

CONSULTATION RESPONSE



Comisiynydd
Pobl Hŷn
Cymru
Older People's
Commissioner
for Wales

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol | Equality and Social Justice
Committee

Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn | Evidence from: Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Post-legislative scrutiny June 2025

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales (OPCW) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee's consultation on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Post-legislative scrutiny.

The Commissioner would like to offer the observations below.

The Future Generations Act has encouraged public bodies and others to think long-term more consistently. The governance and reporting responsibilities placed on relevant public bodies mean that discussions about sustainable development and the Act take place regularly. The Act is increasingly referenced by public bodies and understanding is improving which is positive.

However, while progress has been made, the Commissioner agrees with the Auditor General for Wales's recent assessment that "The Act is not driving the system-wide change that was intended".¹ Although the need to focus more heavily on actions that support prevention is well established and understood, public bodies often struggle to put this into practice as a result of immediate and short-term pressures, and due to the challenges of embedding culture change. This is understandable but more needs to be done to turn rhetoric into reality.

As a result, older people in Wales have not seen the improvements that are needed to wellbeing, health and access to services that it was hoped would result from the Act over the past 10 years. Greater focus is needed on older people in future discussions of the Act.

Changing some of the language and understanding around the Act more broadly could help to address this. The Act often appears to be interpreted as being mainly concerned with children, young people and generations not yet born, as opposed to the maturing of current generations into older generations: for example, children and young people becoming the working age population, the working age population entering retirement, etc. Older people also have a future, and this is not always appropriately recognised. Older people across Wales are key to the seven Well-being Goals and this should be reflected more prominently in the narrative, activity and progress around the Act.

It would be helpful to consider how to broaden the understanding of what is meant by 'future generations' in the Act. This might encourage greater progress towards the goals by the public sector workforce and more nuanced thinking about how the Act applies across different areas.

The Act still offers positive opportunities for change, greater emphasis on sustainable development, and an incentive to think differently and on a more long-term basis. There are also opportunities to use the Act to make progress on other agendas, for instance challenging ageism.

There is the potential to use the thinking around the Act to challenge prejudice against our future selves in addition to addressing the prejudice that can be experienced by current generations of older people. Ageism has harmful consequences and eradicating it would contribute to improving the prospects for current and future generations of older people as well as making progress on the Act's Well-being Goals.

Research from the Centre for Ageing Better found that internalised ageism leads people to believe themselves too old to progress at work or that they are too old to learn and train. People can also come to believe that old age means reduced physical and mental health with a corresponding tendency to engage in unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, drinking or being physically inactive. People who internalise self-ageist attitudes have worse medication compliance and are less likely to seek healthcare and to go for check-ups.ⁱⁱ

There are also opportunities to use the Act to bring together different generations, including older and younger people, more consistently to consider our shared future and the actions that can be taken on the Well-being Goals. An intergenerational emphasis could help to make the Act more effective.

The Act further presents a valuable opportunity to explicitly incorporate wider policy areas such as Age-Friendly Communities. By embracing age-inclusive design and planning, the Act can drive more cohesive, equitable communities that enhance quality of life for an ageing population while building resilience for future generations.

The recent Welsh Government announcement of making Wales a Marmot Nation also provides a chance to renew the effort needed to strive for greater progress against the Wellbeing Goals. The eight Marmot principles align well with the aims of the Act.ⁱⁱⁱ:

As with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the emphasis of the Marmot agenda so far has mainly focussed on children and younger people. There is growing recognition that the Marmot principles and can should be applied to older generations too. The Older People's Commissioner looks forward to further conversations about how to ensure the most effective impact for older

people from the shared agendas.

There are good opportunities to build on existing awareness and developments of the Future Generations Act over the coming months and years.

The Commissioner agrees with the Future Generations Commissioner that more emphasis is now needed on outcomes rather than governance and processes and would welcome developments to address this.

Since starting her term, the OPCW has found the Future Generations Commissioner to be approachable, pragmatic and open to discussions on areas referenced in this response. Our respective teams have a positive working relationship and regularly discuss areas of shared interest.

The Commissioner hopes that this information is useful to the Inquiry.

Rachel Bowen

Director of Policy, Older People's Commissioner for Wales



ⁱ Audit Wales (2025), No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Available at: [No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#), p.4.

ⁱⁱ Centre for Ageing Better (2023), Ageism: What's the harm? Available at: [Ageism-harms.pdf](#), p.3.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Institute of Health Equity website: [Marmot Places - IHE](#).