



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Impact and Reach Report 2017-18

**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

Since I took up post as Commissioner in 2012, I have met and spoken with thousands of older people who have generously shared so much with me – about their lives, their experiences, their hopes and wishes for the future.

This year, as in previous years, these voices and experiences have continued to guide and shape my work as Commissioner and have been a constant and important reminder of why it's just so important that we get things right for older people.

Because when we get things right for older people – when help and support is tailored to their needs, is focused on outcomes and, most importantly, listens to and acts upon their voices – they can remain healthy and independent and have the best possible quality of life, things that all of us will want as we get older.

There is much good work and good practice underway across Wales to improve older people's lives, something that I highlight and promote whenever possible – it's just so important that this good practice becomes our standard practice in Wales.

But much more still needs to be done to recognise older people as the vital asset that they are to Wales, to uphold their rights, to protect them from harm, to deliver the changes they want and need to see, and to make the aspiration that underpins much of our policy and legislation in Wales a reality in older people's day-to-day lives.

Many of the issues faced by older people that I have highlighted and reported on as Commissioner have developed over considerable periods of time and there is, unfortunately, no quick fix to resolve them. That is why follow-up work and ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of policy and practice is so important – it is vital that, in a landscape of competing priorities and challenges, the promises made by public bodies to take action and deliver change are not forgotten, that reports are not allowed to simply sit on a shelf gathering dust.

This has been the focus of much of my work during the past year, which has included extensive follow-up work linked to my 2014 Care Home Review, assessing whether the ambition of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act is being made real in terms of safeguarding older people and advocacy, and building upon the findings of my 'Dementia: More Than Just Memory Loss' report and looking in more detail at respite services in Wales.

In addition to this, I have undertaken extensive further work to ensure that older people are safeguarded and protected, raising awareness amongst professionals, through seminars and published guidance, about the scale and nature of abuse faced by older people, how abuse can be identified and how it can be tackled.

The Ageing Well in Wales programme, which I established and is hosted by my office, has grown considerably during the past year: over 70 national partners and over 1,600 Ageing Well Network members are now delivering a wide range of work at both a strategic and community level against the five key Ageing Well themes – Age friendly communities, dementia supportive communities, falls prevention, loneliness and isolation, and opportunities for learning and employment. I also published a series of Ageing Well Stories, to not only celebrate the outstanding work being delivered by Ageing Well Network Members, but to also encourage others to take action in their own communities and establish their own initiatives to help older people across Wales to Age Well.

Further information about Ageing Well in Wales, and its work and achievements, is available in a more detailed Ageing Well in Wales report that will be published alongside this report.

I am also publishing a legacy report – ‘Driving Change for Older People: Impact and Reach 2012-18’ – alongside this report, which details the wide range of work I have undertaken to drive change for older people across Wales during my term as Commissioner.

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

Reaching out and listening to older people across Wales

Direct engagement with older people across Wales has remained a key part of my work throughout 2017-18, allowing me to share important information about my role, the work I am undertaking and the ways in which I can provide assistance and support as Commissioner. This engagement also provides vital opportunities to hear directly from older people about what matters to them, the services they want to see and the issues that affect their lives, which helps to guide and shape my work and priorities.

Engagement Roadshow

My team and I met with 169 groups across Wales during 2017-18, visiting a wide range of settings, such as social clubs, day centres, support groups, care homes, forum meetings, residents' associations and conference events, engaging with over 3,300 older people. My team and I travelled over 19,000 miles to reach out and listen to older people in every Local Authority in Wales.

To ensure that the voices of older people in all of their diversity inform and are reflected throughout my work, I have continued to meet with individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds whose voices are seldom heard. To support this essential engagement, I have worked with a wide range of organisations working with and for people with protected characteristics, including Cyfle i Bawb, Deafblind Cymru, the Golden Years Project (for 50+ Women from BAME communities), Men's Sheds, Parkinsons UK Cymru and the Stroke Association.

I also arranged many joint visits with Assembly Members, MPs, Council Leaders and Councillors, to provide older people with opportunities to have their voices heard and share their views and experiences directly with those who make policy and decisions that affect their lives.

Wider engagement

In addition to engaging with thousands of older people across Wales through my Engagement Roadshow, I 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 (COPA) and the Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing, as well as with older people's 50+ forums across Wales.

As part of my wider engagement, I have continued to work with Welsh public bodies, including Health Boards, Local Authorities, Public Services Boards, Social

Care Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and National Trading Standards, and third sector organisations such as Age Alliance Wales, Age Cymru, Age Connects, Action on Hearing Loss, Care and Repair Cymru, the Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project and RNIB Cymru, to grow knowledge and understanding of the issues and challenges faced by older people, and discuss how services could be improved, through sharing information and examples of good practice. Alongside this work, I have also delivered keynote speeches at conferences and events across Wales, allowing me to highlight a range of issues that affect older people's lives and reach out effectively to large numbers of stakeholders.

Using both the English and Welsh language media in Wales allows me to not only reach out to large numbers of older people so they know about the work I am undertaking on their behalf to drive change, but also to the wider public so they have an understanding of the issues and challenges that affect older people's lives and the action needed to address them. Throughout 2017-18, I have maintained a strong presence across television and radio, appearing on BBC Wales Today, ITV Wales News, S4C's Newyddion, BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru. I also secured extensive coverage in daily newspapers, including the Western Mail, Daily Post, South Wales Argus, South Wales Evening Post and South Wales Echo, as well as other local newspapers published across Wales.

My work has also been covered by a number of more specialised publications, such as professional magazines, journals and other stakeholder publications, which helps to ensure that I am able to reach out to as many older people and stakeholders as possible to highlight key issues and share knowledge and good practice.

Acknowledging excellence

As Commissioner, I have always been clear that there is a huge amount of good practice being delivered in different parts of Wales and I have met many dedicated individuals working across our public services whose work is making a real difference to the lives of older people.

To ensure that this outstanding work is acknowledged, I not only reference it throughout my publications and speeches, but also formally support the RCN Nurse of the Year Awards and the Wales Care Awards to ensure that outstanding individuals working in our health and social care services are recognised and celebrated.

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 provided assistance and support to 366 older people and their families across Wales during 2017-18, 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.

To support this kind of learning, I published my second Casebook in October 2017, which provides examples of the types of cases that are brought to my attention and sets out the themes that often underpin the issues being faced by older people. I also held a seminar event in Cardiff to help public bodies to better understand the experiences of the older people and their families who contact my casework team, and the ways in which public bodies could improve their responses when their decision-making is questioned or challenged.

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.

The difference made through my casework

The selection of quotes below are from older people and their families I have supported during the past year. They highlight the difference my casework team has made to their lives, often in cases where others have been unable to resolve issues or deliver the required outcomes.

"It gives me great pleasure to give some positive feedback to someone at last. I was in a quandary and at my wits end what to do. In a very short time, things are moving faster and I am getting the information I need, All thanks to the Older People's Commissioner and [the caseworker] in particular. Many thanks."

"As a result of the intervention of the Commissioner's Caseworker decisions were made by the authorities which we had taken 14 months to achieve. This has taken away the stress being experienced by other members of the family. A very big thank you to all that helped in resolving the issue."

"I would like to thank you very much for your help. I am satisfied my mother can now stay in the nursing home she has called home for the last five years at a cost she can now meet."

"I still believe that you can tackle any problem, big or small and you persevere until it's resolved. Keep being as patient and amiable as you deal with issues. Thank you and best wishes."

“I am very pleased for the help you have given me, I feel safe now that there is someone like you to help us out. Thank you for your help.”

“Oh my goodness! I am absolutely delighted! I cannot thank you enough; you have been an absolute brick. I will sleep for the first time in months and it’s all thanks to you, you are an absolute gem. You have helped me enormously [caseworker] and you have restored my faith in public services.”

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

“Yet again thanks for everything and we wish you all the very best because I know if it was not for you I would still be fighting and I cannot think what or where Mum and Dad would be.”

“Your support has been invaluable ... I didn’t think I’d ever get the care back, I just wanted to shout about it!”

“I would first like to say thank you for the work put into sorting out the ‘bad decision’ made without involving the tenants of [housing scheme]... with the help of [caseworker] and her team, problems were soon sorted out and now thanks to you we can start living a ‘normal life’ again.”

“We [family member and caseworker] put forward a strong case and following the meeting I’m delighted to say my mother has now been offered a flat in the Warden controlled block near her home. My mother is still in shock and it was incredible to see her crying ‘tears of joy’ for a change. As soon as she moves she can begin to look forward to regaining some independence as the flat is converted to suit someone with her disabilities and this will greatly improve her quality of life.”

“I am pleased to say that I had an email last evening from [the local authority] agreeing that they will continue funding [older person] and will cancel the care bills they have sent me. It has been a very stressful time for me and has unfortunately left me feeling depressed but hopefully now I can just get on with my life and contributing to [older person’s] care as best I can through regular visiting and showing him how much he is loved. Many thanks again.”

“Just a note to tell you that the advice from you and your office has been most helpful. My local authority has promised to begin a review of that particular bus service for better access to a Surgery. So it looks positive. The village grapevine is thrilled and we all say Thank you.”

Driving change for older people

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:

- Continence
- 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.

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.

Access to independent advocacy

All older people should have a voice, and choice and control over their lives, and should be able to access the right support to make informed decisions, particularly in situations in which they are vulnerable. However, older people often speak to me about how they struggle to make their voices heard and how independent advocacy can make a big difference, particularly during the most challenging times.

I therefore continued a programme of work during 2017-18 looking at older people's access to independent advocacy, and whether their legal rights relating to advocacy, introduced by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, are being upheld.

As part of this work, I engaged directly with a wide range of stakeholders (60 organisations in total) – including over 30 independent advocacy organisations, policy leads, third sector organisations and other bodies – as well as older people who have used advocacy services. Alongside this extensive engagement, I also undertook a detailed analysis of the relatively limited data that is currently available that relates to advocacy to consider what this tells us about older people's experiences of accessing independent advocacy services in Wales.

The evidence gathered through this work will form the basis of a report – 'Making Voices Heard: Older People's Access to Independent Advocacy' – which will be published in May 2018. The report will explore whether or not independent advocacy is routinely being used as a way to secure older people's rights and whether there is a consistent approach to ensuring that older people can access independent advocacy, particularly when they have a legal right to it.

The report will also include recommendations for the Welsh Government, Local Authorities and Health Boards, setting out the ways in which awareness about independent advocacy could be increased across society and any ways in which services need to be improved to ensure that older people can access the support they need to make their voices heard.

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

Delivery of Phase Two of Ageing Well in Wales – the national partnership programme to improve the health and well-being of people aged 50+ in Wales – continued throughout 2017-18, with a wide range of action across the programme's five priority areas (Age Friendly Communities, Dementia Supportive Communities, Falls Prevention, Learning and Employment and Loneliness and Isolation).

At a strategic level, over 70 Ageing Well partners from across the public, private and third sectors have continued work at a national level to deliver on the commitments set out in the Ageing Well Phase Two Action Plan, which has strengthened the profile of, and action underway within, the five priority areas.

Work also continued at a Local Authority level, led by Older People's Strategy Coordinators, to deliver the action set out in the Ageing Well Plans that were published by Local Authorities in 2016, which was supported by three workshop sessions held in Autumn 2017 which provided opportunities to work with Local Authority officers and council members to explore the most effective ways of taking forward Ageing Well priorities.

Significant work was undertaken at a community level during 2017-18, and around 1,500 Community Network members are now working on initiatives to make Wales a better place to grow older and helping to establish age friendly and dementia supportive communities in villages, towns and cities across Wales.

To support this work, Ageing Well held five large 'Celebrating Communities' events across Wales during early 2018 to inspire people to take action and encourage partnership working. The events were attended by over 500 delegates and brought together partners working at all levels to share and learn from good practice, and discuss new ideas and solutions to help to empower older people and ensure that our communities support people of all ages.

In addition to this, Ageing Well in Wales published a 'How to Age Well' guide for older people, which provided useful information and tips about growing older, as well as a series of Ageing Well Cards, which support older people, particularly those with dementia and/or sensory loss, to communicate their needs discretely and effectively with people working in shops and on public transport. In March 2018, I also published a collection of 'Ageing Well Stories', which not only celebrates the amazing and innovative work being delivered locally for older people that is making a big difference to their lives, but also aims to inspire others to take action in their own communities and establish their own initiatives to help older people across Wales to age well.

Some of the key developments and successes delivered under each of the Ageing Well in Wales themes are set out below.

Age Friendly Communities

- Ageing Well has continued to support and promote good practice in establishing Age Friendly Communities across Wales and Leeswood/ Pontyblyddyn in Flintshire is the latest community to be awarded age friendly status. This follows other age-friendly work undertaken in Fishguard and Goodwick and Milford Haven as part of the Volunteering Matters 'Rural Wisdom' project. In line with the 'Dublin Declaration', all Local Authorities are developing age-friendly practices in communities across Wales.
- Ageing Well supported the development of the Age-Friendly Culture Network, a new national initiative launched in collaboration with Age Cymru, Arts Council Wales, Gwanwyn and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, which was formally launched in September 2017. The network brings together individuals and organisations from arts, culture and heritage sectors from all over Wales to share skills, knowledge and good practice and helps to develop innovative and practical ways to better engage with older people and improve their quality of life and wellbeing. Actions are already in place to establish age and dementia friendly museums and galleries across Wales.

Dementia Supportive Communities

- Ageing Well in Wales supported, promoted and worked with the Alzheimer's Society to establish dementia friendly places across Wales. There are now over fifty villages, towns, cities and national organisations in Wales that are recognised as dementia friendly, with more working towards achieving this status.
- Copies of the Ageing Well in Wales Pocket Guide to Dementia –which provides a wide range of information to older people and their families, as well as details

of organisations that can provide help and support – were distributed across Wales through Ageing Well partners.

- The experiences of Ageing Well partners and Community Network members were used to inform the Commissioner's response to the Welsh Government's consultation on the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022, and her subsequent work to influence its contents as a member of the Dementia Strategy Task and Finish Group. Ageing Well partners active in establishing dementia supportive communities also took part in the Commissioner's 'Rethinking respite' work on supporting people living with dementia, their families and carers.

Falls prevention

- Ageing Well has also continued to contribute to and encourage the work of the National Falls Prevention Taskforce and support local initiatives focused on falls prevention, such as 'Pimp my Zimmer' in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Ageing Well has also continued to support awareness raising campaigns, publications and other projects led by falls prevention partners such as Care and Repair, Age Cymru, Public Health Wales, 1000 Lives Improvement Programme and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.
- Further work was undertaken by Ageing Well in Wales to promote the 'Steady On, Stay SAFE' campaign, which uses a range of resources and materials to highlight simple ways in which the risk of falling can be reduced and to publicise local projects and initiatives that reduce falls, such as shoe fitting, nail cutting services, eye care and walking clubs.

Opportunities for learning and employment

- Ageing Well has continued to influence the Welsh Government's work on all-age apprenticeships and the all-age Employability Plan, published in March 2017. Ageing Well has also continued to input into and support the 'No Best Before Date' awareness raising campaign, helping to challenge ageism in the workplace and promote the benefits of age-diverse workplaces.
- Work has also continued to support other key partners, such as the Learning and Work Institute, TUC Wales, Adult Learning Wales and Business in the Community to deliver a range of action linked to learning and employment. Examples include a workshop on employment opportunities for older people within the Learning and Work Institute Employability and Skills Wales Convention, and input into the TUC Wales 'The menopause: a workplace issue' report in 2017.

Loneliness and isolation

- The experiences of Community Network members and the good practice being delivered by Ageing Well in Wales partners was used to inform the Commissioner's response to the National Assembly's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee inquiry into Loneliness and Isolation, which took place during Summer 2017.
- Ageing Well in Wales supported the work of the Campaign to End Loneliness, which began in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire in September 2017 and aims to address loneliness through tackling stigma and working with local communities to find solutions. The work continues and good practice drawn from the pilot projects in south west Wales will be rolled out and used by partners across Wales. Ageing Well has continued to support other initiatives to address loneliness and isolation, for example the 'Ffrind i Mi/Friend of Mine' scheme underway and led by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to tackle loneliness and social isolation in south east Wales.
- Copies of the Ageing Well in Wales Pocket Guide to Tackling Loneliness also continued to be distributed to older people across Wales through local partners.

A report setting out the work and achievements of Ageing Well in Wales in more detail will be published alongside this report.

Safeguarding and protecting older people

Ensuring that older people are safeguarded and protected has remained a key priority for me as Commissioner and I have continued a wide range of work throughout 2017-18 to raise awareness about the nature of the abuse faced by over 40,000 older people each year and the circumstances that can lead to older people becoming particularly vulnerable or at risk of harm.

Alongside this, I have also continued to work to ensure that there is a systematic approach to identifying older people who are at risk of harm and that those who are abused are fully supported to access the help and assistance they need to regain their safety and wellbeing.

Furthermore, I am delighted my office maintained White Ribbon status during 2017-18 (awarded by the White Ribbon Campaign) and that my Safeguarding Lead was officially recognised as a White Ribbon Ambassador.

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.

Awareness raising seminars and presentations

Building upon the success of similar events held during 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, I held four safeguarding seminars to continue to raise awareness of the abuse faced by older people.

The seminars, which were held in Carmarthen, Wrexham, Bangor and Newport, covered the scale and impact of abuse, human rights, abuse within the BAME and LGBT+ communities, the vital role of advocacy and the support available for those who have experienced abuse. One of the speakers at the event in Bangor was transgender and provided a fascinating insight into the abuse experienced by transgender people.

226 delegates attended the seminars, from a wide range of organisations working with and for older people. Feedback on the seminars was overwhelmingly positive, with praise for depth of information provided and the multi-agency perspective provided by the speakers.

Other awareness raising presentations and Events

In addition to the seminars described above, I also delivered a number of awareness raising presentations to stakeholders during 2017-18, setting out what needs to be implemented to improve the lives of older people whose lives have been affected by abuse:

- Hywel Dda University Health Board – 6 awareness training sessions (over 150 front-line staff; further presentations will be delivered during 2018-19)
- Dyfed Powys Police Public Protection Officers (15 officers)
- Cardiff Council – 3 awareness raising sessions (45 social workers: further presentations will be delivered during 2018-19)
- Royal College of General Practitioners (Wales) Conference (over 70 GP's in attendance)
- Action on Elder Abuse Conference – Coercive control of older people workshop presentation (70-80 attendees from various organisations)
- Probus Group Cardiff (25 attendees)
- Parish Men's Fellowship Group, Cardiff (20 attendees)
- Cardiff & Vale University Health Board (over 70 front-line staff attended, further presentations will be delivered during 2018-19)
- Anuerin Bevan Health Board (over 120 front-line staff attended; further presentations will be delivered during 2018-19)
- Vale of Glamorgan Neighbourhood Watch Association (20 attendees)
- Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing Group (20 attendees)
- Cardiff University – School of Social Sciences Students (110 Students)
- Vale of Glamorgan Violence Against Women & Domestic Abuse Conference (Around 120 attendees)
- Monmouthshire Ageing Well Executive Group (15 attendees)

Furthermore, my Safeguarding Lead also participated in the following engagement events to raise awareness about the scale and impact of the abuse faced by older people:

- Roundtable safeguarding meetings with the Public Guardian
- ABMU Ask & Act Steering Group meetings
- IPCC Stakeholder forum meetings
- Live Fear Free (Domestic Abuse Helpline) Steering Group meetings
- Welsh Government - Mental Capacity Act Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Group meetings
- All Wales Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Network meetings
- Gwent-Wide Adult Safeguarding Board meetings
- Powys Adult Safeguarding Board meetings
- Public Health Wales – NHS Wales Safeguarding Network meetings
- South Wales Police Accountability & Legitimacy Group meetings
- White Ribbon Campaign – Ambassador Stakeholder event – Cardiff
- Crown Prosecution Service – National Scrutiny Panel (Crimes against older people)
- Welsh Women's Aid 40 years celebration event
- Gwent Police Scrutiny Panel meeting to review cases relating to crimes against older people
- Dewis Choice meetings relating to Domestic Abuse of older people
- Tackling Vulnerability Together – South Wales Police event

Further work to raise awareness of the scale and impact of the abuse of older people will be undertaken during 2018-19, and training courses have been offered to Health Boards, the Velindre NHS Trust, Local Authority Social Services teams and South Wales Police.

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.

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.

Influencing policy, legislation and practice

Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales

I have continued to meet regularly with Welsh Government Ministers throughout 2017-18, to ensure that they are aware of and understand the issues that affect older people across Wales and, more importantly, that the voices of older people are heard.

These meetings, alongside other engagement with the Welsh Government and its officials, provided opportunities for me to raise concerns about policy and practice that is not sufficiently focused on older people, and make clear where change and improvements are needed.

I have also continued to work with the National Assembly for Wales, providing briefings to members ahead of debates relating to issues that affect older people. Furthermore, I have continued to work closely with National Assembly Committees, in particular the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, sharing information and evidence to highlight potential areas for scrutiny and investigation. During 2017-18, I provided evidence to the following committee inquiries:

- Poverty in Wales: Communities First – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, May 2017
- Apprenticeships in Wales – Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, June 2017
- The use of antipsychotic medication in care homes – Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, September 2017
- Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-being of Future Generations Act and Public Service Boards – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, December 2017
- Loneliness and isolation – Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, January 2018
- The cost of caring for an ageing population – Finance Committee, March 2018

Consultation responses

I also responded to a broad range of consultations undertaken by the Welsh Government and other key bodies and stakeholders during 2017-18, using the voices of older people and the experiences they have shared with me to set out how policy and practice should be shaped to reflect older people's needs and deliver positive outcomes for them:

- Welsh Government – Draft Dementia Strategy, April 2017
- Welsh Government – Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed White Paper, April 2017
- Welsh Government – Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care, April 2017
- Welsh Government – Proposals to Improve Local Bus Services in Wales, May 2017
- Welsh Government Transport for Wales – Design of Wales and Borders Rail Service (including Metro consultation), May 2017
- Social Care Wales – Review of Health and Social Care Induction Framework, June 2017
- Welsh Government – Phase 2 implementation of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, July 2017
- Welsh Government – Phase 2 implementation of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 – Workforce Aspects, July 2017
- Welsh Government – Supporting People Programme Guidance and Outcome Framework, August 2017
- Social Care Wales – Social Care Wales Strategic Plan, 2017-2022, August 2017
- Welsh Government – Draft Budget Proposals 2018-19, September 2017
- Welsh Government – Services Fit for the Future, September 2017
- Welsh Government – Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – Building a Reformed Post Compulsory Education and Training System, October 2017
- House of Commons Transport Committee – Community Transport, November 2017

- Social Care Wales – Transforming Care in the 21st Century, October 2017
- Department of Transport – Accessibility Action Plan Consultation: A Transport System that is Open to Everyone, November 2017
- Welsh Government – Mandatory Concessionary Fares Scheme in Wales, January 2018
- Public Health Wales – A Major Trauma Network for South and West Wales and South Powys, January 2018
- House of Commons All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ageing and Older People: Human Rights and Older People Inquiry, January 2018
- Social Care Wales – Draft Practice Guidance for Domiciliary Care Workers, January 2018

Additional work to influence policy, legislation and practice

In order to ensure that the needs of older people are understood by key stakeholders and reflected in their work, I have also continued to influence policy and practice through being a member of, and working in partnership with, a wide range of expert groups and advisory boards / panels, including:

- Welsh Government Dementia Strategy Task and Finish Group
- Welsh Government Care Home Steering Group
- Welsh Government Digital Inclusion Programme Board
- Welsh Government Accessible Transport Panel
- Welsh Government Public Transport Users Advisory Panel
- Welsh Government Financial Inclusion Programme Board,
- Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing;
- Welsh Government Technical Group on Advocacy
- Welsh Government Stakeholder Group on Evaluation of the Social Services Act
- Welsh Government Health and Social Care Workforce Workstream Steering Group
- Welsh Government Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 Stakeholder Reference Group
- National Assembly for Wales cross-party group on older people and ageing
- Care Inspectorate Wales Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 Stakeholder Group
- Money Advice Service Wales Forum
- ‘Ffrind i Mi’ partnership board (Aneurin Bevan UHB)

- Department of Work and Pensions Wales Stakeholder Board & PIP Forum
- Community Transport Association Wales committee
- Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP)

Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022

Whilst I welcomed the publication of the Welsh Government's draft dementia strategy as a positive step forward and acknowledged the breadth and depth of the issues it would potentially cover, my response to the consultation in April 2017 made clear that there were several areas in which the strategy needed to be strengthened in order to ensure it would deliver upon its ambition to improve the lives of people living with dementia, and their carers.

Within my consultation response, I called for the strategy to be improved in a number of ways, including a greater focus on rights, diversity and independent advocacy; greater recognition of the wellbeing and needs of carers; more ambitious training targets; improved respite services; enhancing the role of dementia support workers; and improved palliative and end of life care pathways. I also made clear the importance of engaging with people affected by dementia in a meaningful way to inform the strategy.

I continued my work to influence the strategy, which was renamed the Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022 during its development, as a member of the Welsh Government Dementia Strategy Task and Finish Group, working alongside other key stakeholders, including people affected by dementia, to ensure that the needs of people living with dementia and their carers would be better reflected in the final version of the plan.

Following the publication of the Action Plan in February 2018, I also wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, making clear that whilst I welcomed many parts of the plan, there are a number of areas where I still have concerns that, despite its ambition, the plan will not deliver the outcomes that people living with dementia, and their carers, want and need to see.

Social care legislation

As Commissioner, I have been clear that robust and effective regulation and inspection of social care is essential, not only to keep older people using social care services safe and protected, but also to ensure that the care and support provided to them is of the highest standard.

I therefore welcomed the introduction of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act and the new standards of care the Act aims to deliver through its regulations. I was also clear that quality of life must sit at the heart of these new

standards of care and I provided detailed commentary on the Regulated Services Regulations to ensure that the recommendations I made in my Care Home Review were appropriately translated into law.

I was pleased that many of the calls I made were reflected in the Act and supporting regulations, including:

- Statutory guidance for service providers and responsible individuals on meeting service standard regulations.
- A written guide to the service for residents, including information about healthcare services.
- A duty to provide a Personal Plan for each resident, setting out how their needs will be met.
- The inclusion of 'chemical means' within the definition of restraint.
- A duty to provide older people with access to aids and adaptations to facilitate communication.
- A duty for providers to produce an annual report on their services.
- A duty for Welsh Government Ministers to produce a National Market Stability Report.

In addition, Care Inspectorate Wales (formerly Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales) is now using a new inspection regime that has a greater focus on quality of life and older people's rights, and Social Care Wales has been established as the new social care workforce regulator, which aims to 'make sure people in Wales can call on a high quality social care workforce that provides services to fully meet their needs'.

The implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is also an area to which I have paid close attention. This Act sets out a wide range of new duties for public bodies to ensure a greater focus on prevention, wellbeing and independence in public service delivery, as well as offering older people and their carers greater choice and control over the care and support they receive.

Through my ongoing casework and my engagement with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Stakeholder Evaluation Group, I have continued to work to ensure that older people are accessing and receiving care and support in line with the legal duties and the principles set out within the legislation.

I will continue to work with stakeholders to set out any areas of concern I have in relation to the effectiveness of the Act's implementation, as well as scrutinising the robustness of the data available to monitor the effectiveness of the Act ahead of the Welsh Government's planned evaluation.

Forward look

As my term as Commissioner is coming to an end in June 2018, I have developed an interim 2018-19 work programme that will include the following:

- Publication of my Rethinking Respite for People Living with Dementia Report
- Publication of my report on Advocacy Services in Wales – Making Voices Heard
- Analysing the responses provided by public bodies following the publication of my Care Home Review follow-up report, ‘A Place to Call Home: Impact and Analysis’.
- Analysing Local Authority Wellbeing Plans
- Publication of information booklets for older people on Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)
- Producing a video in partnership with Age Cymru to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of advocacy

My successor will set out further work that will be undertaken during 2018-19, and will develop a new strategic plan to shape their priorities as Commissioner.

I would like to take this opportunity to again say a huge thank you to my team, the stakeholders I have worked with as Commissioner and, most importantly, older people across Wales who have supported me and my work over the past six years to drive change and make Wales a good place to grow older, not just for some but for everyone.

