



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru



The Commissioner's Report 2009/2010

Working with older people for a better future

Accessible formats

If you would like a copy of this document in Braille, large print or audio format, please contact the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

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Contents

Foreword.....	2
Calls issued by the Commissioner.....	4
What we do.....	6
When older people contact us.....	8
Older People’s Commission organisational structure.....	9
How we listen to older people.....	10
Older people’s main concerns.....	12
Our first Review: reviewing the treatment of older people whilst they are in hospital, especially in relation to dignity and respect.....	16
The Commission’s work under each of our legal functions:	
1. Promote awareness of the interests of older people in Wales and the need to safeguard those interests.....	18
2. Promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older people in Wales.....	21
3. Encourage best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales.....	24
4. Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.....	28
5. Enabling the delivery of functions 1 – 4 in ways which are proper and regular, prudent and economical, make efficient and effective use of resources and identifying and managing risks.....	32
Forward look.....	34
Thanks and acknowledgements.....	35

Foreword

The past year, our first full financial year, has been one in which we have made substantial progress. We have represented the interests of older people, set up new systems, exercised our legal powers, intervened in disputes and have achieved outcomes for older people. We operate in a way which is transparent and legally compliant and we have built an organisation to deliver change.

Ageing has traditionally been seen as a health and social care issue. We have worked to widen the policy debate on ageing outside this arena.



The major issue of poverty is a recurring theme throughout our work. Some people experienced extreme deprivation before the recession and have nothing left to give up as finances tighten. There is a particular need in times of economic difficulty to address extremes of poverty, and protect people in situations where they are vulnerable.

It is vital that we all do everything in our power to ensure that progress which has been made to improve services is not lost but is built on, so that services are more centred on what older people need as well as maximising choice and independence.

I realise the challenges ahead for public services and believe it is essential that private, public and voluntary sector organisations fully engage with older people to deliver the best services possible.

We must recognise the great contribution older people make to life in Wales and tackle prejudice and discrimination. Older people play a central role in our communities, but are too often referred to in negative terms. This is unacceptable and we all have a responsibility to promote realistic images of older people.

I want to make a real difference and am committed to raising the profile of issues that matter to older people in Wales. I chose to launch my first Review in Bangor. This will look at whether older people are treated with dignity and respect whilst they are in hospital. This Review is being chaired by Dame Deirdre Hine, who has significant experience in the health sector in addition to conducting public inquiries across the UK.

Through our dispute intervention service we successfully responded to a range of enquiries from older people. We did this by liaising between older people and service providers to help resolve their issues. Dispute intervention benefits older people and can also help providers as it often avoids lengthy complaints processes.

Our work around adult protection continues to be of great importance to me. When older people are in vulnerable situations we work with other relevant agencies to ensure that the law and other systems protect them from harm. I have invested in a range of work in this area to help to tackle and prevent elder abuse in all its forms.

I have established a team at the Commission which can discharge my legal functions and also extend the depth and volume of the work I undertake, so we can achieve real change,

I have structured the Commission to enable me to make the most effective use of the unique powers I have to scrutinise, challenge and review many public bodies and to assist older people in Wales. The year ahead will be challenging and we will work with partners to make the most of these powers and our resources, to continue to make a positive difference to older people.

Ruth Marks

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Calls issued by the Commissioner

I have publicised the following key principles, which are guiding me in my work. These are:

- It is especially important in harsh economic times that decisions made about the use of resources are wise ones. We must ensure that we respect the dignity of older people, help people to be as independent as possible, and support people to take part in their communities.
- We must get better at giving people the support and information they need, when and where they need it. I am very aware of the widely varying experiences of public services that older people have in Wales. I have heard examples of excellence contrasting with deeply troubling examples of people being badly let down.
- The right support early on is vital and plays a big part in preventing illness and dependence and promoting dignity and respect.
- We need to raise our game here in Wales, and a key step in that is to raise our expectations of what is possible. We need to deliver better services to older people by building on the services we know are effective and seek creative solutions to the challenges we face. Many of these issues are well known to policy makers, older people, families, carers and those who work with and for older people. The big question is why improvements are not happening more rapidly.
- Older people need to be actively encouraged to participate in society and have a clear way of ensuring their voices are heard by decision-makers. It has been a privilege to be able to speak to so many older people and benefit from their experience. I would advise anyone who plans services to get out and listen as much as they can as the solutions to challenges can often be found from the people they affect.
- Above all, we need to be positive. We must recognise the great contribution that older people make to life in Wales. This is the 21st century and attitudes and expectations are changing - we must understand that reality and think long-term when we make decisions.

We need to build a Wales which works far better for older people.

Introduction to the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and our legal powers

The independent Older People's Commissioner for Wales was created with legal powers to make a positive difference to the lives of older people in Wales.

We have chosen five objectives for the Commission, which reflect the functions set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006. These are to:

1. **Promote awareness of the interests of older people** in Wales and of the need to safeguard those interests;
2. Promote the provision of opportunities for, and the **elimination of discrimination** against, older people in Wales;
3. **Encourage best practice** in the treatment of older people in Wales;
4. Keep under **review the adequacy and effectiveness of the law** affecting the interests of older people in Wales;
5. Deliver these four functions in ways which are **proper and regular, prudent and economical, making efficient and effective use of resources and identifying and managing risks.**

In order to fulfil these objectives we proactively listen to older people and organisations in the widest way possible, using digital inclusion, face to face meetings, consultations and surveys, attending events and correspondence. We evaluate all the information that we receive in order to build our work plan.

Older people are at the heart of all we do.

What we do

As the Older People's Commission for Wales, we will use our unique powers to achieve the following:

Promote awareness of the interests of older people

We use our status to help set the agenda about issues affecting older people amongst decision makers at all levels. We promote public discussion through the media. A key role for the Commission is to be a powerful champion for older people in these arenas and we have intervened in a wide and increasing range of debates and decision-making processes across Wales and Westminster.



Challenge age discrimination

We advocate changes to laws, guidance and practice to address age inequality. We also present realistic and balanced images of older people, recognising that older people are diverse. Older people are individuals in the same way as the rest of society and whilst they might share some common concerns their individual status remains undiminished.

There should be no one view of older people and we aim to reflect this in our work. We promote understanding of the nature of age discrimination in its most evident and its more hidden - but equally damaging - forms. We see tackling it effectively as key to making progress across all policy areas from care to transport, from learning to housing, from employment to health.

Encourage best practice

We aim to achieve this through a variety of methods, including bringing together people and evidence and where necessary carrying out research, to demonstrate effective policies and services. Most importantly we press for excellent services that deliver well for older people to be made widely and consistently available.

Encouraging change to established practices, where alternatives have been shown to work better, can present a considerable challenge. Therefore, we encourage service providers to face this challenge so that the needs of older people can be better met. For example, giving older people early support in order to prevent greater dependency at a later stage.

Review the law

We build the case for change and make this case to the Welsh Assembly and UK Governments. We establish what the issues and opportunities are through bringing together leading legal, and other, expertise and the experience and views of older people.

The law is a vital part of protecting older people and providing redress and yet it is often complex, confusing, hard to access and in need of reform. The Commission has already played a strong role in this debate, we are working to ensure this leads to significant improvements.

When older people contact us

When older people contact the Commission, we can offer a range of services, including:

An information service

We provide an information service to help older people resolve the problems that they face. Each enquiry is different so we tailor our response based on people's needs.

A signposting service

We put older people in contact with the best service to answer their query or support them. This is so we do not duplicate the work of others.

A referral service

This service is for an older person who may, through ailing health, vulnerability or isolation, be unable to access services by themselves.

A dispute intervention service

This is a service in which we liaise between older people and service providers to help people resolve their problems. Dispute intervention can benefit older people and service providers, as it can avoid lengthy complaints processes.

“It is really helpful to have direct contact with older people. We need to hear older people's views and opinions and encourage people to tell us what they think by phoning, writing to and emailing us.”

Alison Evans, Information and Enquiries Manager,
Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

Older People’s Commission organisational structure

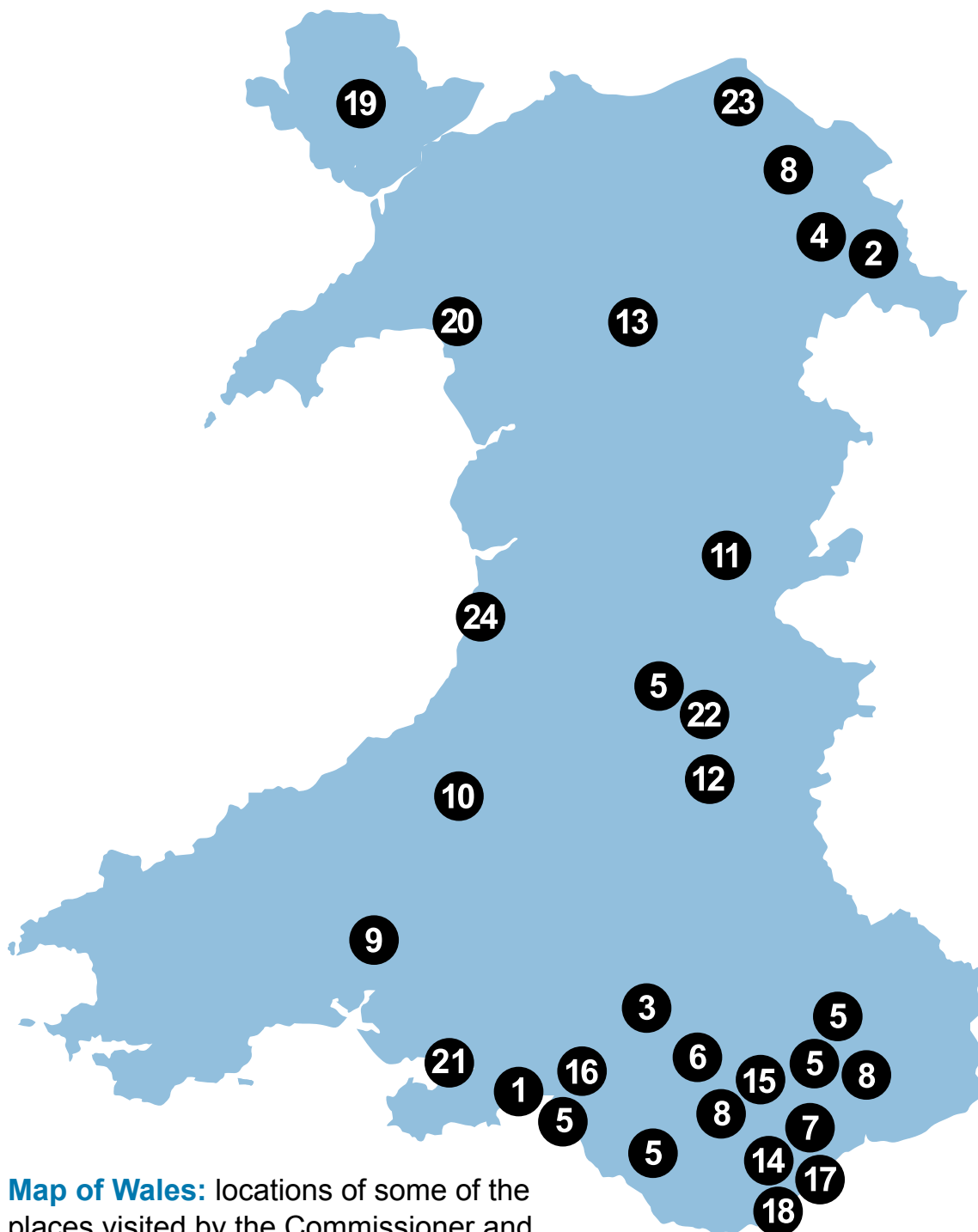
The Commissioner has recruited a team to enable her to deliver her legal functions.



How we listen to older people

We have a team dedicated to responding to older people and their representatives. The team can use the information given to help build our evidence base about what matters to older people in Wales.

Our team actively consults with older people by travelling to meet with individuals and groups in their own communities.



Map of Wales: locations of some of the places visited by the Commissioner and her team - key to this map is on page 11.

Examples of some of the groups and places we have visited:

- 1 Rose Cross House Residential Home and Day Centre (Swansea)
- 2 British Geriatric Society meeting (Wrexham)
- 3 Meeting with the Onllwyn and the Banwn and the Coelbren branches of the Old Age Pensioners Association
- 4 Day Centre at Deva House (Wrexham)
- 5 “Meet the Commissioner” events in Blackwood, Abertillery, Rhayader, Bridgend and Neath
- 6 Meeting of the Upper Rhondda Forum (Rhondda)
- 7 Meeting of the National Partnership Forum (Cardiff)
- 8 Age Concern AGMs for North East Wales (Mold), Gwent (Cwmbran) and Morgannwg (Treforest)
- 9 50+ Strategy Stakeholder Day, Carmarthenshire County Council (Trimsaran)
- 10 Ceredigion Transport Forum (Lampeter)
- 11 My Home Life Wales Conference (Newtown)
- 12 Royal Welsh Show (Builth Wells)
- 13 National Eisteddfod for Wales (Bala)
- 14 Care & Repair Cymru Conference (Cardiff)
- 15 Pontypridd & Rhondda NHS Retirement Fellowship St David’s Day Lunch (Pontypridd)
- 16 Neath Port Talbot Advocacy Project (Neath / Port Talbot)
- 17 AGM of the Cardiff Chinese Elderly Association (Cardiff)
- 18 Clwb Hamdden (Cardiff)
- 19 Launch of Agewell Programme (Anglesey)
- 20 Joint event with The Pension Service (Porthmadog)
- 21 Burry Port and Pembrey U3A (Burry Port and Pembrey)
- 22 UK Homecare Association Annual Conference (UKHAC) (Llandrindod Wells)
- 23 Elder Abuse Conference (Flintshire)
- 24 Welsh Centre for Legal Affairs Annual Lecture (Aberystwyth)

We have also attended several events across the UK to learn and spread best practice and build partnerships. These include: The National Pensioners’ Parliament; The UK Advisory Forum on Ageing; The Older People’s Assembly in the Scottish Parliament; The Government Equalities Office conference and The Institute of Public Policy and Research (IPPR).

Older people's main concerns

The four most common subjects that older people contacted us about were:

1. Health

People contacted us about their experiences in health settings and age discrimination in health care. We feature our Review into whether hospitals treat older people with dignity and respect later in this Report.

2. Social care

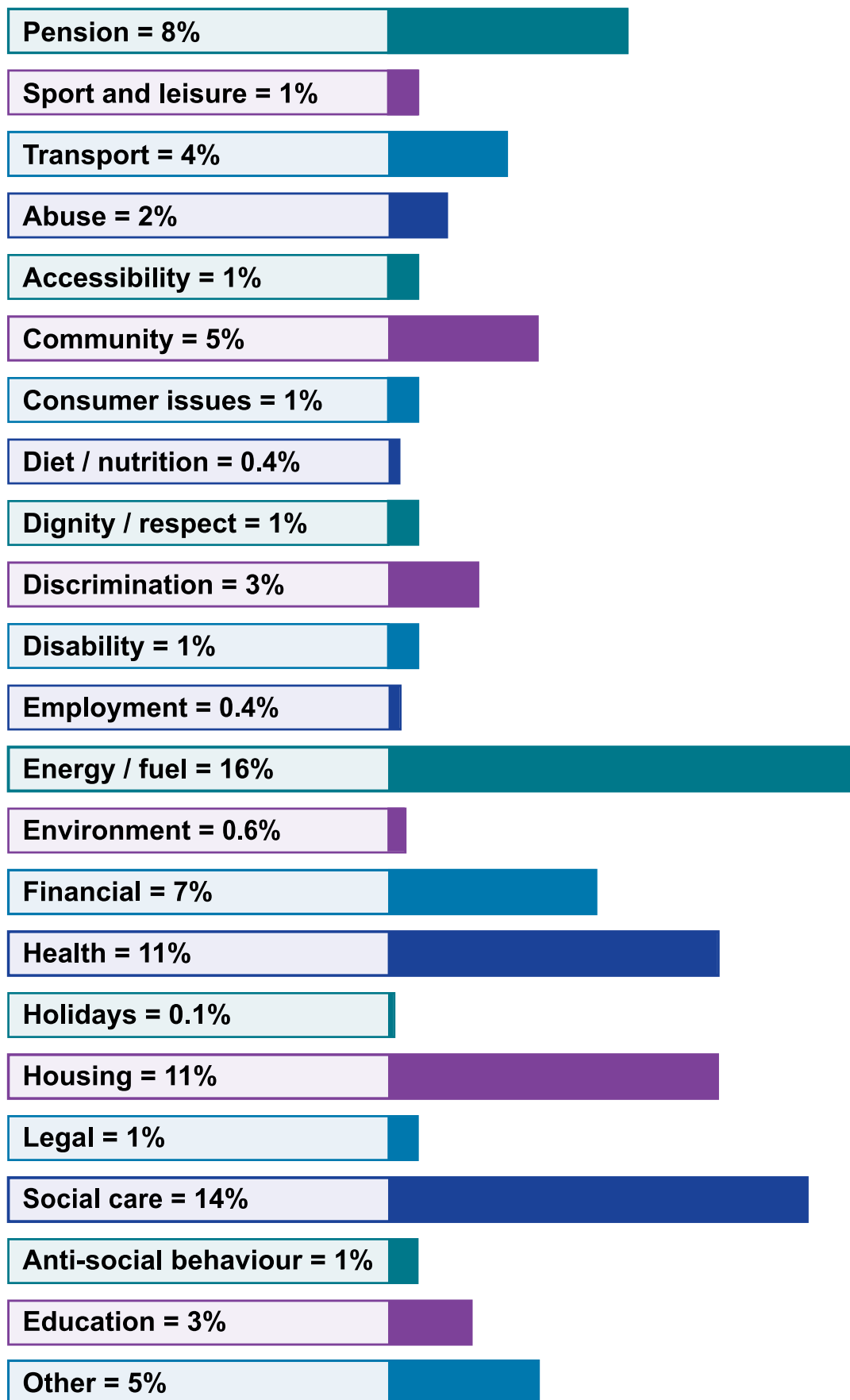
Many people contact us to say that they do not feel they are well treated when they need care, whether in their own home or in residential care. Relatives worry about their loved ones and feel they are not treated with respect.

Case study: The standard of care

Mr C had a number of complaints relating to the care that his father has received at home since the deterioration in his health several months previously. Mr C's main complaint was that his father was fitted with incontinence pads even though Mr C's father does not suffer with incontinence. Mr C rightly asks "What is dignified about that?"

We will be demanding that this no longer happens.

Enquiries by subject 2009-2010



These figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

3. Housing

Older people tell us that they have to wait so long for housing adaptations that their risk of tripping and falling is greatly increased. Even minor adaptations, like handrails, can take a long time to fit.

Warm homes are vital to keep people well, but over one third of housing stock in Wales was built pre-1919*. These can be very expensive to heat and whilst there is a range of help available to support energy efficiency some people tell us that they still struggle to keep warm and do not qualify for assistance.

Case Study: The importance of timely services

Mrs A contacted the Commission to draw our attention to a matter involving her housing association. She and the other residents of a large housing complex had been promised that double glazing would be fitted a number of years ago.

During this time, the housing association was sold to a larger organisation that promised to honour the existing agreement.

Even though it had been agreed, the new housing association repeatedly put off the agreed work and pushed back the date year after year. Mrs A informed us that the original work, scheduled to start several years ago, was now not due to start for a further several years, with no guarantees in place.

Following intervention from the Commission an agreement was made to re-glaze the entire facility within the year.

4. Income

People were worried about how they were going to pay essential bills. Older people tend to have a fixed level of income, or have seen their savings reduced by the recession. Many older people struggle to pay essential bills for food and heat.

The Winter Fuel Allowance is a vital benefit that helps people stay warm during the cold winter months, but people are still struggling.

* Report by National Audit Office Wales on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales “Renewal of Private Sector Housing in Wales” (2003).



Case study: The cost of living

Miss T contacted us to say that heating costs have risen massively over recent times and heating allowances have not kept pace.

Inflation, taxation and other domestic costs are disproportionately higher for older people.

She feels that in the coming years this inequity will widen if practical and effective measures are not taken to address it.

Fuel poverty is a major concern to older people. We are challenging decision makers to find effective ways to address this issue.

Our first Review: reviewing the treatment of older people whilst they are in hospital, especially in relation to dignity and respect

We announced the topic of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' first Review in Bangor in March 2010. The Review will consider whether, in discharging their functions, Health Boards and one of the NHS Trusts in Wales are treating older people in Wales with dignity and respect. It will also consider whether older people's rights are being protected whilst they are in hospital.

The Commissioner has heard many views which show there is a need for an independent, authoritative look at hospital care from the perspective of the older person. This Review will establish whether the standard of care provided needs to be improved and, if so, will recommend ways of improving things.

The Review will result in a report and will make any recommendations required to improve dignity and respect for older people in Wales whilst in hospital. It will also highlight examples of the good work taking place across the country. This report will be sent to the First Minister, Health Boards and the relevant NHS Trust in Wales (as the bodies and organisations being reviewed).

It will be part of an extensive work programme for the Commission. We are aiming to use our legal powers to make a positive difference to older people's experiences in hospital. We would like to thank all the older people and advocates who contacted us. The information and evidence they have given us means we have been able to root all our work in what matters most to older people.

The Chair of our Review

The Review Panel will be chaired by Dame Deirdre Hine DBE FFPH FRCP. Dame Deirdre has had a career in both academic and NHS practice in Wales and in the Medical Civil Service. She has been Chief Medical Officer under the Welsh Office, Chairman of the Commission for Health Improvement, President of the Royal Society of Medicine, and President of the British Medical Association.



1. Promote awareness of the interests of older people in Wales and the need to safeguard those interests

We work hard to ensure that the interests of older people are high on the agenda in Wales and are fully taken into account when governments and service providers make decisions. Examples of how we have done this are:

- Extensive contact with decision makers and meetings with politicians which have resulted in opportunities to put forward the issues of concern to older people. We met with Angela Eagle MP, Minister of State for Pensions and the Ageing Society, and pressed for an increase in the level of the basic state pension and effective measures to increase take-up of entitlements.
- We made strong and effective representations against proposals to make changes to Attendance Allowance and will continue to focus attention on this issue as the government considers the future funding of long term care.
- We have engaged with older people and championed their views through media interviews on bus passes and dignity in care. We have incorporated the views of older people into all our work to influence policy and raised them through written briefings, media interviews, speeches and presentations.
- During events and in correspondence with public bodies we have promoted the concerns of older people and the importance of achieving compliance with the UN Principles for Older Persons.
- We have had a presence at key events in Wales, for example the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod, to engage with older people and promote their views. We worked with the Pensions Service and Farmers Union of Wales.
- The Commission also gave evidence as part of the Review into the UK's compliance with the Council of Europe's Charter on Minority Languages. We focused on the experiences of older Welsh speakers in health and social care.

Proposed Carers Measure

The Commissioner gave written and oral evidence to an Assembly Legislation Committee on the proposed Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure. This gave us an opportunity to represent the views of older people who are carers, as well as to present evidence (research and case studies) of the impact that caring can have on the carer's life.

We welcomed the proposed Measure as a significant move in securing practical recognition and support for carers.

Case study: The need for local services

Mrs Y is 84 years of age, lives in a rural area and has great difficulty walking. She does not have her own transport and uses public transport to get about. Mrs Y wrote to the Commission to draw our attention to the lack of such facilities in her local area.

She finds it hard to reach local services and, in particular, the nearest medical centre as there is no bus. Her only option is to take a taxi, which can be very expensive.

Older people are the principal users of public transport and their needs and views should be properly considered when new developments are planned. Public transport offers many older people the opportunity to access activities and amenities and should be made more widely available.

The free bus pass is vital to many older people, and we will be commissioning research during 2010-11 to assess the impact of the bus pass on older people and communities and learn about people's travel experiences. This will cover rural and urban settings and will be used to inform future work.

Social Care Charges Measure 2010

The Commission responded to the proposed Social Care Charges Measure, which has now been passed. We conducted a comparison of the proposed Measure to the standards set by the UN Principles for Older Persons. Our response included the need to adhere to the principle that older people should be consulted when a local authority is deciding the reasonableness of a social care charge.

Claim your entitlements

During the summer of 2009, the Commission worked with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and The Pension Service on a joint project to raise awareness of the importance of older people claiming their financial entitlements.

The Commission is continuing this joint work with the DWP and The Pension Service as, especially in these challenging economic times, extra income can improve people's day to day living and enable people to keep warm and safe.

Importance of independent living

We promoted the importance of independent living and of making this more of a reality in Wales through an event held jointly with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Bevan Foundation in May 2009. The event provided an opportunity to debate key policy issues that impact on older people's lives including care, housing, finance and dignity.

One of the issues most frequently raised with the Commission is access to, and quality of, care. It is vital that we move from words to action more effectively and support people throughout Wales to live as independently as they are able. Bringing people together at events like this helps us all to work out what we need to do to achieve this.

“The event provided a valuable opportunity to share experiences and insights on key issues affecting older people. The combined knowledge and experience of those present provided a huge asset in terms of finding ways to ensure older people are fully engaged in debates about their care and treated with dignity and respect.”

Julia Unwin, Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

2. Promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older people in Wales

We have represented the needs and views of older people in Wales as a key stakeholder in the work for the creation of the Equality Bill (now an Act of Parliament). This will address discrimination across a range of strands, including age discrimination in health and social care.

We are working to ensure that this Act is implemented fully and delivers on its potential to change service culture and practice.

The Commission is also developing a solid, authoritative and up-to-date evidence base about areas that really matter to older people. We plan to undertake, commission or lend our support to research in key areas, including:

- Issues associated with the closure of care homes in Wales in relation to the experience of residents and adherence to, and the adequacy of, closure guidance.
- Pensioner poverty and isolation.
- Advocacy and complaints arrangements in Wales with the Older People and Ageing Research & Development Network (OPAN Cymru).
- How Health Boards, Local Authorities and Voluntary Organisations currently engage with older people.
- How Local Authorities are implementing improvements in the provision of aids and adaptations following an Assembly Committee report on this issue.
- Avoidable hospital admissions, the value of prevention in Wales and investment in providing more community services closer to home.
- Information and statistics from Citizen's Advice Cymru about the key concerns that older people share with them.

Partnership Working

We encourage best practice to promote dignity, health, wellbeing and independence by working with external stakeholders and organisations. As part of this work in 2009-10, we attended a range of events to promote these messages. These have included:

- WLGA Learning Exchange
- Listening Events for Dignity in Care
- UK Advisory Forum on Ageing
- Launch of the Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust “Quality Framework for achieving Excellence in Services for Older People”
- Annual Care Conference for Wales
- Welsh NHS Confederation Annual Conference
- Wales TUC Conference
- Dementia Conference with Research in Specialist and Elderly Care
- RCN and Open University in Wales “National Healthcare Assistants” conference
- Cardiff Community Health Council
- Political Party Conferences

We emphasised to these organisations and others the need for real choice and clear information for older people by integrating this into our team’s presentations and speeches.

“One of the themes running through what older people say to us is that of the need for good, timely information and advice. Information and, where necessary, advocacy is vital to being able to exercise choice and control.

This is not just about benefits advice, important as this is, it is about the needs of the whole person, knowing that often people do not know what questions to ask. Information services need to operate intelligently, anticipate need and be linked to networks of support as well as to services.”

Sarah Stone, Deputy Older People’s Commissioner for Wales.



We provide regular comment for the media to raise the profile of issues faced by older people, and of our work. One example is our interview with the BBC during the period of prolonged snow and bad weather, where we were able to highlight the willingness of older people to volunteer and take part in community work, for instance, clearing snow and looking after grandchildren at short notice.

We also highlighted the benefits of older employees, and the experience, skills and high levels of competence they can bring to the workplace. This is important as there remains a major challenge in overcoming the prejudice that older workers tell us they still encounter.

Older people should have the right to work for as long as they choose to and are able. Compelling people to retire at 65 purely on the basis of age is discriminatory and the Commission wants to see the end of ageism in the work place.

“Older people make an amazing contribution to society through working, volunteering and caring. We need to recognise and celebrate this.”

Kate Hughes, Communications and Engagement Manager, Older People’s Commissioner for Wales.

3. Encourage best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales ensures that older people are at the heart of what we do. We call for organisations to listen to older people and design and deliver their services in consultation with the people who receive them.

Our team collectively works to encourage best practice in Wales. We aim to achieve this by identifying opportunities to address the way in which older people are portrayed, as well as enabling older people to make change happen themselves.

We have increased our capacity to exercise our powers of review and recommendation and launched our first Review to further our work to encourage best practice.

Working with other organisations

We worked with Age Cymru to build on evidence and provide up-to-date information about advocacy provision in Wales. This will be reported in "Advocacy Counts 3" during 2010-11.

Research undertaken by Swansea University, using the expertise of the Older People and Ageing Research and Development Network (OPAN) into advocacy and complaints arrangements will inform our future work in this area during 2010-11.

Media training for older people

We are very keen to support older people in getting their voices heard in the media and organised training for older people to learn about how the media works and how to present what they have to say during interviews. This was undertaken in partnership with Prime Cymru, which helps people who are over the age of 50 in Wales to become economically active. This training took place in Bangor, Cardiff and Aberystwyth.

"I personally was much more confident after this event, even though I have spoken in public forums before. This session strengthened my confidence and gave me valuable insight on how to act in front of a camera and react positively to the interviewer."

Delegate at media training, Bangor.





The United Nations Principles for Older Persons

The United Nations (UN) Principles for Older Persons were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1991.

These principles are a set of guidelines to promote the interests of older persons throughout the world. Governments are encouraged to incorporate them into their national programmes.

The UN Principles are grouped under the five themes of:

1. Independence
2. Participation
3. Care
4. Self-fulfilment
5. Dignity

How we consulted on and promoted the UN Principles

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is legally obliged to have regard to the UN Principles and we strongly believe that all organisations should consider these when carrying out their work with older people.

Countries do not have to report on their compliance with Principles as they would have to do with a Convention, for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We have joined the call for these Principles to be upgraded to a Convention and set in law to provide a more robust base from which to challenge discrimination and unfair treatment of older people.

Our team conducted workshops with older people to discuss what they thought about the UN Principles and how they should be applied in practice. There was a strong feeling that older people's contribution should be recognised, and many examples were cited where older people had received poor services, which were not in line with the Principles. Participants at the workshops felt that more regard would be paid to the Principles if they were upgraded to a UN Convention.

The Commission is committed to promoting the UN Principles for Older Persons and supports work to upgrade the Principles into a Convention. We take advantage of opportunities to engage at an international level to promote this work, for instance through the International Federation on Ageing.

“We need to upgrade the UN Principles for Older Persons to a Convention to enshrine the rights of older people in law. The older people we consulted felt that doing this would ensure that the human rights of older people would be more widely recognised and implemented.”

Alun Thomas, Head of Review, Examinations and Policy, Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

4. Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales

We have kept an active watch on legislation being developed in Wales, such as the Social Care Charges Measure and the proposed Carers Measure, having input where appropriate. The Commission has a particular role to speak up for the most vulnerable older people in society. We have contributed to the recent reviews of adult protection guidance and legislation in England and Wales.

Elder abuse and Adult Social Care Law

The Law Commission published its draft proposals for reforming adult social care law in England and Wales in February. We believed that this represented a major opportunity for older people and others in Wales to influence significant potential new legislation.

We had already set out our view that adult protection law was in need of reform, and had held discussions with the Law Commission and legal experts in Wales.

We proposed a major conference in Wales through which the Law Commission would consult and which would also deliver views we could build on in Wales. We worked jointly with the Law Commission and with Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales (now Age Cymru) to hold the conference.

The conference was attended by over 100 delegates from a wide range of backgrounds, including older people, front line service providers and organisations working with and for older people in the voluntary sector.

Some key messages from the conference were:

- Simplification of the complex web of legislation that currently covers adult social care in Wales is to be welcomed.
- Any new adult social care statute should also cover adult protection, placing a duty on local authorities to investigate concerns about abuse of vulnerable adults (both with and without capacity).
- Any new legislation should contain a duty to consult with older people and other people who access adult social care. It should also be based on a thorough analysis of resource implications and the feasibility of full implementation.

We wrote a report reflecting the conference's recommendations to the Law Commission and the National Assembly for Wales. This report is available on our website: www.olderpeoplewales.com.

Further consultation events will be held by the Older People's Commission and others around Wales. We will continue to be involved in the process leading to any new statute.

We will represent the views of older people to the National Assembly, and the Deputy Minister for Social Services in particular.

“Age Cymru was delighted to be able to work with the Older People's Commission and the Law Commission in delivering the consultation conference. It provided a vital opportunity for stakeholders in Wales to understand what the Law Commission were proposing and to be able to voice their opinions and views.

Working in partnership enabled us to share resources and expertise and to bring in experts from across Wales to respond to the proposals, which encouraged and enabled discussions in workshops and plenary.”

Louise Hughes, Elder Abuse Programme Manager, Age Cymru.



The Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs, Aberystwyth

In November 2009, the Commissioner delivered the 10th Annual Lecture for the Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs.

She spoke about her unique role as the world's only Older People's Commissioner, as well as outlining the legal functions of the Commission.

The Commissioner also spoke about the need for the human rights of older people to be fully recognised, encouraging lawyers and would-be lawyers to be active in this area of law.

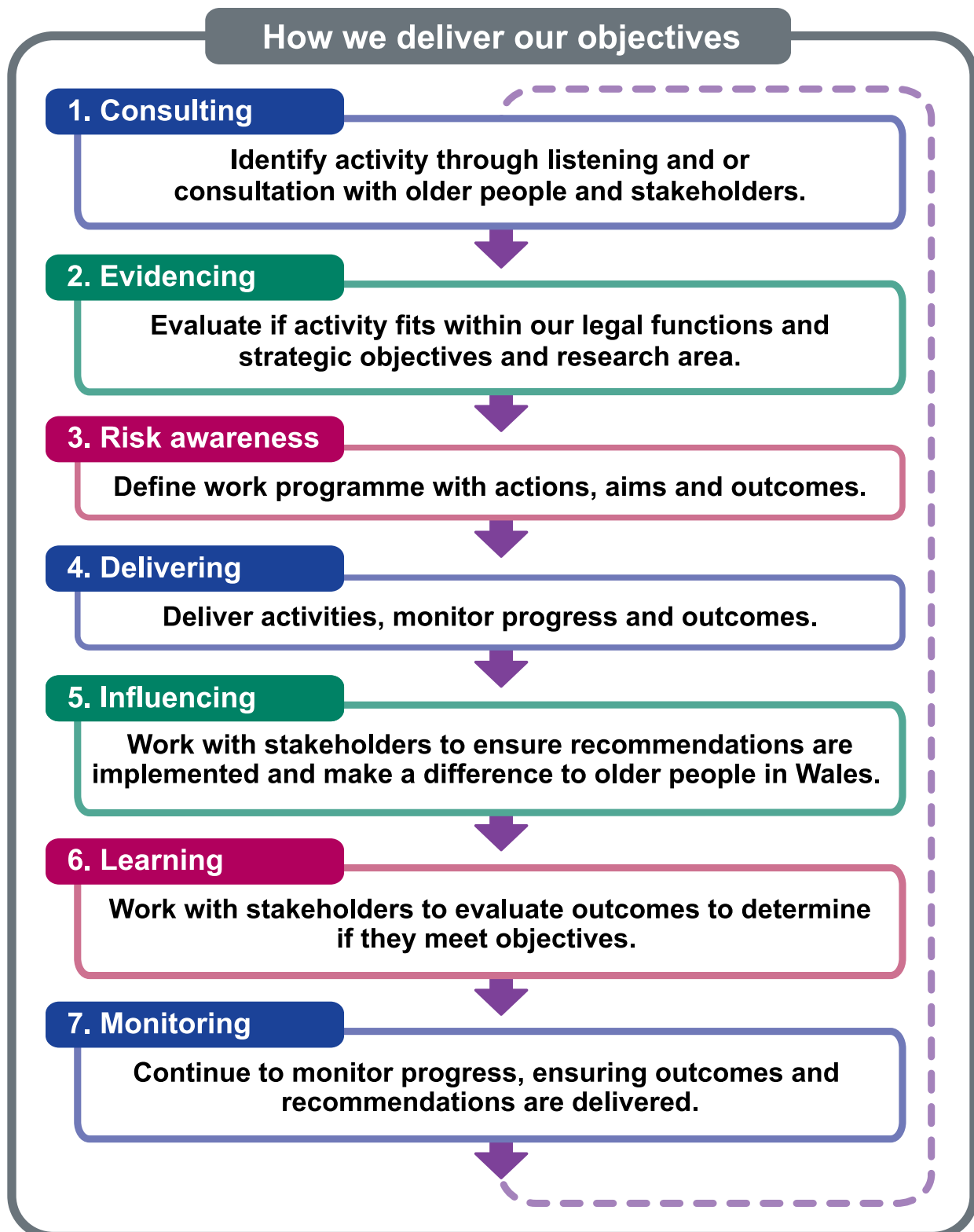
A practical guide to the law

We have commissioned a practical guide for social care workers on the current law protecting older people, to improve understanding and application of the current law. This is due to be published in 2011.

“I am determined to use the powers given to me through the Act of Parliament to improve the lives of older people in Wales, especially when people are in situations where they are vulnerable.”

Ruth Marks, Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

5. Enabling the delivery of functions 1 – 4 in ways which are proper and regular, prudent and economical, make efficient and effective use of resources and identifying and managing risks



Executing our legal functions

We have taken further steps to develop the Commission into an organisation capable of making the most effective use of the powers given to the Commissioner through the Act of Parliament which established this role. This is vital for underpinning our work and will enable us to deliver the commitments set out in our first three-year strategic plan.

Developing partnerships has allowed us to reach older people directly in a cost effective way and signpost enquiries to the most appropriate place. Older people have told us they do not want us to duplicate the work of others and we know it is only by working together with other organisations that we can make a lasting positive difference to older people.

We have commissioned Arad Consulting to conduct an independent evaluation of our work. The first evaluation report has been received and we are building their recommendations into the way we work.

We consulted on and published our Strategic Plan for 2010 to 2013 based on what older people have told us are their priorities.

We have appointed an independent Audit Committee to advise us on the adequacy of our internal and external audit arrangements, management responses to audit recommendations and on other corporate governance, risk management and internal control matters. Significant progress has been made in embedding risk management arrangements within the Commission and developing effective procurement procedures.

The internal auditors' opinion stated that, based on the work undertaken for the year ended 31 March 2010, the Commission has adequate and effective risk management, control and governance processes to manage the achievement of our objectives.

The Auditor General issued an unqualified audit certificate on the 2009-10 financial statements. For further information, please see our Annual Accounts 2009-10 at www.olderpeoplewales.com or contact us to request a copy.

Delivering the strategic plan

The Commissioner and the team will further develop the use of our powers to scrutinise, challenge, review, examine and assist. We will do all we can to ensure older people's voices are heard, services are maintained and the valuable ground that has been gained is not lost.

Following extensive consultation, the Commission has published its three-year Strategic Plan, which will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. It sets out the direction and headline activities of the Commission. This plan is based on the wide ranging information we have received from older people and relevant organisations and individuals in Wales.

The objectives in the Strategic Plan reflect the four main functions set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006. For 2010-11 a more detailed organisational plan has been approved by the Commissioner to deliver the aims and objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan 2010-2013 has been widely distributed to the government and our stakeholders.

It is available on our website at www.olderpeoplewales.com or on request.



Thanks and acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the individuals and organisations who have provided support advice and guidance over the past year. Whilst there are far too many to list, we would especially like to acknowledge:

- All the older people and their families, friends and advocates who have contacted us to share their experiences - please continue to do so.
- The individuals, groups and organisations who have worked with us to help us to listen to older people and deliver a range of work and research.
- The people and organisations that have helped us evaluate our work and ensure we are legally compliant.

Documents

Any documents referred to in this Report are available on our website at www.olderpeoplewales.com or on request. All case studies relate to typical examples of the information that we receive, rather than specific cases, in order to guarantee that people who contact the Commission remain anonymous.

None of the photographs used in The Commissioner's Report (except the photograph of Ruth Marks) relate to the case studies and contacts mentioned in the Report. All other photographs were sourced from www.veer.com.

Complaints

In the financial year 2009-10 there were no complaints made in accordance with the Commissioner's complaints procedure.

Freedom of information requests

During 2009-10 we received five requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. In four the information requested was partially provided and in one the information was not held.

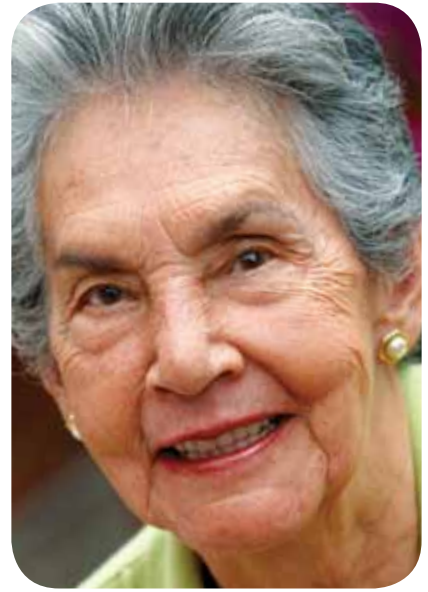
Welsh language

We have developed a draft Welsh Language Scheme setting out how we will use the Welsh Language in our work. We opened a public consultation on the Scheme on 29 March 2010.

Feedback

We would welcome your feedback about our work and also the design and content of The Commissioner's Report. Please contact us at:
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Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, CF10 5FL.
Telephone: 08442 640670 Email: ask@olderpeoplewales.com

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Working with
older people
in Wales for a
better future.

Thank you
everyone.

