



# Commissioner's NEWSLETTER

An update from the Older People's Commissioner for Wales // Jun 2021

## **Commissioner works with Welsh Government to ensure that action is taken in response to the calls made in her Manifesto for the Senedd Election 2021**

**Following the Senedd Elections in May, the Commissioner is now working with Welsh Government Ministers and Officials to ensure that action is taken in response to the calls made in her Manifesto for the Senedd Election 2021.**

This includes ensuring that older people's experiences, and the issues and challenges that affect their lives, are understood and shape the priorities and plans currently being developed.

The Commissioner will soon be meeting with Ministers and officials, and will be re-iterating her calls for a range of action from the Welsh Government during its first year, as set out in her recently published Manifesto.

These priorities include ensuring that older people can access health services and other forms of support, supporting older people to remain in or return to employment, and taking action to improve the support available for older people experiencing abuse. The Commissioner also wants to see action during the next 12 months to support the establishment of age-friendly communities throughout Wales, and a national campaign to increase the take-up of financial entitlements and support amongst older people.

The Commissioner also ensured that opposition parties nominated older people's spokespersons, so that older people have representatives from across the political spectrum who can speak up strongly on their behalf and provide crucial scrutiny of issues that affect their lives.

Given the vital role that Senedd Committees play in capturing evidence about key issues, holding the Government to account and making the case for change, the Commissioner will be working with newly-elected Committee Chairs, particularly the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, to identify areas where investigations and inquiries are needed to deliver change and improvements for older people.

The Commissioner will also be working to re-establish the Cross-Party Group on Intergenerational Solidarity, to promote solidarity and understanding between generations and develop policy proposals that will benefit both younger and older generations, which will be hugely important as we move towards our recovery from Covid.

Alongside the work outlined above, the Commissioner will continue to monitor and scrutinise the action, plans and decisions being taken by the Welsh Government, and will continue to hold them to account and call for change on behalf of older people.

**The Commissioner's Manifesto for the 2021 Election is available to read here: [https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/21-01-26/Manifesto\\_for\\_the\\_2021\\_Senedd\\_Election.aspx](https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/21-01-26/Manifesto_for_the_2021_Senedd_Election.aspx)**

# Commissioner urges anyone facing difficulties with care home visits to contact her and share their experiences

**The Commissioner wants to hear from older people who are experiencing issues with care home visits, as well as their family and friends, following a further change in guidance to remove the ‘two designated visitor’ rule.**

As guidance has changed throughout the spring, the Commissioner has been contacted by a number of people who have faced difficulties relating to visits and raised concerns about gaps between the guidance and the reality on the ground.

With new guidance now in place, the Commissioner is urging anyone who experiences difficulties to contact her office so she can assess whether cases are isolated, or whether issues are more widespread.

This will ensure that the voices of older people living in care homes (and their families and friends) are heard, and will allow her to share any concerns with the Welsh Government and other bodies so that action be taken to support care homes to enable safe indoor visits.

Anyone who contacts the Commissioner’s office will also be offered advice and support from her casework team, to help them resolve any issues they may be facing.

The Commissioner said:

“We know how important visits from family and friends are for the well-being of older people living in care homes, and the changes in the guidance to remove restrictions on who can visit are a welcome step forward. A huge amount of work has been undertaken in care homes throughout Wales to make more visits possible, and I’d like to thank everyone involved for all they have done.

“But some issues have been raised with me, and it’s crucial that what the guidance promises is being delivered consistently on the ground.

“That’s why I want to hear from people about their experiences – not just about the issues and challenges they have faced, but also the good practice being delivered that is making a positive difference. This will allow me to determine how widespread issues relating to visits are and identify the kinds of action and support that can help to ensure that safe visits are able to go ahead.

“I will ensure that older people’s voices are heard by the Welsh Government and other bodies and will raise any concerns I have so that issues can be resolved.

“My casework team will also offer tailored advice and support to anyone who contacts me.

“So, I would urge anyone who has faced difficulties relating to visits to please get in touch with me so I can help.”

**You can contact the Commissioner’s office with any concerns by calling 03442 640 670 or 02920 445030 or email us at [ask@olderpeoplewales.com](mailto:ask@olderpeoplewales.com).**

# New website helps older people being abused to find the information, advice and support they need

In June, the Commissioner launched a new website to help older people who are being abused, or those at risk, find the information, advice and support they need.

Using the new website, older people, as well as their family and friends, can easily search for services and support in their local area that can help them if they are experiencing abuse, are concerned they might be at risk, or are concerned about someone else.

They can also find details of key national organisations and more specialised services available, which in some cases offer round the clock support.

The Commissioner developed the website in response to concerns highlighted by older people, including survivors of abuse, who said they often did not know where to turn for help and support relating to abuse, which can take many forms – such as domestic abuse, sexual violence and financial abuse – and affects thousands of older people in Wales each year.

As well as being a helpful and user-friendly resource for older people, the new website will also be useful for staff working across a range of public services and third sector organisations, who will be able to easily access information about the help and support available – both locally and nationally – that can be shared with the older people they work and engage with.

The Commissioner said:

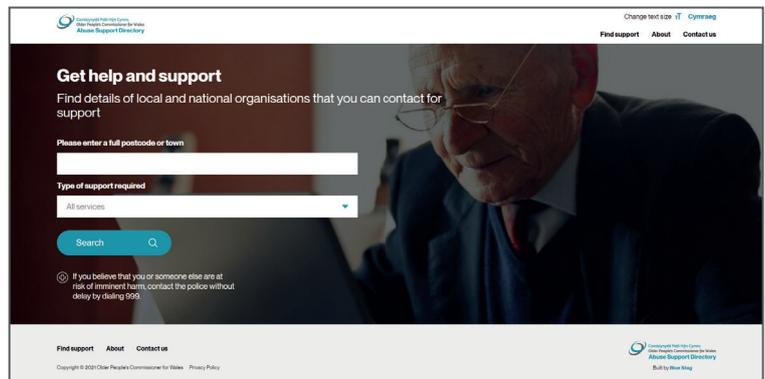
“We know that older people who are being abused, or those who might be at risk, often do not know where to go to access the help and support they might need to keep them safe and protected.

“That’s why I commissioned research to identify the services available in Wales to provide support to older people, and brought all of this together as part of a new directory of services so that older people can easily find the information they need and access help if they need it.

“As many older people do not have access to the internet, I’ve also developed a new information leaflet, which is being distributed by partners working in communities throughout Wales to ensure that older people know the signs of abuse they need to look out for and can get in touch with organisations that can provide information, advice and help if they need it.

“I will continue working in partnership with over 30 organisations as part of the Stopping Abuse Action Group I established in April last year to ensure that action is taken to tackle potential gaps in services and other issues or barriers that may prevent people from accessing support, so that older people can get the help they need, when and where they need it.”

**You can visit the Abuse Services Support Directory here:**  
<https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/abusesupport>



# Commissioner launches new leaflet providing information to older people about how to recognise abuse and where to get support

Alongside the new Abuse Support Services Directory to connect older people to the help they need, the Commissioner also launched a new leaflet that provides information to older people about how to recognise abuse and where to get support.

The leaflet was developed in partnership with key organisations working together as part of an Abuse Action Group to protect older people from abuse and ensure they can get the help and support they may need.

Over 10,000 copies of the leaflet have already been distributed throughout Wales, and will be delivered to older people on the Commissioner's behalf by a wide range of partners including local authorities, health boards, and the police, as well as through community groups, older people's forums, sheltered housing schemes and care homes.

The Commissioner said:

"As many older people do not have access to the internet, I've developed a new information leaflet alongside the Abuse Support Services Directory, which is being distributed by partners working in communities throughout Wales to ensure that older people know the signs of abuse they need to look out for and can get in touch with organisations that can provide information, advice and help if they need it.

"We're working with partners throughout Wales to distribute the leaflet to older people, and we've already sent out over 10,000 copies.

"We know that seeking help can be extremely difficult for older people experiencing abuse, and many will be feeling frightened and alone, but it's so important that people get the help they need.

If you'd like to request copies of the leaflet to share with the older people in your community, you can contact the Commissioner's Office by calling 03442 640 670 or 02920 445030 or email us at [ask@olderpeoplewales.com](mailto:ask@olderpeoplewales.com).

You can read the Commissioner's Get Help, Stay Safe leaflet here:

[https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/Get\\_Help\\_Stay\\_Safe\\_Leaflet.sflb.ashx](https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/Get_Help_Stay_Safe_Leaflet.sflb.ashx)

For further information about the work of the Action Group, visit:

<https://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/stopping-abuse/action-group.aspx>



# New data reveals an increase in the number of new Pension Credit claimants during Commissioner's campaign

The Commissioner welcomed new data in March that revealed an increase in the number of new Pension Credit claimants during her campaign to encourage older people to claim the financial support they are entitled to.

New data from the Department of Work and Pensions showed that the number of new Pension Credit claimants in Wales was 26% higher during the campaign compared with the average per quarter over the last two years and that over £10,000 a week – over £500,000 a year – was now estimated to be in the pockets of older people who otherwise would have missed out.

The Commissioner worked with Transport for Wales to distribute a leaflet encouraging people to claim Pension Credit with all renewed concessionary bus passes, which were sent to everyone in Wales over the age of 60 in 2019. With financial support from the Welsh Government, over 500,000 leaflets were delivered in total throughout Wales.

The Commissioner launched her campaign due to concerns about rising levels of poverty amongst older people in Wales – nearly 1 in 5 older people in Wales now lives in relative income poverty – and figures showing that over £214m of Pension Credit went unclaimed in Wales in 2018/19.

The Commissioner has called for further action and investment to ensure that Pension Credit reaches older people in Wales as it provides crucial financial support worth an average of £58 a week to those who are eligible and provides access to a range of other benefits, such as council tax discounts, free dental care and help with housing costs.

“I’m really pleased that my campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and encourage those who are eligible to claim appears to have led to a significant increase in the number of new claimants in Wales, which highlights the tangible benefits that action to increase the take-up of financial entitlements can have for older people.

“We know that poverty amongst older people is a growing issue and that entitlements such as Pension Credit can make a big difference to older people who are struggling financially.

“Older people in Wales are currently missing out on over £214 million a year in unclaimed Pension Credit, so it’s crucial that everyone who is entitled to claim is able to do so.

“The Welsh Government’s Claim What’s Yours campaign is a welcome step towards increasing uptake, but we need to see further action – both nationally and locally – to maximise the number older people claiming what that they are entitled to.”



As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, I have seen the positive difference that Pension Credit can make to older people's lives but every year thousands of older people in Wales miss out on millions of pounds of unclaimed financial entitlements.

If your weekly pension is less than **£167.25** (£255.25 for couples), you may be eligible for Pension Credit, which tops up your income and unlocks a range of other entitlements, such as council tax discounts, free dental treatment and help with housing costs. You may still be entitled to Pension Credit even if you own your own home or have savings and other income.

Call the Pension Credit claim line now to make sure you receive what you're entitled to!

 **0800 99 1234**

The average amount of Pension Credit received by those claiming is £58 a week, which could boost your income by as much as £3,000 a year!

It's really easy to claim Pension Credit - all it takes is a phone call. You just need your national insurance number, your bank details and information about your income and savings.

Heléna Herklots  
Older People's Commissioner for Wales



[www.olderpeoplewales.com](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com) \ 03442 640 670

# EU Settlement Scheme: Assurances needed from Home Secretary that older people will not lose their rights

## EU Settlement Scheme: Assurances needed from Home Secretary that older people will not lose their rights

In May, the Commissioner joined forces with other organisations working for older people across the UK to call on the Home Secretary to extend the deadline for the EU settlement scheme due to concerns that some older people have been unable to register for the scheme, or may be unaware of their requirement to do so, and may lose their rights to continue living in the UK.

They say that extending the deadline would enable opportunities for further publicity of the requirement to register for the scheme, more targeted promotion of the support available and increased time for older people to complete their applications.

In an open letter published in May, the group highlighted the barriers that may prevent older people from registering, including the digital-only nature of the process and difficulties accessing relevant documentation to prove eligibility, particularly for people living in care homes or those living with dementia.

In addition, they said that much of the publicity relating to the scheme has been focused on the right of individuals to work in the UK and may have not seemed relevant to older people who have retired and lived here for many decades.

They are calling on the Home Secretary to provide assurance that no older person will lose their rights, be denied treatment and other benefits, or be forcibly removed from the UK because they were unaware that they needed to register for the Scheme.

The Commissioner said:

“It’s crucial that older people who may have been unable to register for the EU settlement scheme, or those who were unaware of the need to do so, do not lose their rights and have the time and support they may need to register.

“It’s important to recognise that many of those yet to register for the scheme will be older people living in care homes, or those living with dementia, who may be particularly vulnerable. The pandemic has also limited the opportunities available to older people to find out about the scheme and the action they need to take.

“We must avoid a repeat of the shocking injustice faced by members of the Windrush Generation and ensure that all older EU, EEA and Swiss nationals are given the widest opportunity to register for the scheme and retain their rights to continue living in the UK.

“This will only be possible if the Home Secretary makes a commitment to extending the deadline and provides the assurances we are calling for.”

**If you need to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme, you can find information from the Welsh Government here:**

<https://gov.wales/preparing-wales/eu-citizens>

# 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 protects and promotes the rights of older people throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives. She provides help and support directly to older people through her casework team and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon. The Commissioner's role is underpinned by a set of unique legal powers to support her in reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The Commissioner is taking action to end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

**The Commissioner wants Wales to be the best place in the world to grow older.**

## How to contact the Commissioner:

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Email: [ask@olderpeoplewales.com](mailto:ask@olderpeoplewales.com)

Website: [www.olderpeoplewales.com](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com)

Twitter: [@talkolderpeople](https://twitter.com/talkolderpeople)

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