



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Making a difference for older people in Wales

Impact and Reach Report
2014-15

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.

How to contact the Commissioner:

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

Phone: 08442 640 670
Email: ask@olderpeoplewales.com
Website: www.olderpeoplewales.com
Twitter: [@talkolderpeople](https://twitter.com/talkolderpeople)

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Foreword

Since taking up post as Commissioner, I have met and spoken with thousands of older people across Wales who continue to share with me their concerns, views, hopes and wishes about growing older in Wales. They have told me that, above all else, they want the best possible quality of life as they grow older. This means ensuring that people are safe and well cared for and can access the services and support they need to stay healthy and independent. Driving this change, the change that older people want and need to see, has continued to be at the heart of my work during the past twelve months.

I undertook the biggest Review to date into the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes in Wales and published my Review report, 'A Place to Call Home?' in November 2014. The report makes for hard reading and I have been clear that failing to deal with the issues identified cannot be an option for Wales.

I have been very clear about what must change within care homes and what action is needed and I will continue to seek evidence, on behalf of older people, that this change has been delivered.

Older people place their trust in us and have a rightful expectation not to be let down. We cannot and must not shy away from unacceptable standards within any aspect of our public sector.

Alongside concerns about care homes, older people frequently talk to me about the importance of community services, such as libraries, buses, community and day centres, and public toilets. We must not forget or overlook the value of these essential community services to older people and the impact upon their lives, as well as the cost to the public purse, when these services are lost.

Many changes are currently taking place to these services and I have been clear that if we fail to engage and consult with older people in a meaningful way, or if we fail to draw effectively upon their knowledge and expertise when



“I have met and spoken with thousands of older people across Wales who continue to share with me their concerns, views, hopes and wishes about growing older in Wales.”

making difficult decisions, we risk taking decisions that will have a detrimental impact for years to come.

That is why I developed and issued a practical engagement toolkit, which has been distributed to older people across Wales, and issued best practice guidance to Local Authorities, under Section 12 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act, to make clear their duties to older people in relation to engagement and consultation.

This year, I have also significantly strengthened my work to ensure that older people are safeguarded and protected as there is still a lack of recognition of, and response to, the abuse of older people.

I am therefore working with a wide range of agencies so that the nature of the abuse faced by older people is better understood, that the victims of domestic abuse are recognised and properly supported and that we provide advice, guidance and support in a way that meets the needs of older people.

Whilst much of my work is about ensuring that older people who are frail or vulnerable, or those in need of protection, are properly cared for and supported – giving them a voice when they have none – it is important not to assume that all older people are frail or vulnerable, or that frailty and a loss of independence is an inevitable part of ageing. There is much we can and need to be doing to support everyone in Wales to ‘age well’ as they grow older.

This is why I established the Ageing Well in Wales programme, the first of its kind in Europe, a national collaboration of over 300 organisations, groups and individuals working together to improve people’s wellbeing and create a country in which everyone has opportunities to make the most of their older years.

Wales faces many challenges and I do not underestimate the scale of these. There is a strong intent to get it right for all older people, but intent is not enough. Ultimately, the impact and outcomes of the work underway or planned to deliver change must be used to judge whether intent has moved beyond aspiration into reality.

“This year I have significantly strengthened my work to ensure that older people are safeguarded and protected.”

“There is much we can and need to be doing to support everyone in Wales to ‘age well’ as they grow older.”

Older people's voices hold the key to getting this change right and we must remember that nothing will ever cost as much as getting it wrong. It is often the smallest and least costly of things that can make the biggest difference.

Wales should be proud to be a nation of older people, proud of the knowledge, experience and diversity that older people bring to our country, proud of the huge contribution they continue to make to our communities. I am proud to be their Commissioner and I will continue to stand up and speak out on their behalf, holding public bodies to account where needed, to ensure that the issues that matter to them are being dealt with effectively and that, as a result, Wales is a good place to grow older – not just for some but for everyone.



Sarah Rochira
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

“We cannot and must not shy away from unacceptable standards within any aspect of our public sector.”

Reaching out and listening to older people across Wales

My team and I have continued to engage directly with older people across Wales to ensure that they know about my work and how I can help them. My engagement also ensures that older people's voices continue to be at the heart of all that I do, guiding and shaping my work as Commissioner.

Engagement Roadshow

This year, my team and I have met with 216 groups throughout Wales, travelling over 23,000 miles to reach out to more than 5700 older people. My team and I have visited every Local Authority area in Wales, meeting and speaking with older people at a variety of events, from large conferences to forum meetings to local support and social groups.

Meeting with this number of groups, an increase compared to 2013-14, in which my team and I met with 202 groups, has been a significant achievement as many of my team were involved in undertaking visits to care homes as part of my Care Home Review during April and May.

To ensure that my team and I engage with as diverse a range of older people as possible, we visit the places that they live their lives, such as care homes, extra care housing schemes, support groups, carers groups, dementia cafes, day centres and social clubs.

I have organised many joint visits with Assembly Members, Council Leaders and Councillors in constituencies across Wales to hear from older people about the issues that matter to them in their communities and to ensure that policy makers and decision makers hear first-hand about older people's experiences and the challenges they face.

I have also formed excellent relationships with organisations working on behalf of people with protected characteristics to ensure that I am engaging with those whose voices are seldom heard. During the course of the year my team and I have met with groups such as:

- BAWSO
- Cardiff Chinese Elderly Association
- Communities First Groups
- Cyfle i Bawb
- Men in Sheds

- Members of Cardiff's Gypsy Traveller Community
- Newport BME 50+ Forum
- Tawe Butterflies (Organisers of Swansea Sparkles Transgender Festival)
- Unity LGBT Older People's Group
- Women's Institute

Wider Engagement

Alongside my Engagement Roadshow, I have continued to work with formal organisations that represent older people, such as the National Pensioners Convention, National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales, Welsh Senate of Older People, Cymru Older People's Alliance and the National Partnership Forum.

I have also continued to work with a wide range of third sector organisations across Wales, such as Age Alliance Wales, Care and Repair Cymru, Age Cymru, Alzheimer's Society, RNIB Cymru and Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, as well as public bodies, including the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Welsh Language Commissioner, Health Boards, Local Authorities, Wales Audit Office, Welsh Local Government Association and Public Health Wales, delivering keynote speeches at conferences and events, and meeting with key individuals within these organisations.

I also visit front line services and staff on a regular basis, including out of hours and night visits, to see for myself the challenges they face, the difference they make and the extent to which real change is taking place at the front line of care and support.

This work enables me to grow knowledge and understanding about the issues and challenges faced by older people, promote good practice and identify opportunities for joint working. By working in partnership, we are able to support each other in our aims and objectives of delivering real change for older people.

My team have also run information stands at conferences, information days and community events across Wales, providing information, advice and useful resources directly to older people and those who care for and support them.

Information leaflet

To ensure that older people know about my role, the work I undertake and the ways in which I can provide them with direct help and support, I have produced a new information leaflet that has been widely distributed across Wales.

The leaflets are available in English, Welsh, Bengali, Gujarati, Somali and Urdu, as well as in large print and audio versions.

Over 13,000 copies of the leaflet have been distributed to all GP surgeries, pharmacies and dentists in Wales, as well as to sheltered housing, extra care facilities and Care and Repair Agencies in each Local Authority area.

Media

Continuing my work with the media has enabled me to reach out to large numbers of older people across Wales so that they know about the work I am undertaking to drive change and make a difference to their lives.

I have maintained a strong media presence across television and radio, appearing many times on BBC Wales Today, ITV Wales news, S4C Newyddion, BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru.

I have also secured extensive media coverage in daily newspapers, such as the Western Mail, Daily Post, South Wales Evening Post, South Wales Argus and South Wales Echo, as well as weekly local newspapers throughout Wales.

In addition, I have continued to write columns and articles for a wide range of other publications, such as journals, magazines, blogs and Welsh language publications.

Omnibus survey

In order to assess the effectiveness of my communication and engagement with older people in Wales and their awareness of my role and my work, I commissioned a survey* to gather their views.

During November 2014, face to face interviews were conducted with 391 people aged 55+ across Wales. The questions asked included whether people had heard of the Older People's Commissioner, how they had heard about my work and whether they felt I was making a difference.

* Beaufort Research Omnibus Survey; field work conducted 17-28 November 2014

- 1 in 3 people had heard about the Older People's Commissioner
- 85% of those who had heard about the role had done so through television, radio or newspapers.
- 75% agreed that there should be an Older People's Commissioner

I will commission another survey in November 2015 using the same questions. This will enable me to monitor and compare levels of awareness amongst older people about my role and my work.

Acknowledging excellence

In order to promote good practice across the key sectors that work with and for older people, I have supported a number of organisations by sponsoring awards that recognise the invaluable contribution made by outstanding individuals.

These awards formally recognise excellence in practice and celebrate innovation, passion, dedication, hard work and commitment to improving the lives of older people.

During 2014/15, I was pleased to sponsor the following awards:

- Royal College of Nursing in Wales Nurse of the Year Awards – Older People's Commissioner for Wales Award (the winner of this award went on to win the overall Nurse of the Year Award)
- Wales Care Awards (in association with Care Forum Wales) – Dignity in Care Award
- NIACE Dysgu Cymru Inspire! Adult Learning Awards – Older Adult Learner of the Year
- British Association of Social Workers Social Work Awards for Wales – Lifetime Achievement Award

There is much in our public services in Wales to be proud of and I have met many outstanding public service staff who make a real difference to the lives of older people in Wales.

Protection and Scrutiny Casework Team

My Protection and Scrutiny Casework Team offer direct support, assistance and advocacy to older people and their families across Wales. They intervene where older people and their families feel they require my support to challenge the decision making and practice of public sector bodies.

Individuals contacting my Protection and Scrutiny Casework Team for assistance will be given the support they need in line with my legal powers, which are defined by the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006.

The Act outlines the action that I am able to take to ensure that the interests of older people are safeguarded and promoted when public bodies discharge their functions and the assistance I am able to provide directly to older people.

During 2014-15, I provided help, support, advocacy and assistance to 525 older people. The five most common subjects my team were contacted about were:

Subject	Number of Enquiries Received	Percentage of total Received (%)
Care	92	17.5
Residential Care	57	10.9
Transport	37	7.0
Community	34	6.5
Housing	34	6.5

Key trends identified

Through my casework, a wide range of issues have been brought to my attention and it has become evident that there are some key issues that appear to be an issue for a number of older people and their families in more than one area of Wales, indicating a more systemic issue. Key issues identified include:

- Poor communication
- Disempowerment and not being listened to
- The complexity of systems and processes
- Unacceptable delays in decision making
- Waiting times for services

My casework is an important source of information about the experiences of older people. Where individuals raise an issue that has a wider relevance to older people, my team and I may undertake further, more strategic work to ensure the issue is addressed.

The quotes below from older people and families I have supported show the positive difference my team makes to older people's lives, often in cases where others have been unable to deliver the required outcomes.

“Thank you for your kindness and understanding. So glad you are there for older people.”

“It was nice to know someone cared and wanted to listen. Thank you for the concern you have shown and for your interest in my father's situation.”

“I cannot thank you enough...you are extremely efficient! I haven't got anywhere for 6 weeks and 1 telephone call and within a matter of minutes I have help. Thank you so much.”

“Thank you so much for all your help and support, we wouldn't have gotten this far without you.”

“My Caseworker was wonderful. Top marks; twelve out of ten. It has been a big help to us and through the intervention we have had satisfaction. You have all done a wonderful job, the service and the people dealing with us.”

“I am absolutely delighted! I cannot thank you enough... I will sleep for the first time in months and it's all thanks to you. You have helped me enormously and you have restored my faith in public services.”

For the first time this year, I am also publishing a Casebook alongside my Impact and Reach report. This is an opportunity for me to provide more detail on the way I undertake my casework, the type of cases I support, the difference I have made to individuals and the wider themes that have emerged.

Driving Change for Older People

Care Home Review

In 2013, I announced that I would use my legal powers, under Section 3 of the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006, to Review the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes in Wales.

Gathering Evidence

My Care Home Review was the biggest Review of its kind ever undertaken in Wales. To ensure that the voices of older people and those who care for and care about them were at the heart of my Review, I gathered a wide range of evidence from older people, statutory bodies and other key stakeholders, such as third sector organisations, professionals and relatives.

Evidence gathered for my Review included:

- Over 2,000 questionnaire responses from older people, their families and the public.
- Unannounced visits to 100 care homes across Wales by my team of Social Care Rapporteurs to observe older people and to hear directly from them about their experiences.
- 53 submissions of written evidence from the bodies subject to the Review and a wide range of organisations that represent and work on behalf of older people.
- Engagement events and focus groups across Wales with families of older people living in care homes, those providing independent advocacy and representatives of groups whose voices are seldom heard.
- Roundtable sessions with organisations that represent and work on behalf of older people, including professional bodies, third sector organisations and recognised experts in the delivery of residential and nursing care.

- Formal evidence and scrutiny sessions with bodies subject to the Review to discuss and consider the written evidence provided in greater detail and to obtain further information about their understanding of the day-to-day realities of living in residential and nursing care, the change required to improve quality of life and whether current action (planned or underway) is sufficient to deliver this change.
- In total, oral evidence gathered from 82 bodies.

Review Findings and Requirements for Action

While my Review findings, published in November 2014, identified some excellent examples of truly person-centred care, enabling and empowering care that delivers the very best outcomes for older people, there are significant variations across Wales that result in too many older people living in care homes having an unacceptable quality of life. Too many older people living in care homes are no longer able to do the things that matter to them, lose meaningful choice and control over their lives, have their emotional needs neglected and do not have their basic rights upheld.

My findings also showed that the care delivered in many care homes in Wales often fails to meet the needs of an individual, focusing instead on a one-size-fits-all approach, something that can have a significant impact on the quality of life of older people.

My Review report – *A Place to Call Home?* – included clear Requirements for Action that outline the change required to drive up the quality of life and care of older people living in care homes across Wales that the public bodies and independent care home providers subject to my Review are expected to comply with.

I requested that these bodies provided me with a written response within three months, detailing what action they are currently undertaking, or will take, to meet my Requirements. All bodies and the majority of independent care home providers have provided a response and my team and I are currently analysing and assessing these responses. Should any response be deemed unsatisfactory, a formal written notice will be issued, requiring an improved response within one month.

Political engagement

I was pleased that all of the bodies and organisations that were part of the Review process, including care home providers, publicly welcomed my findings and Requirements for Action and stated their commitment to working

with me to deliver the change required to ensure that quality of life sits at the heart of residential and nursing care in Wales.

My Review was also strongly welcomed by all political parties in the National Assembly for Wales and was the focus of my annual scrutiny session by the Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee, as well as a plenary debate. The Health Minister also made a statement in plenary that outlined the Welsh Government's formal response to my Review and Requirements for Action.

There has been strong cross-party consensus that my Review has been essential to highlight the many issues faced by older people living in care homes and that the change required, as outlined in my Requirements for Action, must be delivered as a matter of urgency.

Media Coverage

My Review also received significant media coverage, which included:

- Lead story on ITV Wales news
- Dedicated edition of the ITV Wales current affairs programme 'Wales This Week'
- Coverage throughout the day on BBC Wales News (TV, Radio, Online, including Welsh language)
- Front page of the Western Mail
- Coverage on BBC Radio 4 programme 'You and Yours'
- Extensive coverage in Welsh daily newspapers as well as weekly local papers and Welsh language publications
- Coverage on the Guardian newspaper's social care website
- BBC Wales today story on food standards within care homes

Review Outcomes to Date

I was pleased that all of the bodies subject to the Review strongly welcomed my Requirements for Action and are committed to delivering the change needed to ensure that quality of life sits at the heart of our care home system, at every level from commissioning to frontline care delivery.

I am also pleased that following the publication of my Review report, a number of actions have already been undertaken to address some of the key issues identified by my Review.

I strongly welcomed the Welsh Government's announcement that £320,000 of additional funding will be targeted at improving oral health care for older people living in care homes to ensure that every care home has a mouth care policy, that oral health assessments will be carried out upon entry into a care home and that each home will have an oral care champion who will be responsible for promoting best practice.

I also welcomed the Welsh Government's announcement that as part of the new GP contract for Wales, GPs will have more time to spend caring for the most vulnerable people with complex care needs, in particular, frail and older patients, and that there is a commitment to undertake a review of the care homes enhanced service in 2016/17.

Next Steps

In Summer 2015, I will issue a statement detailing my overall assessment as to whether the actions detailed in the responses will deliver the outcomes I expect and any further action I intend to take to ensure that these outcomes are secured on behalf of older people.

I will be looking for clear evidence that demonstrates that the actions undertaken have resulted in meaningful, long-term change for older people living in care homes in Wales and that quality of life sits at the heart of the care home system.

Community Services, Facilities and Infrastructure

For many older people, community services are, quite simply, an indispensable lifeline. Community services must be seen as essential assets that enable individuals to maintain their health, independence and wellbeing, bringing wider benefits to our communities.

Seminars

Following the publication of my report 'The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales' in February 2014, which made a strong case for protecting the community services that older people often rely upon, 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:

- Welsh Government and Public Health Wales (embedding wellbeing into public services)
- Royal Voluntary Service (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. Many stated that they would share what they had learnt with their colleagues and would aim to take a more innovate approach to the planning, development and delivery of community services.

Best Practice Guidance

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 them 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, a practical resource to help older people make their voices heard, which has been widely distributed across Wales.

The Toolkit provides a range of 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 is available to help them to do 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.

As Commissioner, I want to ensure that older people across Wales have the knowledge, resources and support to have the strongest voice possible, a voice that is heard, listened to and acted upon, so they can work effectively with their Local Authorities and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

I understand that difficult decisions on expenditure and savings must be made by Local Authorities, but it is essential that community services are protected

or delivered in new and innovative ways so that older people can continue to access them. Older people's voices must therefore be at the heart of any decisions that will result in changes to these essential services.

Ageing Well in Wales

Age can, of course, bring its challenges, but frailty and dependence need not and should not be seen as an inevitable part of growing older. There is much that individuals can do to maintain their health and overall wellbeing, but much more is required if we want Wales to be a good place to grow older. A joined-up approach is required that focuses on very clear outcomes, outcomes that reflect the biggest challenges faced by people to age well.

The Ageing Well in Wales Programme, which I am proud to Chair and is hosted by my office, is a collaborative partnership of national public and third sector bodies and organisations, working together to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older for everyone.

The programme has one simple aim - to improve the wellbeing of people aged 50 and over in Wales. To achieve this, work is being undertaken across five key themes:

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

The Programme structure includes a Strategic Action Group to steer the work of the Programme through advice, guidance and scrutiny; Expert Advisory Groups, which identify good practice and advise the Strategic Action Group; and Thematic Networks, which provide their members with support as they deliver a range of initiatives in our communities.

The Thematic Networks are a crucial way to raise awareness of action that can be taken at a local level to support people to age well and to harness and support action within communities. They use local knowledge and experience to drive the development of better and more impactful national programmes.

The programme has well established links with the European Union, which are important both in terms of learning from good practice across Europe and also in respect of being able to access European funding streams linked to

growing older. As part of this work within Europe, Wales is now recognised as one of 13 exemplar nations in respect of our innovative work to support people as they grow older.

The Programme was officially launched by the Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford AM, at an event at the Senedd in October 2014. The launch event was attended by a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including senior officials from the European Commission and the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing.

During the launch, Cllr Ellen ap Gwynn, Leader of Ceredigion County Council and WLGA Local Government Lead, formally committed all of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales to become Age-Friendly, ceremonially signing a declaration of intent alongside me.

To ensure that Local Authority staff were able to learn more about the aims of Ageing Well in Wales and the ways in which they could become involved in the programme, seminars were held in Llandudno and Cardiff, which were attended by 85 officers and members working across a variety of departments. As a result of these seminars, Local Authority staff are now better placed to work towards ensuring that communities across Wales are Age-Friendly.

In March 2015, I held the first in a series of Network events in Llandudno and Baglan, which were attended by a total of 210 stakeholders – a mixture of existing Network Members and prospective members. The events allowed attendees to form new networks, share good practice and explore opportunities for joint-working. As a result of these events, an additional 80 stakeholders have signed up to be part of the Ageing Well in Wales Thematic Networks, increasing the total number of members to 380.

The organisations that make up the Strategic Advisory Group and the Expert Advisory Groups have made public their commitment to take action that will support the delivery of the aims of the programme over the next four years. This will include a local Ageing Well in Wales plan within all 22 Local Authorities. This represents a genuine commitment to make a real difference to the lives of people in Wales as they grow older and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to age well.

I have begun a series of meetings with Local Service Boards throughout Wales to establish how they can work to ensure that their work complements the work of Ageing Well in Wales to deliver real change for older people. The work of the programme is also integral to the new focus on wellbeing that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act intends to bring to our public services.

Ageism and Discrimination

Older people feel that services and indeed some sections of society discriminate against them simply because of their age. Furthermore, the language used about older people can often be derogatory and disrespectful.

As Commissioner, I have been clear that we must celebrate the fact that we are a nation of older people and that portrayals of older people need to be balanced and reflect their true value to society. I take every opportunity to challenge ageist and discriminatory thinking and promote the value of our older people, highlighting the need for an asset based approach. I also work to grow knowledge and thinking about how to recognise and address ageism and discrimination.

In 2013-14, I piloted a series of training seminars to help professionals better understand the impact of ageism and how it feeds discrimination.

Following very positive feedback about the training, which was completed by 147 professionals, I made the decision to roll out the training, which was provided free of charge, more widely during 2014-15.

The seminars helped delegates to understand the impact that ageism can have upon individuals, families and communities and how ageism and age discrimination can result in public services that do not meet the needs of older people.

The seminars also included a number of exercises that allowed delegates to think practically about how to develop age-friendly communities and public services.

To date, a total of 264 professionals from bodies such as Health Boards, Local Authorities, the Police Force and Third Sector Organisations have completed the training, with many stating that they will share what they have learnt with colleagues, encourage colleagues to adopt a more age positive attitude and challenge discriminatory practice. Delegates also welcomed the fact that the training included a focus on a rights-based approach and how they could use this to deliver change.

Safeguarding and Protecting Older People

It is estimated that over 40,000 older people in Wales are abused or neglected each year. However, despite the good work underway in many parts of Wales to tackle the abuse faced by older people, there is still not yet sufficient understanding within public services and society generally about the nature of this abuse and the circumstances that lead to older people becoming particularly vulnerable or at risk of harm.

It is essential that there is a systematic approach in Wales to identify older people who are at risk of harm and those who need access to safeguarding support. Furthermore, abuse of older people must be recognised as a criminal act and older people must be recognised as victims of domestic abuse where they fit the legal definition. Those who are abused must be swiftly and appropriately supported to regain their safety and wellbeing and have the full support of our civil and criminal justice systems.

Access to Support and Justice: Working Together Report

As part of my work to stand up for older people at risk of harm and to ensure they are safeguarded and protected, I commissioned Aberystwyth University to look at how organisations across Wales identify abuse of older people, particularly domestic abuse, and how information is recorded and transferred between agencies.

The report was published in March 2015 and was aimed at professionals who have a role in adult safeguarding, protection and domestic abuse services. It identified that whilst there is some good practice across Wales, it is not consistently being applied in all areas and made a number of recommendations of how improvements could be made.

The report clearly indicated that there needs to be greater awareness, commitment and a more joined up approach if older people who experience abuse are to be safeguarded effectively.

Safeguarding Seminars

Adult protection in Wales has been placed on a statutory footing through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It is therefore an opportune time to consider how agencies can work better together to prevent older people falling through the 'gaps' that currently exist between services.

In order to address the recommendations in the 'Access to Support and Justice: Working Together' Report and, more broadly, to grow knowledge and thinking about the crimes against and abuse of older people, I delivered a series of seminars for adult protection professionals and those providing specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence support services across Wales, with support from experts in safeguarding and adult protection.

The seminars were targeted at those working to directly protect older people, as well as professionals working at a strategic level such as Chief Executives and key policy makers within Local Authorities, Health Boards, Police Forces and a range of third sector organisations.

The seminars, which were attended by 132 delegates from across Wales, highlighted the importance of giving older people equal rights and a stronger voice, the need for more effective joint working to ensure older people have access to appropriate support and justice and the need to improve knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse of older people.

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

Delegates stated that the seminars improved their knowledge about the scale, nature and impact of abuse faced by older people and that they would consider what actions their organisations could implement to ensure that abuse of older people is recognised, recorded and receives an appropriate response. Progress is currently being made to develop action plans that will lead to an improved response and service for older people in Wales.

Protection of Older People in Wales: A Guide to the Law

The second edition of 'Protection of Older People in Wales: A Guide to the Law', produced in partnership with Professor of Law John Williams, has been widely distributed to professionals in Wales working in the field of adult protection.

The Guide provides comprehensive information about a variety of adult protection related issues, such as human rights, deprivation of liberty and the criminal justice system, as well as a series of case studies that relate legislation to real life scenarios.

The Guide has been used by social work practitioners, social care staff, medical staff, care home owners, lawyers and students, as well as older people and their families to reduce the confusion around current adult protection legislation and identify the ways in which the law can assist them.

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

To raise public awareness of the domestic abuse and sexual violence that affects older people, I have 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 contact information for the All Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline.

To date, 25,000 copies of the booklet have been distributed across Wales to a wide range of partners, including Police Forces, Health Boards, Local Authorities, Women's Aid and Advocacy Services.

Guidance on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

I have been working in collaboration with the Welsh Government to produce much needed guidance about domestic abuse and sexual violence of older people. The guidance will be aimed at front line professionals working in health, social care and housing and will assist them to better identify and subsequently respond to domestic abuse and sexual violence of older people.

This work will contribute to a greater understanding of the issues faced by older people when they experience domestic abuse and sexual violence and will ensure that they are recognised as victims, essential so they can receive the support they need at such a traumatic time in their lives.

Quality and Safety of Health Care Services

I have a long standing programme of work in place in respect of the quality of health care in Wales, ranging from support to individuals who experience unacceptable care to extensive engagement with Health Boards and the Welsh Government regarding my expectations in respect of board scrutiny and governance.

Annual Quality Statements

I have been very clear to Health Boards and Trusts that they must ensure that patient care is safe and effective, that patients are treated with dignity, care and compassion at all times and that they are supported to feel safe and cared for.

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

I agreed with Health Boards and the Welsh Government that Annual Quality Statements would be used to report against areas in which further and continued improvement was required. This would ensure a more consistent and integrated approach to reporting on quality of care in a clear and accessible format that older people, who are the biggest users of health services in Wales, can easily understand.

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

Following the publication of the Statements in Autumn 2014, I met with Health Boards and provided a detailed critique about which elements of their Statement provided clear information and appropriate detail, as well as the ways in which the statements could have been improved.

The 2013/14 Annual Quality Statements demonstrate that there is clearly a great deal of work being undertaken to improve communication with the public and value the patient experience. However, there are still a number of areas that need significant improvement, in particular how the patient voice and experience has been used to influence service delivery, and I expect these to be addressed in the 2014/15 Annual Quality Statements.

Effective Governance and Scrutiny

Following the publication of the 'Trusted to Care' report in May 2014, which identified significant failings in the level of care provided in Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, I wrote to all Health Board Chief Executives in Wales requiring assurances that the issues identified in the report were not prevalent in their Health Board.

The responses clearly showed that the Boards were unable to guarantee that their governance systems would always be able to identify similar issues to those highlighted in 'Trusted to Care'.

I therefore raised concerns with Health Boards and the Welsh Government about a number of governance issues that the NHS in Wales as a whole must address as a matter of urgency:

- The consistency and clarity of definitions of quality of care and the extent to which these reflect the perspective of older people.
- The robustness and effectiveness of the mechanisms that Health Boards and the Trusts have in place to evaluate the quality of care.
- The robustness and effectiveness of Board scrutiny regarding the quality of the care provided by their organisations.
- The sources of Board assurance regarding the identification and remedying of unacceptable care.
- The openness and transparency of Board performance against their core business.

I have also formally raised these issues with the Public Accounts Committee, the Auditor General for Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales.

I have identified 12 key areas that I expect Health Boards and Trusts to regularly report and provide commentary on, including within their Annual Quality Statements. Using a reporting framework that includes these key areas will ensure that there is greater consistency between information published by Health Boards and will allow more meaningful understanding of the quality of care provided and the impact this has upon older people.

I have also been clear with the Welsh Government that the NHS in Wales should urgently implement a national performance measurement framework to be used by all Health Boards to bring consistency to measurement and reporting on the quality of care.

I expect to see my key areas for reporting included within this as well as within the updated Healthcare Standards Framework and reflected in the NHS Outcomes Framework that is currently being developed.

I have engaged extensively with Health Board Chairs and Chief Executives, as well as Executive Directors across Wales, to grow their knowledge and thinking about what high quality care means to older people and assist them in understanding what good scrutiny on behalf of older people looks like at

Board level. I have also been clear that whilst there is much good practice, we are still failing to get the basics right too often and failing to learn from mistakes. We need to see best practice quickly become standard practice across Wales.

Integration

As Commissioner I have been clear that a lack of integration between health and social care in Wales can have a significant impact upon the quality and availability of support and services for older people. I have continued to call for greater integration, which includes housing and the third sector as equal partners.

As part of a range of work underway to improve integration, Health Boards and Local Authorities published Statements of Intent for delivering integrated health and social care.

In Autumn 2014, I provided detailed feedback on whether their statements of intent clearly demonstrated that the actions outlined would deliver real change for older people.

In my response to Health Boards and Local Authorities, I raised concerns that housing and the third sector were often not seen as equal partners and would not be involved during the planning and development stages of work to improve integration. I also raised concerns that there was a lack of planning around how the impact of proposed changes would be identified, assessed and mitigated.

To support the integration agenda, which is essential to meet the changing needs of older people, I will be holding a workshop in April 2015 for key Health Board and Local Authority staff to explore how to deliver integrated services more effectively to provide real benefits to older people.

Influencing Legislation, Policy and Practice

Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales

Building upon my work to ensure that older people's voices are heard and listened to, I have continued to meet with Welsh Ministers so that policy and practice reflects the issues faced by older people and meets their needs.

These meetings have provided opportunities for me to raise concerns about areas of legislation that are not sufficiently focused on older people and to agree the most effective ways forward to deliver the change required.

I have also met with the Chairs of a number of National Assembly Committees to highlight potential areas for investigation and inquiry and I have welcomed a number of committee inquiries that have been particularly relevant to older people. I will continue to work with Assembly Committees to maximise the potential of our respective scrutiny roles through close cooperation.

I have met with the Permanent Secretary and the Director Generals in order to ensure a greater understanding among Director Generals that the issues that affect older people in Wales are not restricted only to health and social care, but are relevant to the full breadth of their portfolios.

Consultation Responses

Throughout 2014-15, I responded to a wide range of Welsh Government and National Assembly consultations, using the experiences that older people across Wales have shared with me, ensuring that their voices are heard and that the changes they want and need to see are delivered:

- National Assembly for Wales consultation on Minimum Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill, June 2014
- Welsh Government consultation on proposals for a Public Health Bill, June 2014
- NHS Wales Skills and Career Development Framework for Clinical Healthcare Support Workers, July 2014
- My Language, My Health: Inquiry into the Welsh Language in Primary Care, September 2014
- Inquiry into the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, September 2014

- Inquiry into Welsh Government draft budget proposal for 2015-16, September 2014
- Inquiry into Poverty in Wales, September 2014
- Review of the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers, September 2014
- Devolution, Democracy and Delivery White Paper – Reforming Local Government, October 2014
- Physical Activity Policy Development, November 2014
- Implementation of the Social Service & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 – Consultation on the Regulations and code of practice, February 2015.

Evidence Provided to National Assembly for Wales Committees

Throughout 2014/15, my team and I also gave oral evidence to a number of National Assembly Inquiries:

- Inquiry into disqualification of membership from the National Assembly for Wales, Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, June 2014
- Inquiry into Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty in Wales, Environment and Sustainability Committee, July 2014
- Scrutiny of Commissioners' Accounts 2013-14, Public Accounts Committee, October 2014
- Inquiry into Poverty in Wales, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, November 2014
- General Scrutiny of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Health and Social Care Committee, November 2014
- Inquiry into Employment Opportunities for People Over 50, Enterprise and Business Committee, January 2015

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Whilst I was supportive of the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, which reflect priority one of my Framework for Action 2013-17 to embed the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public service, I raised concerns with the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for Health

and Social Services about the potential impact upon the rights of carers, following representation from carers' groups in Wales.

I was concerned that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, as originally drafted, would not be sufficient to safeguard the position of carers, and those they care for. I was clear that the duties to protect and safeguard unpaid carers that were included in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 should not be undermined.

Following an amendment that aims to ensure that carers' rights are replicated across both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, I will keep under review whether the intent to protect the rights afforded to carers under the Carers Measure has been delivered.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

I have previously welcomed both the intent behind and the detail of much of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. However, the extent to which this intent is made real for older people, in many instances, will depend upon the regulations and codes of practice developed that underpin the Act and their implementation by public bodies. I will continue to have a strong interest in the following five areas:

- Safeguarding
- Advocacy
- Information, advice and assistance
- Assessment Process and Eligibility Criteria
- Charging for Services

I have formally responded to consultations in respect of the regulations and codes of practice relating to safeguarding, information, advice and assistance, the assessment process and eligibility criteria. Furthermore, I have continued to engage with key stakeholders and government officials to ensure that the perspective of older people in relation to these new duties is fully understood and reflected in the detail underpinning the Act.

I will also continue to take a particular interest in the way in which the duty to have due regard to the United Nations Principles for Older People is implemented and the extent to which these principles underpin the future delivery of social care.

Although the underpinning details in relation to charging for care and support services have not yet been published for consultation, I have provided advice

to the Welsh Government through the Paying for Care Stakeholder Advisory Group and through extensive discussions with Welsh Government officials in respect of the key issues that older people have raised with me.

I have been clear that the weekly maximum cap on domiciliary care must be retained and that any future arrangements in respect of paying for residential care must take into account issues of fairness and present a clear and credible way forward that does not deter older people from moving into residential care when it is the best option for them. I now await the Welsh Government proposals for Wales relating to paying for domiciliary and residential care. I have also been clear that charges for preventative services should not be introduced as they could present barriers to older people and be counter-productive to the intent behind the policy.

I want to ensure that the principles underpinning the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, specifically 'a strong voice and real control', are made real for older people. I have been consistently clear that independent advocacy, whilst not for everyone, is crucial for certain individuals in certain circumstances if this intent is to be made real. This benefits both the individual and public bodies, as well as the public purse.

I have already advised the Welsh Government, at their request, in respect of duties to offer independent advocacy and I have continued to discuss with them how this should be reflected in the details that underpin the Act to ensure that the intent of the Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action, published by the Welsh Government, regarding a strong voice and real control, respect and safety is made real.

As a result of significant funding from the Big Lottery Fund, Wales has an impactful and significant advocacy base that delivers real benefit to individuals who find themselves in the most difficult of circumstances. This places Wales in a strong position to respond to duties around advocacy within the regulations that will underpin the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. However, the regulations that should put in place these duties will not come into effect until 2016. As the three-year Big Lottery Funding was only in place until 2014, this would have resulted in an 18 month period in which advocacy services would have been unavailable to support older people. This presented a real risk that the advocacy skills base in Wales would be lost.

I therefore worked with independent advocates and the Big Lottery Fund to successfully broker significant additional funding from the Big Lottery Fund to sustain much of our advocacy skills base for the intervening period until potential new duties come into force.

Notwithstanding my public support of the intent behind the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, I expect it to be made real in a way that reflects older people's lives, the kind of support they need and the ways in which they need that support to be provided. If required, I will use my function to review the adequacy of the law if, in my opinion, the areas upon which I am focused are not made real in this way.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

I am pleased that the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 was recently passed by the National Assembly. It will change the infrastructure in Wales by creating stronger leadership and ensure a stronger and more consistent focus on tackling these issues.

I have formally responded to the consultation on the National Training Framework on gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

I have also engaged and will continue to engage with the Welsh Government's Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse Team to maintain the focus on older people.

A national training framework will provide quality and consistent training which has been sadly lacking for some time. I have been clear that the training needs to be age related to take into account the issues for older people, particularly those with dementia and/or sensory loss..

I also highlighted the current gaps within the 'Victims Journey' route map, which had omitted abuse of older people and had made no mention of adult safeguarding.

Through my continuing work with the Welsh Government I expect to see a continuing improved response for older people who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Forward Look

The issues that affect older people are many and varied and there is no doubt that current financial constraints are having a significant impact upon many older people.

The potential range of issues that I could focus on is vast, but I must ensure that I remain focused on the priorities that older people have told me matter to them, the priorities within my Framework for Action 2013-17.

Much of my work, year on year, is a continuation of action around specific priorities within my Framework, but some areas will feature more strongly in my work programme depending on their urgency or the experiences of older people.

In the coming year my work will include a focus on the following:

- The lives of people with dementia and those who care for them
- Ageism and discrimination faced by older people
- Safeguarding and the prevention of crimes against and abuse of older people
- Follow up work linked to my Care Home Review
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – development of regulations and implementation
- Monitoring and scrutiny of public bodies and the services they deliver
- Ageing Well in Wales

I will continue to work with a wide range of bodies to grow knowledge and thinking about the issues faced by older people and to change practice. However, I will also continue, where it is the most appropriate option available, to use my legal powers to drive the change that older people want and have a right to see.





