



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Update from the Older People's Commission for Wales

Newsletter number 6: August 2010

Message from the Commissioner

In the last few months we have launched several major pieces of work that set out some of our priorities for the coming months.

We have issued Call for Evidence for our Review into the treatment of older people in hospitals, especially in relation to dignity and respect. The Call was released on our website, and has been highlighted in local, regional and national press as well as on television and radio. I would also like to thank all the organisations who have helped to publicise the Call. The Local Health Boards have also taken part, displaying posters and information leaflets for their patients as well as relatives, friends and staff. The deadline for submission of evidence was 16 August and we have received many examples of information from older people across Wales in relation to the Review.

The Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) Report, has published "Adding Life to Years", which looks at the approach to ageing and an ageing society in Wales. The Report, written by IWA Director John Osmond, is accompanied by public seminars throughout Wales to gather public opinion on the topic.

A key area of work for the Commission has been to join with organisations and stakeholders at events across Wales. As Commissioner, I fully believe that is only through partnership and

working together that we can make a real positive difference to the lives of older people in Wales. This is explored in more details in our Spotlight section and we hope to find further ways of promoting joint working in the future.

Ruth Marks
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Current priorities

Call for evidence on Review of older people's experiences in hospitals

The Panel of Inquiry set up to gather evidence as part of the Commission's Review into older people experience's in hospital has now completed its call for written evidence. The Panel is being chaired by Dame Deirdre Hine.

The Panel asked to hear about older people's experiences, both good and bad, when they are hospital in-patients. Evidence related to **hospital stays of more than five consecutive days** and was based on experiences **within the last two years**.

The Panel will report their findings to the Commissioner, who will publish her report and recommendations early next year.

The Commissioner hopes that "older people in Wales embrace this Review of the treatment they receive in hospital in relation to dignity and respect. With their help and support, we will make recommendations to those who have the power to improve services in Wales".

For more information on the Review, including what types of issues it will and will not cover, please see our website:

www.olderpeoplewales.com or contact:

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Adding Life to Years – IWA project and seminars

Ruth Marks, Sarah Stone and Alun Thomas attended the launch of the 'Adding Life to Years' report at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay on 14 June 2010.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales aims to provide strategic leadership and be an ambassador for older people's issues. We want to engage in public discussion about attitudes to ageing because understanding and influencing the views of the public about the experience of older people is a vitally important part of developing policy.

As a means of taking our work forward, we asked John Osmond, Director of the Institute of Welsh Affairs, to write a paper on some of the issues around ageing and the specific policy context that is evolving in Wales. 'Adding Life to Years' has been informed by a seminar of experts, which was of great value not only for this publication but also in informing the Commission more generally.

The Report and its launch received a considerable amount of media coverage, for example the article in the Western Mail:

['It's time we closed the inter-generation gap through Welsh schools'](#)

Copies of the report can be downloaded from the Commission's website:

['Adding Life to Years'](#)

Or by contacting Richard Jones at
richard.jones@olderpeoplewales.com.

Burning Question

Each bulletin will contain a burning question that the Commission thinks needs to be raised with the public for comment. In this edition the question is regarding adult community based learning.

Estyn is currently considering how older learners access lifelong learning opportunities, and effective, best-practice in this area. The Commission would be interested to hear your experiences of adult community based learning, both good and bad.

What are your experiences of adult community based learning?

Let us know by emailing ask@olderpeoplewales.com with the subject “Adult Learning”.

What Older People are saying to us

The Commission encourages older people from all over Wales to speak to us regarding the issues that directly affect them. The information we receive is used to identify key needs and priority areas, and is then used to inform the Commission’s ongoing work plan.

In recent months, older people have contacted the Commission about a wide range of issues. The particularly prominent topics have been:

Care

Older people and family members have contacted the Commission raising concerns over a range of issues relating to care and in particular the proposed closure of a number of care homes around Wales. We are urging care homes to ensure that any closure plans follow best practice guidance in consultation and supporting research in this area.

A research project into the effects of care home closures in Wales has been awarded £130,000 by the National Institute for Social Care and Health Research (NISCHR) for an 18 month study. This research will study the implications of care home closures and examine the effects of relocation on the health and well being of older people.

Lead researcher, Professor Vanessa Burholt, Director of the Centre for Innovative Ageing at Swansea University, together with her colleague Professor Judith Phillips and Sarah Stone, Deputy Commissioner for Older People in Wales, will support the study of the prevalence, process and impact of the closure of care homes in Wales.

Financial

The Commission has received a number of enquiries about money, especially the difficulty of living on a fixed-income.

Pensioners' groups and older people consistently tell us of the challenges of living on a fixed income, and the value of entitlements such as Attendance Allowance and the bus pass that are not means tested. A number of older people have contacted the Commission to express their concerns about the suggestion of ending Attendance Allowance as part the possible changes in how social care is funded. People have stressed its importance as it provides a greater degree financial support and of independent living.

We await with interest the outcome of the coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October, which will outline the future of Attendance Allowance and other benefits. The Commissioner met recently with the Secretary of State for Wales, Cheryl Gillan and made clear the strength of views we have received on this issue, as well as the higher proportion of older people who receive this benefit in Wales compared to England. Mrs Gillan agreed to raise this with her colleagues in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Social Services

The Commission has received a number of enquiries regarding the provision of social services. These enquiries reflect general concerns over access to and availability of local authority assistance.

Some of the local authority services people have contacted the Commission about are the availability of assessment, respite care in some areas of Wales, the provision and length of time it takes to have

vital adaptations fitted in the home, the support given by social services upon an older person's discharge from hospital.

Transport

Older people have told us about cuts to some bus routes in a number of rural areas around Wales.

A reliable public transport system is essential, particularly for those older people living in rural communities and more remote areas of Wales. Older people need to have access to public transport that will not only enable them to access essential services but also to provide a means preventing isolation and enabling social inclusion.

We would like to hear about

If you have experienced any issues relating to the following topics, please contact us.

Making Complaints

Problems accessing complaints procedures.

Poverty

Difficulties living on a fixed income.

Isolation

Concerns over becoming increasingly isolated and lonely.

Aids and Adaptations

Problems accessing adaptive equipment in a timely and effective manner.

Recent activities

International Federation on Ageing Conference

Ruth Marks represented a range of organisations at the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) Conference from 3-6 May 2010.

The conference was a key opportunity for countries around the world to learn from international experience and share good practice. Our

structures and the way in which we engage with older people in Wales are of great interest to others. We have good examples to share in relation partnership working, for instance, the Team Wales and Age Alliance Wales networks. We are committed to contributing to the international on ageing.

The Commissioner was involved in a range of events including a residential care and recreational centre visit as well as speaking on the issue of strengthening older people's rights from UN Principles to a convention, and the challenges and opportunities for Wales. Ruth presented with Prof. Judith Phillips of Swansea University (Professor of Gerontology and Social Work) and OPAN (Ageing Research Wales) at the session about challenges and opportunities for smaller countries.

For more information, see our [IFA Conference pages](#) or contact us at: ask@olderpeoplewales.com or phone 08442 64 06 70.

AGE Northern Ireland visit

Age NI visited the Commissioner's offices on 24 May 2010 and met with Ruth Marks and Sarah Stone. Their visit was to gain insight into our experiences in order to inform Northern Ireland's plans to establish a similar body. We were able to offer insight into the set up period, the first formative years and the formal exercising of our powers.

All Wales Doorstep Crime Awareness Campaign

Sarah Stone spoke at an event for the All Wales Doorstep Crime Awareness Campaign on 26 May 2010 in the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff.

Doorstep crime is an issue affecting people across the country and this campaign aims to raise the profile of this crime and how to protect against becoming a victim.

For more information, see our [Doorstep Crime page](#).

Visit from delegation from Estonia

A delegation from Estonia visited the Commissioner's office on 28 May 2010 and met with Ruth Marks. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the legal role of the Commission and how we work.

Pensioners' Parliament

Ruth Marks and Sarah Stone attended the Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool from 8-10 June 2010. Members of pensioners' organisations and groups from across the UK came together to discuss a range of key topics affecting older people.

Ruth Marks took part in a Question and Answer session at the start of the event and took part in a debate on such topics as the challenges facing pensioners in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The group also discussed the ageing society and heard expert analysis on the challenges it raises and why this is often portrayed in a negative way.

For more information, please visit the NPC website

<http://www.npcuk.org/parliament.htm> or contact them on 02075 536 510 or info@npcuk.org.

National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales (NOAPAW) Rally

Alun Thomas, Head of Review, Examinations and Policy at the Older People's Commission for Wales, spoke at the National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales (NOAPAW) rally on 9 June. The rally, held at the Princess Royal Theatre in Port Talbot, was attended by older people from across Wales who came to listen to the speakers and take part in the wide ranging debate.

For more information, please visit the NOAPAW website

<http://www.noapaw.org.uk/>.

Informal visit with Cardiff and Vale UHB

Ruth Marks and Rebecca Stafford, Policy Officer for the Commission, undertook an informal visit to a general medicine ward, and a rehabilitation ward at the Heath Hospital on 11 June 2010.

They met with the Director of Primary, Community and Mental Health Services team, Executive Director of Nursing, Clinical Director for Older People and Intermediate Care and the Chair of the hospital to discuss issues affecting older people in hospital.

World Elder Abuse (WEA) Awareness Day

The fifth World Elder Abuse (WEA) Awareness Day took place on 15 June 2010, endorsed by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA). It supports the United Nations International Plan of Action that recognises the significance of elder abuse as a major public health and human rights issue.

Throughout the day, communities, organisations, governmental bodies and companies held events to raise the awareness of elder abuse at international, national, regional, local, community and neighbourhood levels around the world.

The aim of the day is to promote a better understanding of the abuse and neglect suffered by older people.

The Older People's Commission for Wales fully supports World Elder Abuse Awareness Day as an important means of raising the profile and awareness of this major subject. The Deputy Commissioner, Sarah Stone, spoke at an event in North Wales that included presentations on 'What is Abuse?' as well as information provided from organisations such as Women's Aid, the Police, Ambulance, Age Cymru and North Wales Advocacy to explain their role.

For more information, please visit the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse website <http://www.inpea.net/>.

Welsh Refugee Council Event

Ruth Marks and Clive Carpenter, Finance Officer at the Commission, attended the 20th Anniversary celebrations of the Welsh Refugee Council in Cardiff on 16 June.

The Council states that “During the past 20 years the Welsh Refugee Council has seen many changes in policy, governments, public attitudes and perceptions. This event was organised as a day of celebration and reflection of the past 20 years and a chance to look forward to the future.”

For more information, please visit the Welsh Refugee Council website <http://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org/> or contact them on 02920 489 800.

China in Our Hands Conference

Ruth Marks spoke at the Annual Nursing Conference on 25 June 2010 entitled China in Our Hands to speak about the vital role of dignity in care. The conference aimed to reflect the unique contribution that nursing makes to patient care and emphasised the importance of high quality nursing care.

The event was organised by the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board, the largest Health Board in Wales. Other speakers at the event included Dr Jean White (Nursing Officer for the Welsh Assembly Government) and Professor Ann Marie Rafferty.

International Study Group of Kentucky

An international study group from Kentucky, USA, visited the Commission office on 25 June 2010 to meet with Ruth. Their visit was to gain an overview of how the Commission. Ruth discussed how we began our work, our work so far and our first Review.

Meeting with the Secretary of State for Wales, Cheryl Gillan

Ruth Marks and Sarah Stone met with the new Secretary of State for Wales, Cheryl Gillan in July. They used the meeting to share the views of older people on the importance of attendance allowance, and Mrs Gillan offered to raise this in turn with her colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions.

They also urged the Secretary of State to press her colleagues on the importance of the age discrimination aspects of the Equality Act. The OPCW are keen that the planned timetable for these provisions should stay on track under the new government.

They also discussed the newly established Commission on Long Term Care. Whilst the LTC Commission will only be working on a new care settlement for England, it is clear that any changes will have a knock on effect on older people in Wales. The Secretary of State said that she is also keen to ensure Wales and devolution are considered by the new commission.

Royal Welsh Agricultural Show

Ruth Marks and members of the team attended the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells on 21 July 2010. We met with many organisations and older people to discuss the challenges they are facing.

As well as meeting with older people around the Showground, Ruth had organised time slots to meet older people at the following stands:

- Farmers Union of Wales
- The Pension Service stand
- NFU Cymru stand between

Many of the issues raised by older people at the event related to rural inclusion and access to services and local transport. Another key topic, raised during Ruth's visit to the show last year as well, was the lack of pensions for farmers and their wives.

National Eisteddfod for Wales

The Commissioner and members of the team attended the National Eisteddfod for Wales on 3-4 August 2010. The day followed the same format as the Royal Welsh Show with opportunities for the Commission to meet with older people and find out their views and experiences.

We worked with the following organisations on the Maes:

- Farmers Union of Wales
- Cytun
- National Partnership Forum
- Care & Repair Cymru
- Big Lottery Fund

- The Pension Service
- Care and Repair Cymru

The Big Lottery Fund launched the AdvantAGE programme at the Eisteddfod, with an allocated £20 million for projects across Wales working with people over 50, specialising in Advocacy or Befriending services.

You can apply to the programme until 29 October 2010 and there are information events across Wales throughout June. For more information on the programme and how to apply, please email advantage@biglotteryfund.org.uk or phone 01686 611700.

Recent visits by the Commissioner and her team include:

- St Helen's Ladies Circle, Barry
- Llandovery Friendship Club
- Older People's Independence Day in Blackwood
- British Society of Gerontology Conference
- Age Cymru Elder Abuse Conference

Recent meetings with stakeholder organisations include:

- Princess Royal Trust for Carers
- Somali Progressive Association
- Older People's Strategy Coordinators
- NIACE Dysgu Cymru
- Prime Cymru
- Federation of Master Builders

Spotlight on...

In this section we will highlight an aspect of the Commission's work or views on a particular issue affecting older people. In this edition Ruth Marks writes about the issue is Partnership.

Partnership

I believe that we must work in partnership to make a positive difference in the lives of older people across Wales.

Since taking up my post in April 2008, I have met with many stakeholders and organisations working with and for older people across the country to discuss what work needs to be done and how to put this into practice. I take every opportunity to meet with older people to listen to their issues and concerns as well as their examples of good practice that need to be shared.

I would like to share just a few of the partnerships that the Commission has been involved in. This year, I attended events including Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in Builth Wells and the National Eisteddfod for Wales in Ebbw Vale. I was able to join the stands of organisations including the Farmers Union of Wales, the Big Lottery Fund and The Pension Service.

Through working with the Farmers Union, we learnt more about the issues affecting older people living in rural areas. Concerns raised with us include the lack of transport (especially in relation to travelling to hospitals or visiting relatives in care homes), problems accessing services, broadband internet access and lack of choice of domiciliary care services.

Older people have told me about rural isolation, a major issue affecting people across the country. The Big Lottery Fund has recently launched the AdvantAGE programme, making £20 million available for projects across Wales working with people over 50, specialising in advocacy and befriending services.

Older people want to live full and active lives and have access to relevant information and services. I support the aims of the programme and feel it is a step forward in improving the quality of life for older people.

The Commission has developed an ongoing partnership with The Pension Service in order to highlight the importance of older people

claiming the financial benefits they are entitled to. Claiming your entitlements can mean being able to afford a healthier lifestyle through better nutrition as well as having more money to get out and about and access facilities and activities. We have joined them at events and arranged ongoing projects to support and spread this message.

Later this year, the Church in Wales will be hosting a Symposium, in partnership with the Older People's Commission for Wales, to bring together representatives from various fields and professions affecting the lives of older people. The aim is to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced in Wales today. There will be meaningful discussions and open debate on this crucial subject.

I am grateful to everyone who has contacted me to tell me about their concerns and examples of good practice. It is through listening to and learning from older people we have been able to root all our work in what matters most to you.

The Commission is continually seeking out different organisations that work with and for older people to meet with them and share ideas of how to tackle the challenges facing Wales today. We hope that through promoting and advocating this joint working mentality, we can influence others to work together to improve the lives of older people in Wales and beyond.

Future work

Review into older people's experiences in hospitals

The Panel of Inquiry for the Review will be continuing its work throughout the summer and early autumn with a series of hospital visits and evidence gathering meetings.

Church in Wales Symposium

The Bishops of the Church in Wales, in partnership with the Older People's Commission for Wales, will host a holding a symposium in late November.

The aim of the symposium is to bring together representatives from various fields and professions affecting the lives of older people in Wales to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced today.

We hope to make the most of everybody's skills, experience and knowledge, and are grateful to all the delegates for giving their time to contribute to the debate. The symposium will stimulate many worthwhile discussions and allow open debate on this challenging and crucial subject.

1 October – International Day on Ageing

1 October is the UN's International Day on Ageing. This is a day set aside for organisations, governments and groups around the world to focus on the issues facing older people as well as to celebrate the contribution they make to society and culture as a whole.

This is also the day the Older People's Commissioner for Wales gives her Annual Report to the First Minister.

Bus Pass research

The Commission is pleased to announce the appointment of Mott MacDonald to conduct research on its behalf into the impact of the concessionary bus pass for older people in Wales. This research will take place at a variety of locations across Wales during September and October.

Information to Note

Learn with Grandma

Learn with Grandma seeks to help parents and grandparents by offering suggestions of educational and fun activities that families can do together. Over 60% of grandparents now care for their grandchildren on a regular basis. Learn with Grandma aims to give tips on how to learn and have fun together and help those with grandchildren living a long way away to build a relationship.

An activity day is being held at Margam Park, designed so that charities and organisations, can give insight into their work and how they work to help children, older people and families.

If you are interested in attending, the details are:

Margam Park
Wednesday 18 August 2010
10.00 – 4.30

For more information on Learn with Grandma, please contact Valerie Wood-Gaiger on 01550 720994 or valwoodgaiger@aol.com. Or visit the website:

<http://www.4learningenglish.com/>

The Nationwide Foundation

The Nationwide Foundation, a grant-making charity, is seeking applications for its Small Grants Programme from charities in Wales. We hope you will be able to share this message with to any charities which you think may be eligible to apply for a grant, or other voluntary agencies in Wales who might be in touch with eligible charities.

The Programme means that small grants can be applied for by registered charities working for the benefit of all older people or survivors of domestic abuse to improve their housing needs and address financial exclusion. Grants are given every two months. Grants of up to £5,000 are available to registered charities with incomes of under £500,000.

The application process is very simple and the Foundation prides itself on processing grants quickly. For details about the criteria and how to apply for funding, please visit www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk or email enquiries@nationwidefoundation.org.uk.

Or contact Jennifer Thompson (Grants Officer) on 01793 657181 or jennifere.thompson@nationwidefoundation.org.uk.

Your comments

Feedback welcome at news@olderpeoplewales.com

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