my work. In a landscape of competing priorities and challenges, it is vital that the promises and commitments made by public bodies to take action and deliver change are made real for older people.

It has been a real privilege to have been the Older People's Commissioner for Wales over the past six years, a time in which there has been much positive change for older people. I would like to thank my team, the stakeholders I have worked with and, most importantly, older people across Wales who have supported me and my work to make Wales a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.



**Sarah Rochira**

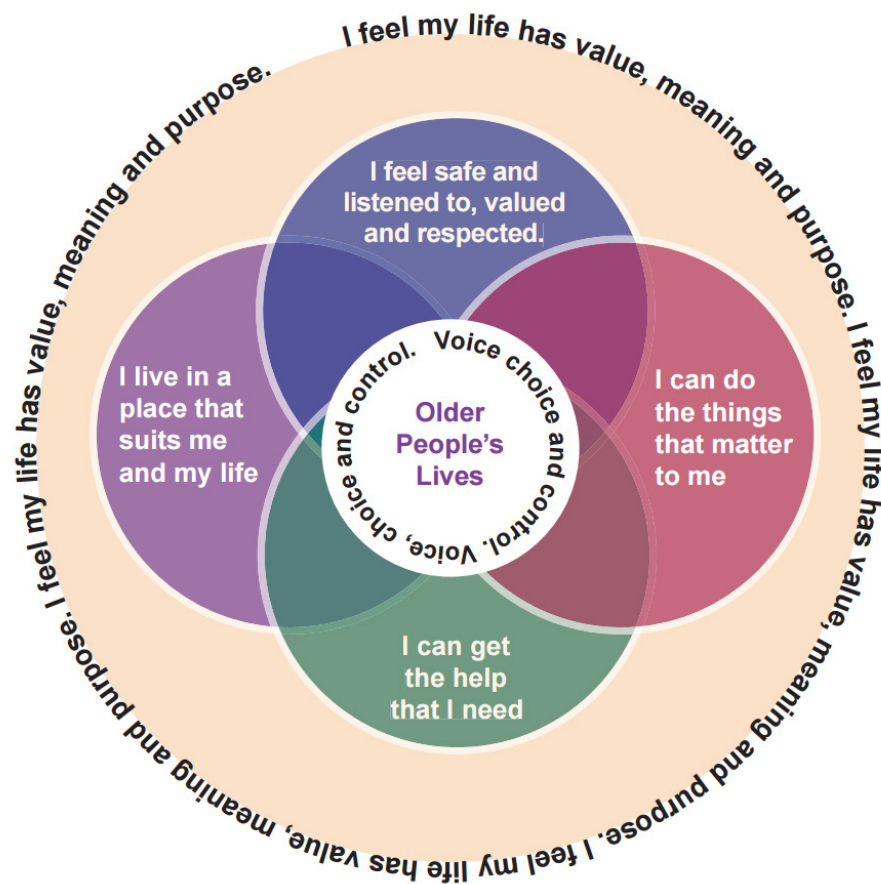
**Older People's Commissioner for Wales**

# A life that has value, meaning and purpose

When I took up post as Commissioner in June 2012, I was clear that the voices of older people would be at the heart of my work and would guide and shape my priorities.

I began an extensive programme of engagement with older people across Wales, meeting and speaking with them not only in formal settings, such as 50+ Forum meetings, but in the places they go and the places they live their lives, such as social clubs, day centres, carers groups, dementia cafes, community events, care homes and extra housing schemes.

In examining what older people had told me about their experiences of growing older – both good and bad – it was clear that they rarely talked about services or systems, but rather the importance of being safe, as healthy and independent as possible, and living lives that have value meaning and purpose. These are the factors that older people feel determine whether or not they have a good quality of life and were used as the basis for my Quality of Life Model:



Using my Quality of Life Model, together with information gathered via my Casework Team and stakeholders working with and for older people, I developed five key priorities, published in my Framework for Action, which would underpin my work as Commissioner:

- Driving up the quality of – and availability and access to – health and social care
- Standing up for older people who are at risk of harm and ensuring that they are safeguarded and protected
- Tackling prejudice, inequality and discrimination
- Protecting and improving community services, facilities and infrastructure
- Embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services

These priorities were used to develop my annual published work programmes, which set out the work I would undertake each year as Commissioner to drive change and improvements on behalf of older people across Wales.

# Reaching out and listening to older people across Wales

## Engagement Roadshow

Reaching out and listening to older people across Wales through my engagement roadshow is an essential part of my work as Commissioner. This engagement not only allows me to share information about my role and the ways in which I can provide assistance and support to older people, but also, just as importantly, allows me to hear directly from older people about the things that matter to them and the challenges they face, which is essential to guide and shape my work and ensure that their voices are at the heart of all that I do.

Since 2012, my team and I have met with over 1,000 groups, engaging with over 28,000 older people in settings such as social clubs, day centres, support groups, dementia cafes, care homes, extra care housing settings, forum meetings and information days. During this period, my team and I travelled over 100,000 miles to reach out to and engage with older people across Wales – the equivalent of travelling four times around the world.

In planning my engagement with older people, I ensured that I met with older people in all of their diversity, capturing the voices of people who are seldom heard. This is vital to ensure that the experiences of older people from a wide variety of backgrounds are reflected throughout and inform my work. To support this approach, I have worked with a wide range of organisations that work on behalf of people with protected characteristics, including Race Equality First, Diverse Cymru, People First, the Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Network (DEEP), the North Wales Regional Equality Network, Men’s Sheds, Action on Hearing Loss, Mind Cymru and Parkinsons UK.

Furthermore, to ensure that those who make policy and decisions hear directly from older people about their experiences and the challenges that growing older can bring, I have arranged many joint visits with Assembly Members, MPs, Council Leaders and Councillors across Wales since 2012. These visits provided opportunities for older people to have their voices heard, discuss the issues that matter to them and suggest ways in which improvements to the services they often rely on could be delivered.

## Wider Engagement

Alongside my engagement roadshow, I have also worked with formal organisations that represent older people and their interests, such as the National Pensioners’ Convention, Active Wales, Cymru Older People’s Alliance and the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing, as well as with older people’s 50+ forums across Wales.

I have also worked with a wide range of public bodies in Wales, including Health Boards, Local Authorities, Public Services Boards, Wales Audit Office, Public Health Wales and National Trading Standards, as well as with third sector organisations

and independent care home providers, delivering keynote speeches at conferences and events, and meeting with key individuals within these organisations.

In addition to growing knowledge and understanding about the challenges that older people in Wales face, the issues that affect their lives and their experiences of growing older, this work also allows me to promote good practice and identify opportunities for joint working to drive change on behalf of older people and improve their lives.

## Casework support to individuals

My powers under the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006 allow me to provide direct support and assistance to older people, which I deliver through my dedicated Casework Team.

Older people and their families from across Wales contact me when they require support to challenge the decision-making and practice of public bodies, when they feel that their voices are not being heard, often in the most difficult and distressing of circumstances. My Casework Team offers information, advice and guidance to help them to negotiate complex policies, processes and frameworks, intervening on their behalf where necessary (subject to their consent).

My Casework Team has provided assistance and support to thousands of older people and their families across Wales since 2012, many of which were protracted and complex in nature, particularly where safeguarding and protection issues were identified.

People contact me about a very wide range of issues, including treatment and care in hospital and residential care settings; financial issues such as cross-organisational funding disputes, incorrect charging of fees, or non-payment of financial entitlements; housing issues ranging from accessing home adaptations, home safety, evictions and couples being separated; best interest decisions covering a range of matters; waiting times for services; domestic abuse and safeguarding; and failures to prosecute.

Everyone who contacts me is unique, as are their needs and the circumstances in which they find themselves, and the approach I take when providing them support through my casework team reflects this.

However, whilst the issues that people contact me about are unique, they are often underpinned by a number of cross-cutting, common themes that can create issues and difficulties for older people:

- Public body policies and procedures can be complex and challenging to people unfamiliar with them, often intensifying the stress they are under and

causing great anxiety. Inflexible processes and a lack of integrated working can create barriers to securing desired outcomes and leave people feeling that the policies are designed to benefit organisations, not the individual. Life rarely follows a predesigned path and older people tell me that organisational processes and procedures are not clear or transparent, and that issues which can and should be resolved quickly can go on for unacceptably long periods of time.

- Communication is often ineffective and consultation often feels meaningless, leaving individuals feeling powerless and ignored.
- Public bodies and decision makers often do not understand the impact of decisions made, the ways decisions are made and the impact that they will have upon people's lives, particularly the extent to which the way decisions are made can lead to individuals losing their sense of identity and self-worth. Older people all too often say that they are not treated as equal partners, are excluded from decision making processes, have limited and untimely communication and feel as if the 'shutters' have come down. They also feel that their perspective is not given sufficient weight within the decision-making process. The issues considered by older people or their families to be important are often minimized by professionals and as a consequence older people often experience frustration through the lack of inclusion and insight.
- There is little understanding, or practical application, of human rights or a rights-based approach, despite the duties placed upon public bodies under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This often leads to poor decision making and places vulnerable people at risk of harm. I have been consistently clear that a full and proper understanding and application of a rights-based approach leads to better decision making, prevents harm and supports dispute resolution. Denial of a right to family life, free association, and liberty, as well as degrading and inhuman treatment, all feature in my case work.
- Whilst there can be a fine line between poor care and criminal care, public bodies are not always robust enough in their referral to the police and, in some cases, the criminal law is not fully understood. Whilst older people do not automatically want this to be pursued, they do not want it excluded without proper consideration. A strong sense of a desire for justice and accountability often runs through the issues that people raise with me, alongside a desire to ensure that others do not suffer the same fate.

When examining all of the themes set out above, it is clear that individuals often face a significant power imbalance when raising issues and complaints with public bodies. This is one of the reasons that the role of independent advocacy is so crucial

to the delivery of public services within Wales. I have been consistently clear about the value and importance of investing in independent advocacy, which provides people with an independent safeguard that can support them in understanding the choices available to them, making decisions and representing their experiences, wishes and feelings to decision-making bodies, protecting their rights and representing their interests. The value of independent advocacy in safeguarding older people from harm should not be underestimated.

Furthermore, my casework, and the themes identified through this work, demonstrates that public bodies are often not good at learning from their mistakes or using people's voices and experiences to underpin and drive continuous service improvement.

The issues and themes identified through my casework are also used to inform my wider work and priorities as Commissioner, and allow me to provide strong evidence to public bodies about the ways in which practice needs to change to improve older people's experiences, supporting my wider work to influence policy and the ways in which public services are provided across Wales.

# Driving up the quality of – and availability and access to – health and social care

## Care Home Review

Having visited care homes across Wales, I have seen for myself many examples of excellent care and have met many dedicated staff.

However, I also recognised that there were unacceptable variations in the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes. During 2013-14, I also received an increasing amount of correspondence regarding the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes.

I therefore announced in May 2013 that I would use my legal powers, under Section 3 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act, to undertake a formal Review into the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes in Wales, the biggest review of its kind ever undertaken.

## Gathering Evidence

I officially launched my Review in October 2013 and called upon older people across Wales, as well as their friends and families, to share their experiences of residential and nursing care.

I worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including older people's groups and 50+ Forums, to distribute a detailed questionnaire that captured information relating to a number of factors, including physical and psychological health, social relationships, the care home environment and spirituality. There was an outstanding response to the questionnaire, with over 2,000 responses received, double the original target of 1,000.

I also called for evidence from the bodies subject to my Review, as well as third sector organisations, professional bodies and social care experts, to gather additional information about the mechanisms in place to safeguard the interests of older people living in care homes and promote their quality of life, any areas of particular concern and to capture examples of good practice.

In addition to gathering this written evidence, I also ran a series of formal evidence sessions with public bodies and stakeholders, as well as a series of engagement events and focus groups across Wales to capture the experiences of families of people living in care homes and those with protected characteristics, whose voices are seldom heard.

In order to speak directly with older people and hear first-hand about their quality of life and care, and their everyday experiences of living in a care home, I undertook an extensive series of unannounced visits to care homes across Wales, visiting 101 homes in total.

## Review Findings

Published in November 2014, my Review findings were clear: whilst there were some excellent examples of truly person-centred care being delivered in parts of Wales, there were significant variations that resulted in too many older people living in care homes having an unacceptable quality of life. Too many older people living in care homes were no longer able to do the things that matter to them, lost meaningful choice and control over their lives, had their emotional needs neglected and did not have their basic rights upheld.

My findings also showed that the care being delivered in many care homes often failed to meet the needs of individuals and too often focused on a one-size-fits-all task-based approach, which was having a negative impact upon older people's quality of life.

My Review report – A Place to Call Home? – included a series of Requirements for Action, which clearly outlined the change required across a range of areas, to drive up the quality of life and care in care homes.

The public bodies and care providers subject to my Review were required to provide a written response within three months, detailing the action they would take to meet my requirements. In analysing these responses, my team and I were looking for clear evidence that actions that were underway or planned would deliver long-term change for older people living in care homes in Wales, with quality of life at the heart of the care home system.

The responses from Health Boards and Local Authorities set out the action they would take to would deliver the required outcomes for older people and detailed a wide range of work that would make a positive difference to the quality of life of care home residents.

However, initial submissions from the Welsh Government and CSSIW did not provide me with the assurances I needed that appropriate action would be taken at a strategic level to ensure that older people living in care homes would have the best possible quality of life. They were therefore required to provide further written evidence, to provide me with the assurances I needed that they would deliver the outcomes set out in my Review report.

Once I had been provided with the assurances I needed, I made clear that I would be closely monitoring delivery and would undertake a programme of follow-up work to ensure that the action promised is underway and improved outcomes are being delivered. This work began in February 2017 and is described below.

## Care Home Review Follow-up work

When I published the findings of my Care Home Review in 2014, I was clear that too many older people living in care homes in Wales had an unacceptable quality of life and that significant change was required to ensure that quality of life for older people was placed at the heart of our care home system, across care delivery, commissioning, regulation and inspection.

Following the publication of my findings, which were welcomed by all of the bodies subject to my Review, I sought assurances that they would take forward the action needed across a wide range of areas, as set out in the Requirements for Action I published alongside my findings, to deliver the change and improvements that older people and their families told me they wanted to see.

Having received these assurances, I was clear that I would be closely monitoring the ways in which my Requirements for Action were being implemented, and that I would undertake a programme of detailed follow-up work, through which I would seek further evidence that progress was being made in a number of key areas.

My ongoing monitoring work and engagement with public bodies showed that good progress was being made in many areas, through new legislation, regulations and guidance; new values-based and rights-based inspection frameworks; new training frameworks for social care staff; and a wide range of local initiatives. Furthermore, it was clear that those working across the care home sector were beginning to think differently about residential care, with a far greater focus on the quality of life of older people.

However, I was also concerned that there did not appear to be visible action across Wales in relation to a number of key areas. I therefore wrote to public bodies to request evidence regarding the action they had taken in relation to a number of specific areas:

- Contenance
- Reablement and rehabilitation
- Falls prevention
- Dementia training
- Befriending
- Anti-psychotic medication
- Medication reviews
- Quality of Life and engagement
- Integrated inspection, governance and transparency
- Public information
- Workforce planning and nursing career pathways

Whilst I recognised that many of these areas are complex and will take time to address fully, I expected to see evidence of leadership, ambition and progress, alongside a clear understanding of why quality of life and a focus on outcomes are so important for older people.

To support public bodies in providing this evidence, and to ensure they were clear about the type of information and the level of detail I required, I shared a 'model answer' with them, along with a set of high-level judgement criteria, which set out what their responses should include. Public bodies also had an opportunity to share examples of good practice, some of which were included within my follow-up report.

My team and I undertook a detailed analysis of the evidence provided, looking at the progress made against my Requirements for Action and identifying any areas where further work was needed. Individual feedback was provided to each public body (available in full on my website) and I set out my overall findings in 'A Place to Call Home: Impact and Analysis', which was published in January 2018.

The report made clear that whilst some positive progress had been made by Health Boards and Local Authorities, with a wide range of new activity underway across Wales as a result of my Review, many still needed to do much more to provide me with the assurances I needed that they will deliver the change required to fulfil the commitments they made in response to my 2014 Review.

The evidence provided by the Welsh Government, however, failed to demonstrate sufficient progress and action in a number of key areas – such as continence care, falls prevention and workforce planning – where leadership and a national approach is needed to drive meaningful cultural change, ensure greater accountability and promote the more effective use of evidence-based good practice.

Alongside the publication of my follow-up report, I wrote to the Welsh Government, Health Boards and Local Authorities, setting out my expectations that the feedback I had provided would be discussed at Board/Cabinet level and that they would provide a response in writing stating what further actions and commitments had been agreed.

I also made clear that there needed to be a renewed focus from the Welsh Government, Health Boards and Local Authorities on taking meaningful action to deliver upon the commitments they made, and that a failure to do so will mean that our care home system is unable to meet the changing care and support needs of older people and, more importantly will mean that too many older people living in care homes continue to have an unacceptable quality of life.

## Care Home Provider Seminars

When I undertook my care home Review, I identified some excellent practice that helps to ensure that older people living in care homes can have the best possible quality of life.

Through my engagement with care home providers throughout the Review process, it became clear that they would welcome opportunities to find out more about the good practice highlighted in my report and the practical things they could do to improve the quality of life of residents.

I therefore held a series of 12 seminars across Wales, which focused on the following themes and topics:

- Fully engaging with residents to drive up quality (delivered in partnership with My Home Life Cymru)
- Understanding dementia: shared learning and best practice (delivered in partnership with the Care Council for Wales)
- Creating welcoming environments for residents and families (delivered in partnership with Care Forum Wales)
- Magic moments in care homes and how to make them happen (delivered in partnership with Swansea University's School of Social Care Research)
- Getting the best out of the dining experience in care homes (delivered in partnership with My Home Life Cymru)
- Magic Moments – embracing joy, love and laughter in our care homes for residents, families, friends and staff (delivered in partnership with Taith and Credu)
- Is being human a 'Risky Business'? Balancing the benefits and the risks of enabling people living with dementia to spend time outside (delivered in partnership with Dementia Adventure)

The seminars, which were attended by over 350 participants, allowed a wide range of good practice, focused upon quality of life, to be shared by care home providers, and for new and innovative approaches to care delivery to be explored.

## Dignified Care? Follow-up work

The ‘Dignified Care?’ Review, published in 2011, demonstrated that the treatment of some older people in hospitals in Wales was shamefully inadequate and included a series of recommendations for Health Boards and the Welsh Government to deliver the fundamental change required.

When I took up post in 2012, I was clear that I would undertake a programme of follow-up work to ensure that significant and sustained change was being delivered at ward level. I focused in particular on three areas:

- Whether improving dignity was being taken seriously
- Whether action was being taken to bring about improvements
- Whether there was a tangible change in the patient experience at ward level

My ‘one year on’ assessment of the progress made by Health Boards and the Welsh Government found that, as a result of the Review, dignity and respect had been given Tier 1 status within the NHS in Wales, giving them greater priority in the delivery of healthcare. Furthermore, there was evidence of other significant work underway, including improved staff training, the reintroduction of matrons in some hospitals and using volunteers more effectively.

However, Health Boards were unable to provide me with the evidence I needed to be assured that there had been sufficient change at ward level and in the patient experience. Further work was also needed to improve continence care and provide better support for patients with dementia.

I therefore made clear that I would undertake further follow-up work to ensure that the required change was being delivered at all levels, from board level to hospital wards.

I therefore gathered further evidence in 2013 to assess the actions now underway and the impact they were having upon hospital patients. This evidence, together with information provided by older people about their experiences of hospital care, formed the basis of my Dignified Care: Two Years On progress report, which was published in September 2013.

The evidence showed that, overall, all 12 of the recommendations were now being taken seriously and that action was underway across Wales to improve the quality of patient care and ensure that older people are treated with dignity and respect.

I also held a roundtable meeting with the Chief Executives and Chairs of Health Boards, and the Health Minister, making clear my expectation that significant further progress would be made across a range of key areas to ensure that all older people

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in hospitals in Wales are treated with dignity and respect. I also made clear that there must be a zero tolerance approach towards failures and that the experiences of patients must be captured and acted upon much more effectively.

It was agreed that future reporting against the areas where further improvement was required would be delivered through the Annual Quality Statements published by Health Boards, which I review on an annual basis.

## **Dementia: more than just memory loss**

In 2015, I commissioned Age Cymru to undertake research on my behalf to capture the voices and experiences of older people living with dementia and those who care for them and identify the kinds of services, support, information and advice that would make a positive difference to their lives.

This research, which included focus group sessions and individual interviews held across Wales, formed the basis of my Dementia: more than just memory loss report, published in March 2016.

The report showed that there was a lack of knowledge and understanding of dementia, both amongst professionals and wider society, and that dementia services often lacked the flexibility to effectively meet the needs of people living with dementia and those who care for them. Furthermore, it showed that a lack of cooperation between services created unnecessary difficulties and barriers, and that the quality of services varied significantly.

The report set out a number of actions that needed to be delivered to address the issues identified by the research, including work to ensure that primary care services are more dementia supportive and their practice better reflects the needs of people living with dementia and their carers; training for staff to ensure they have sufficient knowledge and understanding to respond to the needs of a person living with dementia in an appropriate and sensitive manner that protects their dignity and minimises distress; and greater post-diagnosis support, including an accessible single point of contact to provide information and advice on the services and support available.

Following the publication of the report, I wrote to public service leaders across Wales, seeking assurances that the required change would be delivered for people living with dementia, and their carers. Regional Partnership Boards subsequently provided written responses to me, setting out the action they would take to deliver this change.

The responses showed that whilst the recommendations included within the report were being taken seriously and influencing the development of practice across Wales, there were still a number of areas in which further work was needed –

particularly with regard to arrangements for respite care, training for health and social care staff and engaging effectively with people living with dementia, and their carers – to drive improvements.

Detailed feedback was therefore provided to Regional Partnership Boards, both in writing and at subsequent face-to-face meetings, to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the gaps that needed to be addressed. I also developed a checklist to support public bodies to be more dementia supportive, along with a series of questions that could be used to scrutinise board members within Health Boards and Local Authorities.

Furthermore, based on my findings and the responses from the Regional Partnership Boards, I also shared a number of high-level observations with the Welsh Government, in order to inform the development of the National Dementia Strategy.

## Rethinking Respite for People Affected by Dementia

My ‘Dementia: more than just memory loss report’, which was published in 2016, gave a voice to people living with dementia and their carers, and found that, despite progress in recent years, there is still a lack of knowledge and understanding of dementia within society, and that services often lack the flexibility to effectively meet people’s needs, creating unnecessary challenges and barriers.

One of the key issues highlighted within the report by people living with dementia and their carers was the importance of being able to access high-quality, flexible respite services that provided a positive experience for both the carer and the person being cared for and did not simply focus on breaks apart.

Given the importance of respite, and its links to other key issues such as safeguarding and health and well-being, I began a programme of work in 2017-18 to look at issues related to respite in more detail and influence the ways in which it is thought about and delivered.

In addition to reviewing the current research and literature on respite and calling for examples of good practice, I also undertook a series of discussion sessions across Wales to hear directly from people living with dementia and their carers.

These sessions, which were delivered with support from My Home Life Cymru, were held in Briton Ferry, Cardiff, Chepstow, Llandrindod Wells, Pontypridd, Porthmadog and St. Clears. 123 individuals took part in these sessions, sharing their experiences of using respite services, including any challenges and/or barriers they faced in accessing these services, and the ways in which respite services should be improved.

A wide range of topics were discussed during the sessions, 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 views shared at these sessions, as well as the information gathered through the literature review and good practice submissions, will be used as the basis for my Rethinking Respite report, which will be published in April 2018. The report will make clear the action that needs to be taken to improve respite services and deliver the outcomes that people living with dementia and their carers said they want and need to see.

## GP Services in Wales: The Perspective of Older People

In 2016, I began a programme of work to look at older people's experiences of accessing and using GP services, to identify good practice that could be adopted more widely by GP surgeries and areas in which improvements were needed.

I captured the views of over 1,600 older people and 47 stakeholder organisations – including Health Boards, professional bodies and third sector organisations – on a range of matters related to GP services and used this evidence as the basis for my GP Services in Wales: The Perspective of Older People report.

The report made clear the significant and unacceptable variations older people face when accessing GP services, in particular issues relating to appointments booking processes, the accessibility of GP surgeries and the surgery environment, the time available for appointments, and communication and privacy. These issues can create unnecessary challenges and barriers that may prevent older people from accessing GP services or push them towards accessing other less appropriate unscheduled care services, which can have a negative impact upon their health and wellbeing.

Alongside my report, I also used my powers under the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act to issue formal guidance to Health Boards to provide support in addressing the issues and concerns shared by older people. The guidance, which Health Boards must have regard to when discharging their functions, included examples of good practice and is designed as a developmental tool to support Health Boards, service directors and practice managers as they make changes to service design and delivery.

The report and guidance were welcomed by a number of key organisations working to improve health services in Wales, including Community Health Councils, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of GPs, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists.

In welcoming the report and guidance, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales also confirmed that they will use their GP inspection programme to determine how well Health Boards have understood and are acting upon their responsibilities, as set out in the guidance.

Similarly, the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport confirmed that he welcomed the report and would be writing to Health Boards to encourage them to use the findings and that the newly established Primary Care Board will consider the report when looking at areas in which an all-Wales approach will be helpful. He also confirmed that the report will be used to inform the development of Welsh Government policy relating to primary care.

## Care Home Top Up Fees

During 2015-16, I received a number of enquiries from older people and their families relating to requests from care home providers for 'third party payments' towards the costs of care (when an individual receives funding from a Local Authority or Health Board), or charges for 'additional services'. Whilst these charges are governed by regulations and are very different to each other, I was informed that both were being referred to colloquially as 'top-up fees'.

In addition to confusion about what these additional payments were for, older people also shared with me their concerns that they would be forced to move to another care home if they (or their families) had been unable to meet such charges.

In light of these concerns, in March 2016 I wrote to all care home providers in Wales, as well as Local Authority and Health Board Commissioners, clearly outlining my expectations on behalf of older people in situations where additional payments may be required. In the letters, I was clear that:

- 'Top-up fees' should never be used to pay for, or subsidise the cost of, basic care and should not be necessary to ensure that an individual's needs and wellbeing are met.
- Greater clarity was needed on what individuals and their families are being asked to pay for.
- The Personal Expenses Allowance should never be used to pay for, or subsidise, the cost of care.

I have continued to listen to the voices and experiences of older people and their families relating to this matter to ensure that older people living in care homes in Wales do not feel that they are being treated unfairly or disproportionately and negatively impacted by the system of paying for care within care homes.

## Annual Quality Statements

As Commissioner, I have been clear that Health Boards must have a fundamental grasp on the safety, effectiveness and quality of their services, with the views of patients and staff integral to this understanding. Furthermore, they should be able to provide the public with assurances about the standards they have a right to expect: either that care is acceptable or that areas for improvement are recognised and improvements are being delivered.

Annual Quality Statements are published by Health Boards to provide these assurances to the general public about the quality of care delivered by our health services. Their publication ensures that Health Boards are being open and transparent about their services and standards of care, including areas in which improvements are needed.

In order to ensure that the 2013-14 Annual Quality Statements were as clear and accessible as possible, I provided guidance to Health Boards at a number of all-Wales learning events, and through the 1000 Lives 'how to' Communications Guide.

When I reviewed the statements in Autumn 2014, it was clear that a great deal of work had been undertaken to improve the ways in which key information was being communicated to the public. There were, however, a number of areas that needed significant improvement, in particular how the patient voice and experience was being used to influence service delivery.

I subsequently met with Health Boards and provided a detailed critique about which elements of their statements provided clear information and appropriate detail, as well as the ways in which the statements could be improved, making clear my expectations that my feedback would be reflected in the 2014-15 statements.

Building upon this work, in February 2016 I published a critique of the 2014-15 Annual Quality Statements, considering the extent to which these documents were successfully communicating with and providing assurances to older people.

In my critique, I was clear that whilst there was still room for further development and greater clarity, there had been a positive direction of travel and that my feedback on the 2013-14 Statements had been used in a positive and constructive way. I particularly welcomed the fact that a number of the 2014-15 Annual Quality Statements referred to a commitment to improve outcomes-based reporting on issues such as continence, hydration and falls.

I also welcomed the fact that Welsh Government guidance published to support the publication of the 2015-16 Annual Quality Statements included references to the expectations I set out in my feedback and the subsequent discussions I held with Health Boards.

## Review of Health Board Reconfiguration

In 2013, I issued formal guidance to all Health Boards in Wales, which set out the standards against which I would measure their actions when engaging and consulting with older people.

Following this, I requested further evidence from all Health Boards, using my legal powers under Section 3 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act, to assure me that the interests of older people in Wales were sufficiently safeguarded and protected as proposals for reconfiguration were developed. I therefore requested evidence on the following:

- The extent to which Local Health Boards were involving older people in discussion about decisions being made and taking their views seriously.
- Whether they took proper account of proposed changes upon older people, to ensure that alternative provision was appropriate and effective and was being used by the older people affected by the changes.
- Whether they had ensured that older people were not disproportionately affected by the changes.

All Health Boards submitted evidence detailing the actions they had undertaken to engage with older people. I reviewed the evidence and provided feedback to each Health Board to support and strengthen their engagement and consultation as they took forward significant changes to their services.

Where I had concerns that more could be done to strengthen engagement and consultation with older people, I requested further information from a number of Health Boards and made clear my expectation that they would pay regard to my formal guidance to strengthen their ongoing engagement. I also met with the Chief Executive of the NHS in Wales to ensure that there was national oversight of the areas that needed to be strengthened and acted upon.

## Improving integration between health and social care

As Commissioner, I have welcomed work in recent years to improve integration between our health and social care systems, which is essential to ensure that older people can access the services and support they need.

Following my analysis of the statements of intent published by Health Boards and Local Authorities in 2014, which set out the ways they would deliver greater integration between health and social care, I hosted an interactive workshop in April 2015 to grow knowledge and understanding about what successful integration would look like, and how success could be measured.

During the workshop, which was attended by colleagues working across health, social care, housing and the third sector, participants considered why integration was so important, the benefits it brings and the price of failing; what a successful integrated health and social care system would look like; and what indicators should be used to measure success.

As a result of the workshop, participants had a far greater understanding that traditional measurements, which focused on systems and processes rather than outcomes, would not be effective in judging success, and that ongoing engagement with older people was essential to identify areas of concern and deliver improvements. There was also recognition that improved outcomes would not be delivered without effective partnership working with the housing sector, the third sector and other service providers.

# **Standing up for people at risk of harm and ensuring that they are safeguarded and protected**

## Safeguarding Seminars and Presentations

Every year since 2014, I have held a series of safeguarding seminars across Wales for professionals working with and for older people across the public and third sectors, to grow their knowledge and understanding of the domestic abuse that is faced by older people.

The seminars, which included presentations from experts working in adult protection, covered a number of topics, including the scale and nature of the abuse of older people in Wales, the links between ageism and abuse, human rights, and the support available for victims of domestic abuse.

Delegates also participated in workshop sessions that explored practical ways of working together more effectively to deliver change and offer greater protection to older people.

In 2016-17, the content of the seminars was evaluated by Agored Cymru and accredited with their 'Quality Mark', a measure of excellence for learning programmes, which allowed participants to earn Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours.

Over 650 delegates attended these seminars, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Those who attended stated that their knowledge about the scale, nature and impact of abuse faced by older people had improved and that they would consider what actions their organisations could implement to ensure that abuse is recognised, recorded and responded to in an appropriate way.

In addition to the seminars, awareness raising presentations, which highlighted the abuse of older people as a key issue and set out what could be implemented to improve the lives of older people who are affected by abuse, have also been delivered at a wide range of events across Wales, reaching over 1,500 stakeholders.

## Safeguarding in Hospitals in Wales

Whilst there is much good safeguarding work underway in Wales, more still needs to be done across our public services to safeguard and protect older people. Much of the assistance and support I provide to older people through my casework team involves issues relating to safeguarding, and many of the cases where older people and their families have raised concerns about safeguarding relate to hospital settings.

I have welcomed the ambition of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to improve the safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse and neglect by placing this on a statutory footing and creating new duties for public bodies, and therefore wanted to review the difference the Act is making to the safeguarding work of Health Boards.

I therefore wrote to Health Boards in June 2017, asking them to participate in a review to determine how effectively they are responding to their new duties arising under the Act.

Using a questionnaire, as well as follow-up interviews with safeguarding staff, I gathered a wide range of information about the safeguarding work in Health Boards, such as changes to safeguarding teams, changes to policies and procedures, staff training, the ways in which alleged victims of abuse are supported and engaged with, access to advocacy and learning from cases. Information was also gathered from stakeholders from Social Services departments and Public Health Wales who have a detailed knowledge of adult safeguarding.

My assessment of the responses provided by Health Boards and the Velindre NHS Trust formed the basis of a report – Safeguarding in Hospitals in Wales – which I shared with the Welsh Government and Health Boards.

The report identified that whilst new initiatives are now underway within Health Boards to address the requirements of the Act, alongside a greater focus on adult safeguarding within core work and increased resources, a number of factors were potentially weakening the approaches being taken. These included a lack of national guidance, resulting in different approaches being taken in different parts of Wales; variations in reporting under the new Duty to Report within the Act; variations in the ways in which enquiries and investigations are undertaken; the level of training provided to hospital staff; access to advocacy; and the ways in which data is collected to measure progress.

In sharing the report with the Welsh Government, I made clear my expectations that the issues identified would be addressed, and requested a written response from the Minister setting out what action would be taken to deal with the concerns I raised.

## **Information and Guidance on Domestic Abuse: Safeguarding Older People in Wales**

In June 2017, I published new guidance, in partnership with the Welsh Government, to help front-line professionals who have contact with older people – such as social care staff, domiciliary care workers, doctors nurses, housing officers and police officers – to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and provide them with information about the help available to protect and safeguard older people.

The guidance covers a wide range of subjects, including the characteristics of the abuse faced by older people, how to recognise controlling and coercive behaviour, the impact of abuse and how to provide an effective response.

I launched the guidance with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children,

who reaffirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to working closely with partners to protect the victims of domestic abuse and welcomed the guidance as a practical resource that would help professionals to work more effectively with older people who are experiencing domestic abuse.

## Access to Justice: Operation Jasmine and the wider legal context

Throughout 2013, I provided support to the families of the victims of alleged abuse and neglect in a number of care homes in South Wales, which was investigated by Gwent Police and known as Operation Jasmine.

In June 2013, following the collapse of a key trial linked to Operation Jasmine, I called on the Welsh Government, on behalf of the families, to undertake an Inquiry as there were still many unanswered questions about who was responsible and how abuse and neglect on the scale alleged could have taken place.

I therefore strongly welcomed the announcement from the First Minister that an Independent Review would be undertaken to ensure that the families had the information and answers they told me they needed.

The families and I also expressed concerns in respect of the charges brought against the alleged perpetrators, reflecting concerns already raised by me regarding the need for the law to be improved in relation to the abuse and neglect of older people. In particular, I made clear the need to strengthen the law in respect of wilful neglect and corporate neglect. This matter was discussed in detail at a meeting I facilitated between the families and the Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer.

As part of my work on this matter, I arranged a briefing session with MPs in Westminster to discuss my concerns about the gaps in adult protection law that often prevent access to justice for older people, and the need for these to be addressed.

Following this, I also met with the Prime Minister to further raise the need for improved legislation, particularly in relation to wilful and corporate neglect, and welcomed the subsequent consultation on a new criminal charge of wilful neglect.

Furthermore, I organised and chaired a seminar with senior public services staff – including Police and Crime Commissioners, the Crown Prosecution Service, Police Officers, Senior POVA leads and Welsh Government Officials – to set out my wider concerns in respect of access to justice, passporting from protection to criminal and restorative justice services and identify what mechanisms were available in Wales to address these issues.

## Tackling the neglect of older people

An area of growing concern for me as Commissioner is the increasing number of cases of neglect of older people being recorded, particularly those relating to avoidable serious pressure sores. Through my casework and my review of many high-profile neglect cases in Wales involving older people, I have seen a worrying pattern emerging.

There is currently a frustrating lack of accountability for those who have a responsibility to care for our most vulnerable citizens, and I have continued to be clear that the criminal justice system is inadequate if it fails to hold to account those who neglect to provide adequate care.

One of the criticisms of the current system, shared with me by a number of stakeholders I have engaged with on this issue, is that the evidential bar is set very high to successfully prosecute criminal cases of neglect, even when a person has died because of failures to provide proper care. I have therefore continued to call for legislation to be reviewed and amended to prevent this growing problem from continuing to go unchallenged by our legal system.

Through this work, I have also been made aware that there have been delays in the police becoming involved in some cases of neglect involving avoidable pressure sores. This has often been due to some organisations failing to recognise potential criminality, which has resulted in opportunities to collect evidence being lost or not considered.

Similarly, I have found that some basic lines of enquiry are not always considered by the police, as officers are not aware of their significance to a potential investigation. In a number of cases, my Casework team has brought these facts to the attention of the police, but the passage of time has resulted in lost opportunities to secure potential evidence or to follow lines of enquiry. Whilst this is not a criticism of the police, it is clear that greater awareness and information is needed on this issue.

I therefore developed an investigative guidance document (relating to avoidable pressure sores) to provide police officers with relevant information to assist them with their investigations and support them in considering relevant and potential lines of enquiry. The guidance includes information that defines the different types of avoidable pressure ulcers, making clear that they can be the result of criminal negligence, and should therefore be subject to closer scrutiny by our law enforcement agencies.

I have shared this with the College of Policing for their consideration in using the guidance as part of police training, and I am currently in discussions with the College about how this could be taken forward.

## Guide to lasting powers of attorney

Working in partnership with the Office of the Public Guardian, which protects people who may not have mental capacity to make certain decisions for themselves, I produced and published An Easy Guide to Lasting Powers of Attorney in January 2016.

The guide was developed to help people to understand the importance of having a lasting power of attorney to manage their finances, health and welfare, and provides clear and accessible information about how to register a lasting power of attorney. The guide also provides answers to frequently asked questions about lasting powers of attorney, helping to ensure that future decisions are safeguarded.

Since its publication, the guide has been widely distributed in hard copy, through my office and the Office of the Public Guardian, and has been downloaded over 1,300 times. The guide is also hosted on the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) website to ensure that professionals working with older people fully understand the benefits of a lasting power of attorney and what setting one up involves.

## Information Booklet – Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: Help and Support for Older People in Wales

To raise awareness amongst the public of the domestic abuse and sexual violence that affects older people, I produced a bilingual information booklet that clearly outlines the kinds of abuse they face and the support available to help to stop this abuse, as well as providing older people and their families with contact information for the Live Fear Free Helpline.

Over 25,000 copies of the leaflet have been distributed to a wide range of partners across Wales, including Police Forces, Health Boards, Local Authorities, Women's Aid and advocacy services.

## Wales Against Scams Partnership

To raise awareness about the devastating and lasting impact that scams – in reality theft, deception, intimidation and coercion – have upon older people, and to ensure a more coordinated approach towards tackling these kinds of crimes across Wales, I worked with Age Cymru throughout 2015-16 to establish the Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP).

WASP brings together a broad range of partners – such as Trading Standards, Get Safe Online, Welsh Police Forces, the Welsh Local Government Association, banks and utility companies – who work together to better protect people from scams and make Wales a hostile place for the criminals who operate them.

The WASP action plan was launched in 2016, setting out in detail the work that would be undertaken by partners to tackle scams and protect older people. The actions set out within the plan are grouped under broader headings that form the basis of the WASP charter, a set of commitments that each partner has signed up to and has agreed to take forward, which include:

- Raising awareness and de-stigmatising scams
- Prevention and protection
- Identification and recording
- Enforcement, access to justice and restoration

The action plan and charter were launched at the National Trading Standards Scams Team and Consumer Empowerment Alliance scams conference, which was held in Cardiff and attended by delegates from across the UK. This provided an excellent opportunity to share, with a national audience, information already undertaken in Wales to tackle scams and the wide range of work planned for the future.

## Friends Against Scams

Building upon my work to establish the Wales Against Scams Partnership, in October 2016 I worked in partnership with National Trading Standards to launch the Friends Against Scams Initiative in Wales.

Friends Against Scams is designed to highlight the scale and impact of scams, challenge perceptions of why people fall for scams and inspire action to protect people from scammers – criminals who often prey upon the most vulnerable members of society.

The launch was attended by a wide range of stakeholders from the public, financial and third sectors, who made pledges about what they would do to tackle scams in their communities and how they would raise awareness of the Friends Against Scams initiative.

Following the launch, I also wrote to public bodies across Wales, providing them with information about Friends Against Scams and encouraging them to sign up and take part in the initiative.

Friends Against Scams sessions are now being delivered across Wales, enabling organisations and individuals to learn about the different types of scams used to defraud and steal from people, and how to spot and provide support to a victim. Online learning is also available to grow knowledge and understanding amongst those who are unable to attend an awareness session.

## Tackling Scams in Wales

Scams have a devastating and lasting impact upon older people's lives, not only separating them from their savings, but also affecting their confidence and their dignity. As Commissioner, I have been clear that much more needs to be done to tackle scams in Wales.

I therefore worked in partnership with National Trading Standards during 2017-18, providing support and funding to enable the delivery of Friends Against Scams in Wales, which aims to inspire action, highlight the scale and nature of scams, change the perceptions of why people fall victim to scams and make scams a topic that sits high on the agenda at a local, regional and national level.

This work has resulted in extensive engagement with individuals and organisations working across the public, private and third sectors in Wales, who have taken part in Friends Against Scams Training Sessions or have signed up as Friends Against Scams Champions and Scambassadors.

# Tackling prejudice and discrimination

## Say No to Ageism Campaign

In order to challenge the stereotypes associated with growing older and to help to change the way that society thinks about older people, I launched my Say No to Ageism campaign on the International Day of Older People 2015, which not only made clear the impact of ageism upon older people, but also the significant contribution older people make to communities across Wales, worth over £1bn to the economy each year.

The campaign was made up of several strands, which included a campaign video to challenge the myths about older people, a website hub of useful resources and an interactive photo gallery of 'Everyday Heroes' – older people highlighting the things they do that make a difference to older people's lives or communities but are often overlooked, such as volunteering or caring.

The campaign video was shared widely and has, to date, been viewed over 6,500 times. The video has also been shown at a wide range of conferences and seminars, and is used as part of my tackling ageism training courses (see below).

Using social media to spread the campaign messages was highly successful, with tweets posted on the day by my office being seen over 16,000 times. The campaign's Thunderclap message (social media users sign up to share a message at the same time) was also very effective, with a potential reach of over 180,000 people.

In addition, many organisations, stakeholders and politicians, including the First Minister, from across Wales shared their own tweets and photos to show their support for the campaign and spread its key message – Say No to Ageism.

A statement of opinion was also tabled in the National Assembly for Wales by Gwenda Thomas AM in support of the campaign, which was signed by members across all parties.

## Taking Action Against Ageism toolkit

As part of my Say No to Ageism Campaign, I developed the Taking Action Against Ageism toolkit for older people, to empower them to challenge ageism in its various forms.

The toolkit, which was widely distributed to older people across Wales, provides practical information and advice about how to recognise ageism – in work, in the media, in health and care services, and in consumer services – and sets out clearly the ways in which older people can challenge unfair treatment and discrimination.

## Tackling Ageism Training

Another key strand of my ageism campaign was a series of training seminars developed for professionals working on behalf of older people, particularly those responsible for the design and delivery of services.

The training seminars, which built upon similar training delivered during 2013-15 that were attended by over 400 individuals, helped participants to understand ageism and its impact upon older people, whilst also exploring unconscious prejudices and the ways in which these can affect the design and delivery of public services. The training also demonstrated the importance of adopting a rights-based approach to service delivery and how this can lead to better outcomes for older people.

187 professionals took part in the training during 2015-16, from organisations including Health Boards, Local Authorities, Social Care Services, Housing Associations and Carers Organisations. Feedback on the training was very positive, and participants made commitments to use what they had learnt within their work and challenge discriminatory practice within their organisation.

A similar training course was also developed for older people and was rolled out to groups across Wales. This version of the training considered the issues highlighted in the Taking Action Against Ageism toolkit in more detail, helping older people to recognise when they are the victims of ageism and discrimination and how they can challenge ageist and discriminatory practice in public services. 10 of these training sessions were held across Wales, and 199 older people took part.

## Declaration of the rights of older people

Since taking up post as Commissioner, I have been clear that older people often face unacceptable discrimination and struggle to have their basic rights recognised and upheld.

I therefore welcomed the cross-party support for the call I made in December 2012 for action to be taken to protect and promote older people people's rights, and the subsequent request from the Welsh Government to Chair an Independent Advisory Group to consider and explore the merits of a Welsh Declaration of the Rights of Older People, the first of its kind in the UK.

The Advisory Group found that a Declaration would provide a clear framework and standard that could be understood and used by older people to ensure that their rights are upheld when receiving the support and services they need to live fulfilled and independent lives.

The Advisory Group subsequently worked with older people to develop a draft Declaration, which was based upon the issues that older people identified as most

important to them, as well as the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. The Declaration also clearly sets out its links to the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Following a public consultation on its contents, the Declaration was launched in July 2014, outlining what matters to older people and the rights that they feel would support and protect them effectively:

- I have the right to be who I am
- I have the right to be valued
- I have free will and the right to make decisions about my life
- I have the right to decide where I live, how I live and with whom
- I have the right to work, develop, participate and contribute
- I have a right to safety, security and justice

Whilst the Declaration has been used in hospital wards and care homes as a basis for ensuring that older people's rights are being upheld when care and support is being delivered, I have continued to work with public bodies and the Welsh Government to embed a rights-based approach across our public services to ensure that the rights of older people across Wales are protected and promoted.

## Intergenerational Work with the Children's Commissioner for Wales

In recent years, a divisive narrative has emerged that has pitted our older and younger generations against each other, something that creates mistrust and misunderstanding. In reality, however, older and younger people have a huge amount to offer each other through sharing their knowledge and experiences, learning from one another and providing each other with support.

I therefore worked in partnership with the Children's Commissioner for Wales during 2016-17 to bring together a set of resources to support communities across Wales in establishing intergenerational groups that bring younger and older people together.

These resources included a series of videos in which older and younger people highlighted the benefits of being part of an intergenerational group, based on their own experiences, a lesson plan to help schoolchildren to think about how they could develop an intergenerational group in their school, and an online resources hub that provides a wide range of easily accessible information about how to set up an intergenerational group.

The resources were launched at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr in Cardiff, at an intergenerational session attended by pupils and older people from a local sheltered housing complex. During the session, the Children’s Commissioner and I led a lively discussion on the stereotypes associated with age and the benefits of intergenerational projects, before participants broke off into groups to explore the activities they could do together in the future.

Since the resources hub was launched in February 2017, the videos and information have been accessed thousands of times, which will help to ensure that community groups and schools across Wales understand the benefits of intergenerational activities and have the information they need to set up and run intergenerational projects to break down the barriers between our older and younger generations.

## **Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments and Scrutiny: Guidance for Local Authorities**

Building upon my work to make a strong case for the retention of key public and community services that older people often describe as ‘lifelines’, in February 2016 I issued formal guidance to Local Authorities on undertaking Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments and Scrutiny, which they must have regard for in discharging their functions.

The guidance, which was developed with support from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association, sets out how to undertake robust and thorough impact assessments and scrutiny processes that identify any disproportionate impact upon older people when changes are proposed, as well as actions that can be taken to mitigate any potential impact.

In order to ensure an increased focus on older people’s rights throughout the assessment process, the guidance included a newly developed equality and human rights impact assessment tool, which combines an equality impact assessment with a human rights assessment to enable Local Authorities to undertake broader and more detailed impact assessments effectively and efficiently.

To support Local Authorities to incorporate my guidance into their working practices, I began a series of training workshops in March 2016 (detailed below) to ensure that council members and officers understand and can use a rights-based approach when considering changes to services or making decisions.

## **Equality and Human Rights Seminars**

Following the publication of formal guidance for Local Authorities on how to undertake robust equality and human rights assessments when changes to services are proposed, I held a series of seminars across Wales during 2016-17 to support

council members and officers in using this guidance effectively, which were attended by over 100 delegates.

The seminars explored the ways in which stereotypes around growing older and unconscious bias can lead to discriminatory policies and practice, and highlighted the instruments available that can support the decision-making process, such as the Equality Act, the Human Rights Act and the UN Principles for Older Persons. The seminars reinforced the importance of undertaking meaningful impact assessments – from both an equality and human rights perspective – to guide decisions, as well as the importance of considering alternative proposals or mitigating actions to address any potential issues identified by the assessment process.

Feedback from the seminars was positive. Delegates stated that they had generated many new ideas and made commitments to adopt new approaches in their work when making decisions on community services.

# Protecting and improving community services, facilities and infrastructure

## A Thousand Little Barriers

When I began my Engagement Roadshow in 2012, many of the older people I met and spoke with across Wales shared their positive experiences of growing older and described new opportunities that had previously not been available to them.

Others, however, even those who considered themselves to be active, resourceful and resilient, found that they encountered a range of barriers that make growing older unnecessarily harder and can make even the simplest of tasks feel like a constant uphill struggle.

I highlighted the kinds of everyday challenges faced by older people in my 'A Thousand Little Barriers' report, which was published in August 2013. The report included quotes and case studies from older people to give them a strong voice, and covered a wide range of issues, including community services and facilities, GP appointments, hospital discharge, community transport and the blue badge application process.

The report's findings were used to guide and shape my work as Commissioner, in particular the establishment of my Toilets, Transport and Bins Taskforce and subsequent work looking at the importance of community services, facilities and infrastructure (see below).

## The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales

Building upon the findings of 'A Thousand Little Barriers', as well as the work of my Toilets, Transport and Bins Taskforce, I published 'The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales' report in February 2014.

The report made a clear and strong case for protecting community services, which are not only essential to the health, wealth and wellbeing of our villages, towns and cities, but are also integral to the public service and public health priorities within Wales and the overall health of our economy.

To gather information and to hear first-hand from older people about how important community services are in their day-to-day lives, I held a series of focus groups across Wales (in Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Carmarthen, Colwyn Bay and Llanrindod Wells) to enable older people to share their experiences.

In addition to the focus groups, information was also gathered from a range of partner groups and organisations to provide expertise in specific areas for the report and supporting research evidence. Evidence was obtained from:

- British Toilet Association
- Bus Users Cymru
- Community Transport Association
- NIACE Dysgu Cymru
- 'P is for People' Campaign
- Public Health Wales
- Royal Voluntary Service
- Society of Chief Librarians Wales
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Welsh Senate of Older People

The report provided evidence of the benefits of a number of essential community-based services and facilities, such as transport, public toilets, community centres and community spaces, and lifelong learning and skills.

A common theme running across all of these areas was the importance of taking an asset-based approach when making decisions about the community services that older people often rely upon to help to keep them healthy and independent. The report made clear that these services should not be seen as a cost burden for Local Authorities, but instead should be seen as a way of investing in older people and supporting them to make an even greater contribution to communities across Wales, an approach that I have continued to promote across much of my work.

## Community Services Seminars and Best Practice Guidance

Following the publication of my community services report (see above), I held seminars in North and South Wales for key Local Authority staff, to discuss and agree the most effective way forward to deliver the best outcomes for older people.

The seminars were attended by over 150 delegates, who took part in a mixture of plenary and workshop sessions throughout the day. Attendees heard presentations from the following:

- The Welsh Government and Public Health Wales (embedding wellbeing into public services)
- RVS (importance of community services in combatting loneliness, isolation and depression)
- Nesta (using innovation to deliver better public services)
- Older People's Strategy Coordinators (engaging with older people and using their knowledge and experience more effectively)
- Age Alliance Wales (the role of the third and housing sectors in delivering the integration agenda)

- WLGA (financial pressures on Local Authorities)
- Older people (experiences of using community services)

The seminars enabled delegates to share good practice and consider new approaches to delivering services, as well as helping them to understand why community services make such a difference to older people's lives.

Feedback from delegates was very positive, with many stating that they would share what they had learnt with their colleagues and would aim to take a more innovative approach to the planning, development and delivery of community services.

In addition to the seminars, as part of my wider programme of work to protect and improve community services, facilities and infrastructure in Wales, I issued formal guidance to Local Authorities across Wales, using my powers under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006.

The purpose of this guidance was to remind Local Authorities of their duty to ensure full, meaningful and effective engagement and consultation with older people when changes to community services are proposed and key decisions are being made. Furthermore, the guidance also made clear the need for Local Authorities to engage more effectively with older people to ensure that their decisions fully consider and reflect older people's needs, concerns and priorities.

The guidance detailed the different ways in which Local Authorities should be engaging with older people, outlining the importance of timely engagement, reaching those whose voices are seldom heard and ensuring that the most effective way of engaging is used.

The guidance also highlighted the importance of robustly assessing the impact of decisions upon older people, and the need to ensure that equality impact assessments are not just a tick-box exercise.

## Engagement Toolkit for Older People

Many of the older people I have met and spoken with across Wales have told me that they do not know how to engage with their Local Authority and often feel powerless when proposals are made to reduce or bring to an end essential community services they rely upon. Older people have also told me that they feel there are insufficient opportunities to express their views and that their concerns are often overlooked and given little attention when they do so.

I therefore published an engagement toolkit during 2014-15, a practical resource to help older people make their voices heard, which was widely distributed across Wales.

The toolkit provides practical information to help older people to engage with Local Authorities, including the ways in which they can influence and challenge decisions and the support that may be available to assist them in doing this.

The toolkit clearly outlines what older people should expect from their Local Authorities, in terms of engagement and consultation, when changes to essential services are proposed and provides useful information about how they can get involved in these processes. It also provides a range of other practical resources, including a set of key questions and a checklist for older people to use throughout the engagement process, a sample letter to Local Authorities and a comprehensive directory of contacts who may be able to provide vital help and support.

## Aids and Adaptations

Following scrutiny of information published by Local Authorities during 2012, I found that there were often unacceptable delays in providing Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to older people for home aids and adaptations and that in a number of cases there was a failure to meet statutory targets. This meant that older people were at risk of falling, being unable to return home from hospital, or having to go into residential care unnecessarily. The cost to individuals was unacceptable, and there was a consequentially high impact upon the public purse.

I issued good practice guidance to Local Authorities, which clearly set out my expectations for improvements within 12 months to those who were failing to deliver. I included examples of good practice within the guidance to assist them in delivering the required improvements.

In November 2013, I sought assurances from Local Authorities that my expectations were being met, in particular that minor adaptations were not being delivered through the DFG route, but were instead being delivered swiftly through other effective routes, and that mechanisms were in place to capture the 'customer experience' and use this to drive continuous improvements. I also required an update on how Local Authorities intended to build upon the improvements they had made.

The responses indicated that significant progress had been made to improve both the DFG and minor adaptations systems and that there was an ongoing commitment to improvements. Furthermore, the information provided to me by Local Authorities showed that the average delivery times had also dropped substantially, from 325 days in 2011-12 to 271 days in 2012-13. There were, however, still variations in the ways in which adaptations were being delivered and the finding streams that were being used.

Following correspondence on this matter with the Minister for Housing and Regeneration, and the Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, which published its own report on home adaptations in 2012, I welcomed the fact that the Minister undertook a review into the home adaptations system in Wales in Spring 2014.

I provided extensive evidence to this review, issuing a detailed summary of progress made by Local Authorities to the Minister, making clear that the changes to the adaptations system had to address the following:

- The standardisation of, or minimum national delivery times for, all aids and adaptations, including minor adaptations, regardless of the funding route.
- Streamlining of the various adaptation routes, using a less complex system that is focused on the needs of the customer and is tenure blind.
- An accurate performance management framework covering all adaptation routes.

As a result of the review's findings, the Welsh Government made a commitment to set up an 'Enhanced Adaptations System Delivery Group' to devise a new adaptations system for Wales to improve delivery times and the experiences of individuals. I was a member of this group and ensured that the needs and interests of older people were considered and reflected as decisions about the home adaptations system in Wales were made.

I welcomed the announcement from the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty that the new adaptations system – Enable: Support for Independent Living – would be rolled out in April 2016, but made clear that the success of the new scheme would be dependent upon ensuring it was implemented in a consistent way across Wales and that people's experiences are used to drive ongoing improvements.

I have continued to monitor and scrutinise home adaptations processes so that older people can access the support they need to adapt their homes, which is vital to enable them to lead healthy, safe and independent lives.

# Embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services

## Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

When the Welsh Government published the draft Social Services (Wales) Bill in 2012, I welcomed its intent, but called for a stronger focus on wellbeing within the proposed legislation. I was therefore pleased that the Bill was redrafted with a far stronger emphasis on wellbeing and was renamed the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill.

In the evidence I provided to the Assembly Committee scrutinising the redrafted Bill, I made clear the importance of including statutory principles on the face of the Bill to protect older people's rights, and the need for greater clarity on how the Bill would deliver greater voice and control for older people, particularly in terms of advocacy.

In addition to providing this evidence, I also held a stakeholder workshop session that brought together a wide range of social care experts and front-line professionals, as well as representatives from the third sector, to consider, using real-world scenarios, the impact that the Bill would have on the lives of older people and whether it would deliver upon its intent. The findings of this workshop were captured in a report that was shared with committee members to support their scrutiny of the Bill. Alongside this, I also shared briefings with Assembly Members to ensure that the needs and experiences of older people were fully considered throughout the scrutiny process and reflected in the final version of the Bill.

I was pleased that following my extensive work scrutinising the Bill and its contents, the UN Principles for Older Persons were included, along with a right to advocacy for older people under certain circumstances.

Once the Bill itself had received Royal Assent, the focus of my scrutiny shifted to the regulations that would underpin the legislation, in particular those relating to safeguarding, advocacy, information, advice and assistance, the assessment process and eligibility criteria. I formally responded to consultations relating to these areas and continued to engage with key stakeholders to ensure that the perspective of older people was fully understood and would be reflected within the regulations. Furthermore, I gave specific advice to the Welsh Government, at their request, about how the duties to offer independent advocacy should be made real through the regulations and deliver upon the intent set out Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action to ensure that older people have a strong voice and real control over their lives.

To coincide with the Act coming into force in April 2016, I also published an information leaflet and a Navigating Social Services Toolkit, which explain, in a clear and accessible way, the new rights that older people and carers have under the Act and the new duties placed upon public bodies. The leaflet and toolkit cover a wide range of areas, including access to advocacy, information and advice, needs

assessments, paying for care and safeguarding, and have been distributed to older people and their families across Wales.

## **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

I have been a strong and vocal supporter of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its aims to ensure that there is a preventative, outcomes-focused and long-term approach to public service delivery, essential to improve the lives of older people.

Following my detailed scrutiny of the legislation itself, ahead of the Act coming into force, I engaged extensively with Local Service Boards across Wales to ensure that the wellbeing assessments and wellbeing plans that would be developed under the Act would reflect and address the needs of older people and complement the Ageing Well in Wales action plans being delivered by Local Authorities.

As a result of this engagement, I also developed formal guidance for the newly established Public Services Boards to support the development of their wellbeing plans and underpinning needs assessments, which was published in 2016 (see below).

At a more strategic level, I worked with the Welsh Government to ensure that the national indicators used to measure the impact of the Act are outcomes-focused and relevant to older people. Many of these indicators, which were published in March 2016, complement the quality of life model on which my priorities as Commissioner were based, with a focus on issues such as access to services and facilities, feeling safe at home, and loneliness and isolation.

## **Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016**

I welcomed the publication of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill, which was designed to provide an improved statutory framework for the regulation and inspection of social care in Wales and the regulation of the social care workforce.

In analysing its contents, however, I identified a number of areas in which the Bill needed to be strengthened to deliver more for older people, which I made clear during the pre-legislative scrutiny process and during Stage 2 and Stage 3 scrutiny.

The concerns I raised focused on a number of issues – around fitness to own, workforce registration, the definition of care, integration of health and social care, commissioning, and the use of lay assessors as part of the inspection process – and I welcomed the fact that subsequent drafts of the Bill were amended to address these.

In addition to influencing the Act at the beginning of the legislative process, through scrutinising the Bill and making clear where improvements were needed, I also continued to shape this legislation both as a member of the Technical Group responsible for drafting the regulations that would underpin the Act and through more formal consultation responses.

My work on the regulations was focused in particular on ensuring that quality of life sits at the heart of the new standards of care, ensuring that proper planning is undertaken so that the provision of care services meets the needs of older people, and ensuring that better information is available so that older people and their families are able to judge the quality and safety of the services they depend on.

## Guidance for Public Services Boards

Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Public Services Boards (the statutory bodies created to replace Local Service Boards) are required to publish Local Well-being Plans, setting out how they intend to improve the economic, environmental and cultural well-being in their area and how they will deliver on the national well-being goals that will be monitored by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

In order to ensure that these well-being plans would deliver for older people and reflect older people's needs, wishes and circumstances, I met with each of the 19 Public Services Boards across Wales between December 2014 and July 2016 before issuing formal guidance – Preparing Local Well-being Plans: Guidance for Public Services Boards – to them using my powers under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act.

Public Services Boards must have regard for the guidance, which is designed to support a culture shift in how services are shaped and delivered so they reflect the needs of an individual and do not require an individual to fit into the system. The guidance also makes clear the importance of placing wellbeing at the heart of service delivery, as well as providing helpful and practical advice for service providers on preparing their well-being plans.

Feedback on the guidance was very positive, with a number of Public Services Boards reporting to me that they would use it to support their assessments of local well-being and develop their Local Well-being Plans.

## Scrutinising Public Services Boards Assessments of Local Well-being

During the summer of 2017, I undertook scrutiny of the Assessments of Local Well-being published by Public Services Boards, a duty created by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This scrutiny followed extensive work with Public Services Boards during 2016-17, which included meeting with each Board to advise them on the most effective ways of meeting older people's needs and issuing formal guidance on preparing local well-being plans, which are due to be published in May 2018.

The purpose of the scrutiny was to determine how well older people's issues were reflected within the assessment documents, whether the assessments would take forward the prevention agenda and an 'ageing well' approach, and the ways in which my published guidance was being used by Public Services Boards in developing their wellbeing assessments and plans.

My overall findings were published in August 2017, along with recommendations for Public Services Boards on how to ensure that older people's needs and issues are reflected in the local well-being plans. In addition to this feedback, I also ran a series of workshops for Public Services Boards during the Autumn of 2017 to reinforce these messages and ensure that the Boards are considering sustainable, preventative and long-term outcomes for older people and other groups.

# Ageing Well in Wales

When I took up post as Commissioner, it was clear to me that frailty and dependence were all too often seen as inevitable parts of growing older and that a more joined-up approach was needed across a range of areas to support people to age well.

I therefore established Ageing Well in Wales, a collaborative partnership of national public, private and third sector organisations, as well as organisations delivering initiatives at a local level, working to improve the wellbeing of people aged 50 and over across five key themes:

- Age Friendly Communities
- Dementia Supportive Communities
- Falls Prevention
- Learning and Employment
- Loneliness and Isolation

As part of the first phase of Ageing Well, which was launched in October 2014, national partner organisations worked to determine the priorities and outcomes for older people under each of the five themes and developed a delivery plan that set out a wide range of action that would underpin the second phase of the programme. Organisations working at a local level also came together via the wider Ageing Well in Wales Network, to collaborate on a range of action and share good practice.

During this time, each of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales reaffirmed their commitment to the Dublin Declaration and working with Ageing Well partners to ensure that communities are Age Friendly. To support this work, and to ensure that Local Authority officers and members could learn more about Ageing Well and the ways in which they could become involved in the programme, seminars were held in Llandudno and Cardiff, attended by 85 individuals working across a variety of departments and portfolios.

Furthermore, large-scale Ageing Well Network events were held in Llandudno and Baglan, bringing together existing Ageing Well Network members and prospective member organisations to share good practice and explore opportunities for joint-working. As a result of these events, membership of the Ageing Well in Wales Network grew significantly, to around 400 members.

The achievements of Ageing Well during Phase One were recognised at a European level by the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, who awarded the programme Three Star Reference Site Status for its innovative approach to healthy ageing and the work being undertaken across Wales to support people to be healthy and independent as they grow older.

As part of Phase Two, national partners made a wide range of commitments in terms of work that would be delivered across the five Ageing Well themes within the

Phase Two Action Plan, which was published in October 2016. Local Authorities also published Local Ageing Well Plans, setting out the work they would undertake to deliver Ageing Well priorities, which had a particular focus on developing Age Friendly Communities and offering greater support to people living with dementia.

Phase Two also saw significant engagement across Wales with individuals, groups and organisations working at a local level to continue to grow membership of the Ageing Well in Wales Network, inspire action within communities and share good practice.

This work included holding a series of large-scale ‘Celebrating Communities’ events across Wales, which brought hundreds of Network Members together to share their experiences, take part in interactive workshop sessions and explore new opportunities. Two ‘Celebrating Communities’ events were held in Bangor and Cardiff in late 2016, with a further five held across Wales in early 2018. These events have been complemented by others focusing on dementia supportive communities, with two held in Rhyl and Brecon in 2018. A series of Ageing Well Stories was also launched to coincide with these events, to not only celebrate the outstanding work being delivered by Ageing Well Network Members, but also to encourage others to take action in their own communities and establish their own initiatives to help older people across Wales to Age Well.

As a result of this work, membership of the Network has grown significantly, and there are now over 1,600 Ageing Well Network Members across Wales working alongside over 70 national partners to deliver Ageing Well priorities. The achievements of Ageing Well during Phase Two were also recognised at a European level, with the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy awarding the programme the highest Four Star Reference Site status in 2016.

To further support individuals and organisations to take action to improve the lives of older people across Wales, a number of useful information booklets were published by Ageing Well in Wales, in partnership with national partners. The guides, which have been widely distributed across Wales via stakeholders and Ageing Well partners and Network Members, present information in a clear accessible way, providing practical advice on a number of different topics:

- A pocket guide to being dementia supportive (produced in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Alzheimer’s Society)
- Making a Difference: A pocket guide to help you deal with loneliness (produced in partnership with the Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research, British Red Cross and Royal Voluntary Service)
- Making Wales a nation of age-friendly communities (produced in partnership with the Cymru Older People’s Alliance)

- A guide to being an age-friendly business (produced in partnership with the Cymru Older People's Alliance)
- A guide to setting up a community learning club (produced in partnership with the Royal Voluntary Service, the Learning and Work Institute, Men's Sheds Cymru, U3A and the Cymru Older People's Alliance)
- The 'How to Age Well: A guide to planning for a better later life' publication (produced in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Positive Ageing Associates)

In addition to publishing these guides, an information card that older people can share with businesses in their communities to encourage them to become more age-friendly was published in 2016. The information card briefly highlights the benefits of being an age friendly business, directing owners to the Ageing Well website where they can access further information and download the age-friendly business guide.

Furthermore, Ageing Well Cards were also published in 2018. The pocket-sized cards support older people, particularly those living with dementia or those with sensory loss, to communicate easily and effectively with businesses, public services and travel operators.

Further information about Ageing Well in Wales, its work and achievements, is available in a more detailed Ageing Well in Wales report that will be published alongside this report, or by visiting [www.ageingwellinwales.com](http://www.ageingwellinwales.com). The website also includes a Resources Hub that includes a range of publications, self-help guides, good practice examples and links to other partners on a range of issues relating to the Ageing Well core themes.

# Influencing policy, legislation and practice

In addition to the work described above, which often takes the form of projects or longer-term work programmes, my team and I also undertake a wide range of ongoing work with the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales to influence policy, legislation and practice. Running across this influencing work, I have continued to make clear the importance of our public services listening to older people and engaging with them in a meaningful way, as well as the benefits of adopting a rights-based approach to ensure that people's rights are upheld.

I have met with Welsh Government Ministers and officials on a regular basis to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the issues that affect older people and how these can be addressed, or to raise concerns about areas of policy and legislation that are not sufficiently focused on older people and their needs.

Similarly, I also worked with National Assembly Committee Chairs, particularly the Chair of the Health Committee, to highlight potential areas for scrutiny, investigation and inquiry. Recent inquiries into the use of anti-psychotic medication, loneliness and isolation, and employment opportunities for people over 50, for example, have allowed more detailed scrutiny of issues that I have driven up the policy agenda through my own work as Commissioner.

Every year, I responded to a broad range of Welsh Government and National Assembly consultations, using the voices and experiences of older people to ensure that proposals reflect their needs and will deliver positive outcomes.

Since taking up post in 2012, I have responded to over 120 consultations. Whilst many of these relate to health and social care, I have provided responses on a wide range of other subjects, including human rights; safeguarding; tackling hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence; housing; rural development; transport and community transport; employment, training and skills; financial inclusion; equality for transgender people; and protecting community assets.

I have also provided written and oral evidence to National Assembly Committees to scrutinise legislation from the perspective of older people, to ensure that committee inquiries capture older people's voices and experiences effectively, and that committee recommendations reflect the change that they want and need to see.

In addition to working with, and providing evidence to, the Welsh Government and National Assembly in the ways set out above, I have also influenced policy and practice through being a member of, and working in partnership with, a wide range of expert groups and advisory boards / panels. These include Cross-Party Groups on older people and ageing, dementia, fuel poverty and community transport; Welsh Government Advisory Groups on tackling poverty, housing, digital inclusion and public transport; Welsh Government Technical Groups linked to the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act; Good Practice Wales Steering Group; Money Advice Service Wales Forum; and DWP Strategic Partnership Board.

# Looking Forward

The starting point for this legacy report was my Framework for Action, the priorities I published in 2013 which gave a voice to the priorities that older people wanted me to focus on.

On my first day in office, I made the following statement:

“As Commissioner, I exist to make a meaningful difference to the lives of older people in Wales. I am here for and because of older people. One of the most important things I will do is speak on behalf of older people and make sure their voices are heard and are responded to.”

This is my final opportunity to speak out on behalf of older people, to lift up their voices and give them the status and profile they both deserve and have a right to.

For many older people, Wales is a good place to grow older. As a result of legislative and policy changes, good practice across our public services and the determination of our third sector and community groups and individuals, there is now a much stronger focus in Wales on issues such as the prevention of ill-health and the maintenance of independence, violence against women and domestic abuse, dementia and the quality of life of older people living in care homes.

We now have national recognition that issues such as employment opportunities, loneliness and isolation, falls, community facilities and amenities, are highly important to older people and action is now underway to begin to address these.

I have been part of the development of all of these, and much more besides, and they are good beginnings. But a beginning, however strong, is not the same as having completed the task in hand. Ultimately, the success of legislation, policies and public services can only be judged by the extent to which they change people’s lives, by the extent to which they deliver outcomes that are real and tangible, not just for some but for everyone.

Throughout my work, it has been clear that our public services often struggle to define these outcomes, but without more work to make these explicit, it will be impossible to judge whether ambition and intent has become an everyday reality. For older people, this ambition and intent will be made real when Wales is a country in which:

- It is safe to be older – over 40,000 people will no longer be the victims of domestic abuse, over 150,000 people will no longer be victims of crime in their own home, and neglect of older people in care homes and hospitals will be a thing of past.
- Older people will not die simply because they are poor; one in seven older people will not live in poverty, having to choose whether to heat their homes or eat.

- Older people do not face ageism in the workplace and are able to stay in work for as long as they want or need to. There are no longer 200,000 NEETs over the age of 60 and you are not more likely to die rather than get another job if you lose your job over the age of 50 and do not find a new job within six months.
- Older people are not so lonely and isolated that they feel their lives are of little value, with their mental and physical health severely undermined. Emotional health will be recognised as being just as important as physical health.
- Up to half a million older people don't fall each year, with up to 50,000 suffering serious injury, causing many of them to never return to their own homes, regain their independence and former lives.
- The role of unpaid carers is fully recognised and they received all the assistance they need to continue caring and supporting public services across Wales.
- All public services professionals truly understand, have the skills to provide, not just good clinical care, but respectful and dignified care, delivered in a way that is empowering and supports people's independence, and understands and reflects the needs of older people in all of their diversity and what matters to them.
- Older people are not, and do not feel, discriminated against simply because of their age and as a society we recognise older people not just for what they've done and for being the tremendous asset they are, but for what they continue to contribute at a national and community level. Older people remain as active participants and contributors to their communities. Housing and communities are age-friendly.

Over the past six years I have travelled the length and breadth of Wales many times over, meeting older people. We live in a world of labels and they have their uses, but older people do not want to be simply defined by their age, particularly when age is all too often associated with frailty and decline. Our older generations are the backbone of communities and families, still contributing in so many ways, including economically. Far from being the burden they are too often made to feel, they are a huge national asset. Investing in our older people is investing in our country, our economy and our communities. For too many older people, everyday ageism and discrimination, both through wider society and our public services, is both endemic and institutionalised.

When you speak to older people, many are both capable and very confident at expressing their needs and wishes, at an individual level, they know what good

help and support would look like, and at a more strategic level, they also have a fundamentally good grasp of what our wider priorities in Wales should be. The harder the times and the more complex the issues, the more important it is that we root our ambition and our work to these voices, yet there is still a significant way to go before this wealth of knowledge sits at the heart of our priority setting and decision making in Wales. It is not only health and social care that matters to older people and this needs to be better reflected across the breadth of Welsh Government priorities.

However, because of the circumstances in which they find themselves, older people can struggle to articulate their wishes, to make their own voices heard. Our independent advocacy base, and much of our third sector, is key to ensuring that Wales's ambition to ensure that people have voice and control over their lives is achieved. Yet it is clear that these sectors struggle to keep up with the increasing demand being placed upon them. The more we invest in these sectors, the better the outcomes for individuals and the lower the overall cost to the public purse of providing care and support.

Devolution in Wales has at its heart the fundamental concept of equality. This is often thought about across different groups of people, yet it is also a huge issue within the wider umbrella concept of older age. There are particular groups of older people who can find themselves the most disadvantaged, the most voiceless, the most excluded, the most powerless. Older people with disabilities such as sensory loss, people living with dementia, older women within BAME groups, those who are the victims of crime and people living in care homes can all, because of the cumulative impact of age and wider characteristics, find themselves excluded from improvements that are being made. This is wrong. Improvement must be felt by everyone, regardless of their personal background and circumstances. We must strengthen the diversity of the work taking place in Wales in regard of growing older and ensure that our approach to the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales excludes no-one.

All of us in public service exist to make a meaningful difference to people's lives. I have seen so many examples of amazing public services delivered by passionate and dedicated people, it is clear that we can get it right, and we all have a vested interest, if we plan to grow older in Wales, in making this good practice the standard practice.

This is not always easy, this can take more time than we would like, I recognise the many and varied resource constraints that exist. But none of this can take away from the fundamental accountability that sits with the privilege of leading public services to get things right and, just as importantly, through openness and transparency, to demonstrate that this is the case to the people of Wales.

I have worked hard to give older people a voice that is respected, to ensure that the issues that matter to them are both recognised and acted upon. In some areas, progress has been significant, in others a strong beginning, but there is still so much to be done.

It has been a real privilege to have been the Older People's Commissioner for Wales over the past six years, a time in which there has been much positive change for older people. I would like to thank my team, the stakeholders I have worked with and, most importantly, older people across Wales who have supported me and my work to make Wales a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.



