



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

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Rydym yn croesawu
galwadau yn Gymraeg

Adeiladau Cambrian
Sqwâr Mount Stuart
Caerdydd CF10 5FL

Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL

24 August 2020

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter and for the Committee's continuing work on this petition.

At the outset of the Coronavirus pandemic, I established an [action group](#) consisting of over 20 organisations from across Wales to work together to ensure that older people can access the support they need to keep them safe and protected during this period. There is a risk that the Coronavirus outbreak and subsequent lockdown has resulted in some older people being at greater risk of domestic (or other forms of) abuse, neglect or being targeted by criminals.

The group has published a [Covid-19 Information Pack](#) on Protecting and Safeguarding Older People, which provides a range of useful information and resources about keeping older people safe – including how to identify older people who may be at risk, and contact details for key organisations that can provide crucial help and support

There has been a high level of interest and engagement in this work from organisations and individuals across Wales who recognise that more needs to be done to tackle the abuse of older people and are committed to working collaboratively to do this. As interest has grown (there are now over 30 organisations involved) we have formalised the working arrangements, established a Steering Group and will shortly be publishing a strategy setting out the key priorities that we will be working on and what we are aiming to achieve.

We have maintained a constructive working relationship with Welsh Government throughout this work, and officials have confirmed that they are starting work on a Government action plan on abuse which will be complementary to the work of the Groups.

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

One of the key areas that the Action Group has identified for immediate action is the need to improve the availability of accommodation and refuges for older people to access if they are leaving an abusive relationship. Most services that support people fleeing abusive relationships do not meet the specific needs of older people, especially those in need of care and support. This lack of alternative accommodation and support could be forcing older people to remain in or return to abusive relationships. The group will also be commissioning work next month to map the support and services available for older people in Wales (across all types of abuse), identify good practice as well as gaps in services, and what needs to change. This will provide an important evidence base for transforming the awareness of and response to the abuse of older people. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by April 2021.

It is crucial that stopping the abuse of older people remains a key priority as we move out of lockdown and begin to return to a semblance of normality. It is also vital that, if another lockdown is required over the winter, that there is increased support for older people that are at risk of, or experiencing, abuse, to enable them to escape from abusive relationships or situations.

If I can assist the Committee's inquiries any further, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Heléna Herklots', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heléna Herklots CBE
Older People's Commissioner for Wales