



Older People's Commissioner for Wales  
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

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# Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

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An update from the  
Older People's Commissioner  
for Wales

July 2017

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Reach Report

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# Changing Practice, Changing Lives

## Launch of 2016-17 Impact and Reach Report

**In June, the Commissioner published her 2016-17 Impact and Reach Report - Changing Practice, Changing Lives - which sets out the wide range of work undertaken by the Commissioner to drive change for older people across Wales.**

The report includes information about the ways in which the Commissioner engages with and provides direct support to older people; key pieces of work undertaken during the past year, such as the Commissioner's work to improve GP services; work undertaken to safeguard and protect older people; and the ways in which the Commissioner influences policy, legislation and practice.



The report was launched at an event at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay, which was attended by over 120 older people and other stakeholders. In addition to a speech from the Commissioner, those who attended also heard from Lynne Neagle AM, who sponsored the event, and the Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans AM, who both praised the Commissioner and her team for their hard work and commitment to making Wales a good place to grow older for everyone.

Also launched at the event was the first ever Ageing Well in Wales Impact and Reach Report, which celebrates the achievements of Ageing Well over the past year and highlights some of the good practice now underway as a result of the programme.

Speaking at the launch event, the Commissioner said: “I was pleased to welcome so many older people to the launch of my latest Impact and Reach Report and to have an opportunity to share with them some of the work I undertook last year to drive change on their behalf.

“As Commissioner, I have been clear that success will only be achieved when good practice becomes the standard in Wales, and through my work I will continue to both challenge and support our public services until services and support across Wales meet the needs of older people.”

**To download a copy of Changing Practice, Changing Lives, visit: [http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/17-06-14/Impact\\_and\\_Reach\\_Report\\_2016-17\\_Changing\\_Practice\\_Changing\\_Lives.aspx](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/17-06-14/Impact_and_Reach_Report_2016-17_Changing_Practice_Changing_Lives.aspx)**

**To download a copy of the Ageing Well in Wales Impact and Reach Report, visit: <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/news/articles/16-06-2017/Ageing-Well-in-Wales-Impact-Reach-Report>**

# Work Programme 2017-18

**The Commissioner has published her 2017-18 Work Programme, setting out the work she will undertake in the year ahead to drive change on behalf of older people across Wales.**

The work programme has been developed based upon the priorities in the Commissioner's Framework for Action, which include embedding wellbeing at the heart of public services, driving up the quality of health and social care, protecting and improving community services, standing up for older people at risk of harm and tackling prejudice, inequality and discrimination.

The Commissioner's work during 2017-18 will include Care Home Review follow-up work, a review of the action being taken by hospitals to safeguard older people, work looking at older people experiences of accessing and using GP services, the publication of a report and toolkit on respite care and further work to grow knowledge and understanding amongst professionals about how to safeguard older people.

In addition to this, the Commissioner and her team will continue to meet and speak with older people across Wales as part of the ongoing Engagement Roadshow, as well as providing direct support and assistance to older people and their families through the Commissioner's Casework Team.

The Commissioner will also continue to influence a wide range of policy, legislation and practice, including older people's rights and the safeguarding of vulnerable older people, as well as non-health and social care related issues, through ongoing meetings with Welsh Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers, Assembly Members and Officials, providing responses to Welsh Government and National Assembly consultations and giving evidence to National Assembly Committees. This will ensure that the voices and experiences of older people are considered when policies are being developed and that subsequent practice reflects their needs and delivers positive outcomes.

**For further information about the Commissioner's 2017-18 Work Programme, visit: [http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/17-06-05/Commissioner\\_s\\_Work\\_Programme\\_2017-18.aspx](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/17-06-05/Commissioner_s_Work_Programme_2017-18.aspx)**

# New Safeguarding Guidance for Front-line Staff

The Commissioner has worked in partnership with the Welsh Government to produce new guidance for front-line public services staff that will help them to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and provide them with information about the help available to protect and safeguard older people who are being abused.

The guidance covers a wide range of issues, 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.

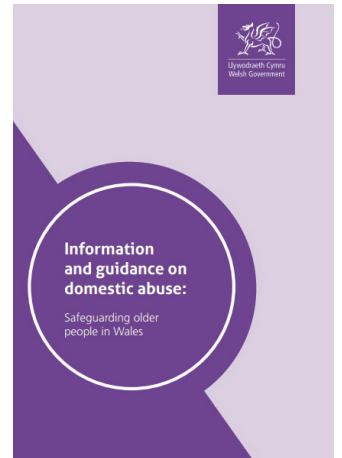
The guidance was launched by the Commissioner and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, Carl Sargeant AM, who reaffirmed his commitment to working closely with partners to protect the victims of domestic abuse and welcomed the guidance as a practical resource that would help professionals to work with older people who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Discussing the guidance, the Commissioner said: “I am pleased to have worked in collaboration with the Welsh Government to produce this much needed guidance on protecting older people from domestic abuse.

“The guidance will assist front-line professionals working across health, social care and housing to better identify, and respond effectively to, domestic abuse against older people, which affects a significant number of people every year.

“The guidance will contribute to a greater understanding of the issues faced by older people when they are the victims of domestic abuse, which is essential to ensure that the right services and support are available to them at such a traumatic time in their lives.”

**To download a copy of the new guidance, visit: <http://gov.wales/newsroom/people-and-communities/2017/170622-protect-older-people-from-abuse/?lang=en>**



# Inquiry into Loneliness and Isolation

**In May, the Commissioner gave evidence to the National Assembly's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee Inquiry into Loneliness and Isolation. The Inquiry is looking at the scale, causes and impact of loneliness and the ways in which it could be addressed in Wales.**



Responding to questions from Committee members, the Commissioner set out the variety of complex reasons that individuals may become lonely - such as retirement, poor health or disability, bereavement, poverty and caring responsibilities - noting that very few people would be able to avoid all of these risk factors as they get older. She added that there older people from certain groups, such as LGBTQ or BAME older people, may be at a particular risk of becoming lonely.

The Commissioner highlighted the work of the Ageing Well in Wales Programme, which has loneliness and isolation as one of its core themes, highlighting some of the work being undertaken by Ageing Well partners, such as the Ffrind i Mi Befriending Initiative that was recently launched in the Newport area. She said that there is much good practice being delivered in different parts of Wales, but this needs to be rolled out more widely where possible. She also agreed that funding challenges would restrict the ability of public services and the third sector to tackle loneliness in communities across Wales.

During the session, the Commissioner discussed how existing public services could be used to identify and tackle loneliness. A GP, for example, could discuss loneliness with their patients and put them in touch with local services that could provide them with help and support. She said it was vital to make 'every contact count' across our public services and that social prescribing could also play a key role in helping people who are lonely.

Bringing her session to a close, the Commissioner agreed that loneliness and isolation is 'everybody's business' and that more needed to be done to raise awareness about its scale and impact, stating that there are many opportunities for civil society and its various components to play a huge role in tackling what is a significant public health issue.

**To view the Commissioner's evidence session, visit: <http://www.senedd.tv/Meeting/Archive/2f79f615-01d0-4a62-959d-4d4b60934e16?autostart=True>**

# New seminars for front-line professionals

The Commissioner has announced that she will be delivering two new seminars in venues across Wales to grow knowledge and thinking amongst front-line professionals about safeguarding and the themes arising from her casework.

## Safeguarding Seminars

The Commissioner's safeguarding seminars will support front-line professionals working across the public and third sectors to safeguard older people from domestic abuse.

The seminars, will help delegates to understand the hidden epidemic of domestic abuse of older people and how they can deal with it more effectively, including identifying the signs of domestic abuse and coercion, the support available for older people, and how they can change their working practices to better safeguard older people.

The seminars have been awarded the Agored Cymru Quality Mark, a measure of excellence for learning programmes providing delegates with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours.

Seminars will be held in September, in Bangor, Carmarthen, Newport and Wrexham.

**For further information about the seminars, visit: [http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/adult\\_protection/safeguarding\\_seminars.aspx](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/adult_protection/safeguarding_seminars.aspx)**

## Casework Themes Seminars

Through her casework, the Commissioner has identified a number of cross-cutting themes that impact upon the experiences of older people and their families when they try to get their voices heard or challenge the decision-making and practice of public bodies.

The themes covered by the seminars, which are aimed at front-line staff working across the public sector such as Local Authority Managers, Health Service Managers, Registered Social Landlords and Police Inspectors, will include effective communication, meaningful consultation, inflexibility and the subsequent barriers this can create, and how decisions can have a detrimental impact upon the lives of older people.

The seminars will also provide an opportunity for delegates to reflect on the current practice of their own organisations and the ways in which policy and practice could be enhanced to improve older people's experiences.

Seminars will be held in Cardiff, Carmarthen and Conwy.

**For further information about the seminars, visit: [http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/adult\\_protection/caseworkseminars.aspx](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/adult_protection/caseworkseminars.aspx)**

# Spotlight On... Older People in a digital world

**Gary Victor, Chair of the Porthcawl Shout Forum, sets out his vision for ensuring that older people have the skills they need to flourish in a digital world.**

Britain has become a leading internet based country with all tiers of government and commerce increasingly directing people to communicate with them via the internet as it decreases their costs and increases profits.

Banks are closing High Street facilities in favour of internet banking while UK internet retailer Amazon chalked up a turnover of £6.6 billion last year and the total UK e-commerce for retail and services in 2016 exploded to £133 billion, a giant 16% increase.

The “on-line” digital revolution is also dramatically changing the society we live in and Porthcawl Shout Forum (PSF) estimates that around 400,000 older people in Wales cannot access or participate in today’s internet society. They have never had any computer tuition or social media training and some are afraid of the internet following the many scam stories relating to older peoples innocence.

As chair of the older people’s group PSF I am aware of this widely known but rarely acknowledged problem which is segregating and isolating thousands of people but being “old school” they do not complain. We have taken this problem up with Age Cymru and the Older People’s Commissioner who is aware of the unhelpful effect it has on many key health problems which the Welsh Health Boards are working extremely hard to improve, Quality of Life, Independence and Loneliness to name a few of the costly issues.

Growing old is not an easy journey and today’s busy people will meet this technology gap when they retire and find their former skills set out-dated. Unless addressed the speed of change will bedevil each new generation of older people and we ask the Welsh Government to consider setting up a permanent computer and social media training initiative that would allowed everyone in Wales with internet reception to obtain computer skills.

Action is needed and if no sponsorship funding is available from the large internet based companies then could the government impose a small internet levy on mega users via their servers, similar to the music performing rights fees collected by the likes of PPS and PPL?

A dedicated well planned tuition programme would certainly be a win-win situation for young people seeking employment and older people seeking training, it would also be a big tick in the box for foreign companies considering investing in Wales.

**Porthcawl Shout Forum would like to enlist your email support for permanent computer training facilities across Wales, with a special focus on helping older people to use the internet safely. To find out more about how you can support this, email [g.victor@btinternet.com](mailto:g.victor@btinternet.com).**

# Spotlight On... Making a Will

The Law Commission has launched a new consultation on Wills. Find out more about how you can get involved.

## Wills law needs an overhaul – have your say

**The outdated law of wills needs an overhaul according to the Law Commission.**

In a new recently published consultation they say that laws are failing to protect the vulnerable – and not allowing others to distribute their cherished possessions after they've gone.



**Law  
Commission**  
Reforming the law

The independent legal body estimate that 40% of people who die every year haven't made a will and as a result wants to make sure that the law around wills is working for everyone.

Proposed plans include:

- Softening the strict formality rules to allow courts to recognise wills where it's clear what someone wanted;
- An overhaul of the rules protecting those making a will from being unduly influenced by another person; and
- Changing the test of mental capacity to take into account modern understanding of conditions like dementia.

Alongside these the Law Commission is also asking the public what the main barriers they see to people making a will, and to hear about experiences of disputes over wills following the death of a loved one.

Law Commissioner Professor Nick Hopkins said:

“Making a will and passing on your possessions after you've died should be straightforward. But the law is unclear, outdated and could even be putting people off altogether.

“Even when it's obvious what someone wanted, if they haven't followed the strict rules, courts can't act on it. And conditions which affect decision-making – like dementia – aren't properly accounted for in the law.

“That's not right and we want an overhaul to bring the law into the modern world. Our provisional proposals will not only clarify things legally, but will also help to give greater effect to people's last wishes.”

**For more information or to find out more visit: <http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/wills/>**



# Spotlight On... Shingles Vaccine

Public Health Wales highlights the importance of older people being vaccinated against shingles.

## Don't miss out on your shingles vaccine

You probably know that shingles can happen to anyone who has ever had chicken pox, and it can happen at any time, sometimes many years later.

But did you know that older people are more likely to get shingles than younger people? Or that older people are also more likely to get complications such as long term pain following shingles?

There is a vaccine to protect older people from shingles, and it's available from your GP practice but last year only around a half of older people took up the offer of the vaccine in Wales.

Since September 2013, a routine shingles vaccination programme for older people has been in place in Wales. This has been introduced in phases and the planned roll out of the programme has been accelerated this year. This means people reaching 70-74 and 77-79 years of age (inclusive) on 1st September can have the vaccine from 1st April 2017. For those aged 75 and 76 the vaccine will be available in the next few years, and that will then mean that then everyone aged 70-79 will be able to have the vaccine.

The vaccine is given in your general practice surgery and any person who is eligible but has not had it yet can still get it up to the day before their 80th birthday. If you are housebound call your surgery for advice so they can help make sure you don't miss out.

Watch a short video to find out how shingles affected David, an elderly man living in South Wales English: [www.publichealthwales.org/shingles](http://www.publichealthwales.org/shingles) Welsh: [www.iechydycyhoedduscymru.org/yr-eryr](http://www.iechydycyhoedduscymru.org/yr-eryr)

From April 2017 the dates of birth of people who may have free shingles vaccination are:

		From	To
Routine	Must have reached 70 years of age since the programme started in 2013 but must also be under 80 years of age on the day of vaccination	02/09/42	01/09/47
Catch up	Must have reached 77, 78 or 79 years of age since the programme started in 2013 but must also be under 80 years of age on the day of vaccination	02/09/37	01/09/40

Currently there is only one shingles vaccine licensed in the UK - Zostavax® - and you only need it once. It is not routinely recommended for those aged 80 or above.

Read more about shingles and the shingles vaccine at <http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/shingles>

If you are not sure if you can have a free vaccine put your date of birth into the simple online checker at <http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/shingles> to find out, or speak to someone at your GP surgery, or NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47

Shingles can happen to anyone at anytime, but it certainly causes more problems as we get older! Do the right thing and reduce your risk of being ill with shingles. If you think you may have missed your GP surgery invitation for the vaccine please contact them and make sure you don't miss out. Get your shingles vaccine soon.

# Engagement Highlights

## With Music in Mind, Cowbridge

**In April, the Commissioner visited the With Music in Mind singing in the community group, which meets every Friday at the Duke of Wellington in Cowbridge.**

The group offers an opportunity for people to get together, socialise and have fun, and aims to help older people who may be lonely or vulnerable to meet new people and try new activities.

The first hour of the session involves singing, which is known to have many benefits to people's health and wellbeing, whilst the second hour involves a social activity or guest speaker and some refreshments.

**For more information about the group, visit <http://www.withmusicinmind.co.uk/> or call 07500 776295.**



## Swansea Carers Centre

In Carers Week in June, the Commissioner visited Swansea Carers Centre for their Celebrating Carers event. During the event, the Commissioner met and spoke with carers from across the Swansea area to find out more about the challenges they face and the impact that their caring responsibilities have on their their health and wellbeing.

**To find out more about the work of the Swansea Carers Centre, visit <http://www.swansecarerscentre.org.uk/> or call 01792 653344.**

# Arthritis Care Support Group, Wrexham

In April, our Engagement Lead, Kate Hughes, visited the Arthritis Care Support Group in Wrexham to talk about the Commissioner's work and to find out more about the ways in which the group provides support to people living with Arthritis.



**ARTHRITIS CARE**

The group meets at 2pm on the third Tuesday of each month at St. Margaret's Church Hall on Chester Road in Wrexham and provides people with the chance to meet other people with arthritis in their community, share their experiences and learn from the experiences of others. During the sessions, members can have a cup of tea and get to know people. The sessions also often include exercise classes and learning techniques for living with arthritis.

**For more information about Arthritis Care Support Groups in your area, visit <https://www.arthritiscare.org.uk/our-services-and-support/branches-and-groups>**

## Our Newsletter

**Please feel free to forward this newsletter to any colleagues or contacts that you think would be interested in receiving it.**

If you have received this newsletter via a third party and would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us (details below). We can also provide hard copies of the newsletter or a large print version on request.

Please contact us if you would like to be removed from our newsletter distribution list.

## Your comments, feedback and stories

**We welcome your feedback about our newsletter so please feel free to contact us to share any thoughts or comments that you have.**

We also welcome suggestions about potential content for the newsletter, so if you have any information that you would like us to include in future editions, please get in touch.

# 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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