



## Consultation Response

### Strategic Equality Objectives 2020 – 2024

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

February 2020

#### Introduction

Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to respond to the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' consultation on her Strategic Equality Objectives 2020 – 2024.

We are fully supportive of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' draft Equality Objectives. We have highlighted a few areas below:

**Objective 3: Ensure that the diversity of older people is reflected throughout my work to make Wales the best place in the world to grow old.**

- Work to ensure that public bodies reduce inequalities experienced by older people

#### Digital exclusion

With reference to inequalities experienced by older people, we would highlight that digital exclusion is a major challenge for older people. As more information and services are made available mainly or exclusively online, there are real risks of excluding older people. The National Survey for Wales reports that 49% of people aged 75 or over were internet users in 2018-19.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government, National Survey for Wales 2018-19 Internet use and digital skills  
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-09/internet-use-and-digital-skills-national-survey-wales-april-2018-march-2019-207.pdf>

One of the key findings of Age Cymru's Community Calculator (in preparation) was that older people told us that their voices were not heard locally, with over a third of respondents rating their community as 'poor' when asked 'How well do you think your opinion is taken on board in community decisions and plans?' Some older people felt excluded from online consultations which they were unable to access.

Older people must be supported and encouraged to acquire digital skills and get online, if they are able to. If public services / consultations are only available online, then older people should be provided with both the skills and the means to access these services, for example through libraries and/or other digital inclusion initiatives.

Services provided online need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible. Service providers must ensure that the provision of online information is not to the detriment of the provision of information in other formats.

### Built environment

All outdoor environments and public spaces across Wales should be accessible, inclusive and usable for all older people, and it is vital that the built environment enables, rather than prevents, older people taking an active part in their communities. However, many older people come up against barriers that prevent their participation in communities. Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey (in preparation) highlighted a lack of public toilets and public seating/places to rest in our communities, together with poorly maintained or obstructed pavements. There are already high levels of loneliness and social isolation amongst older people in Wales and an inaccessible built environment that deters people from taking part in community life can contribute to this.

- Work to ensure that all older people are empowered to know their rights and are able to challenge discrimination in all its forms

We believe that it is essential that older people are aware of their rights and are able to exercise them, and we welcome the Older People's Commissioner's work in empowering older people to know their rights and being able to challenge discrimination in all its forms.

- Work to ensure that the impact of ageism upon older people and society is understood

Older people are equal members of society and should not be subjected to ageist attitudes, stereotyping or conduct. However, negative attitudes towards older people and ageing are pervasive in our society. In common with most other forms of discrimination, ageism is based on inaccurate stereotypes. These ageist attitudes are all too often reflected and amplified by the media. The effect of ageism is that older people frequently experience discriminatory treatment.

We believe that the media industry must be challenged to replace the stereotyping of older people as passive and dependent with positive messages that reflect the diversity of the older population and recognise the contribution they make both in economic and social terms including as workers, volunteers and carers. We believe that the use of ageist language in the media must be eradicated.

- Work to ensure that older people do not face discrimination in the workplace

Age discrimination in employment remains widespread despite the introduction of the Equality Act 2010. We believe that everyone should be able to remain in work as long as they desire and are capable of doing so, and no-one should be disadvantaged because of their age.

- Work to ensure that support for people experiencing abuse reflects the needs of older people in all their diversity

This point is very welcome, and it seems to cover a range of different things in the way it is phrased, including domestic and all forms of abuse, the need for support which could include advocacy as well as many other support systems. The only thing that we would suggest adding is: 'Work to ensure that support for people experiencing abuse reflects the needs **and rights** of older people in all their diversity.'

- Work to ensure that health and social care meets the needs of a diverse range of older people
- Scrutinise public bodies and hold to account those responsible for instances of age discrimination

As stated above, we believe that the use of ageist language in the media must be eradicated.

We hope that these comments are useful and would be happy to provide more information if required.