



# A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons in Ireland

Updated 2024

*Age Action is Ireland's leading advocacy organisation promoting equality for all of us as we age*

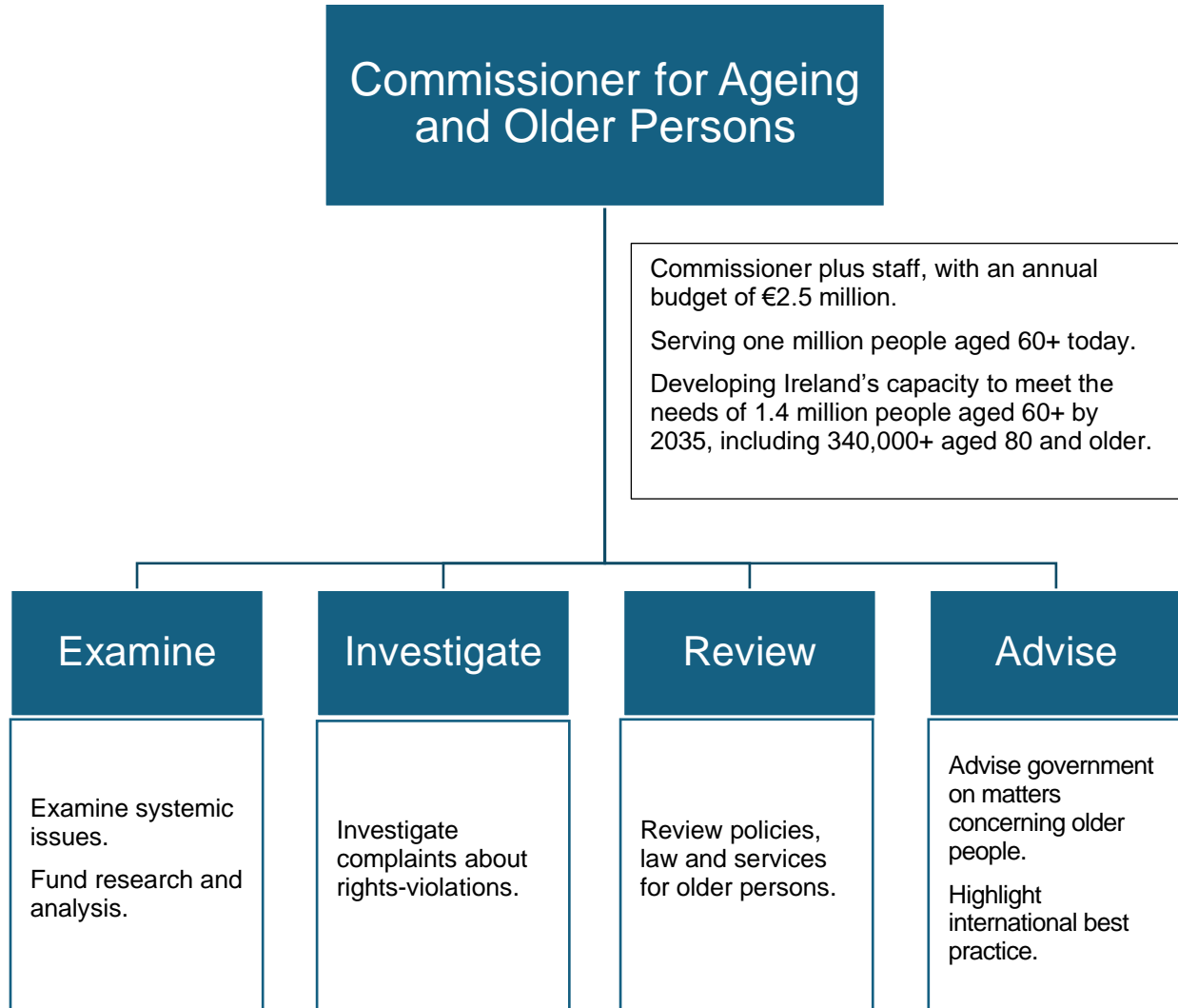


Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



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## **Age Action**

Age Action is the leading advocacy organisation on ageing and older people in Ireland. Age Action advocates for a society that enables all older people to participate and to live full, independent lives, based on the realisation of rights and equality, recognising the diversity of experience and situation. Our mission is to achieve fundamental change in the lives of all older people by eliminating age discrimination, promoting positive ageing, and securing the right for all of us to comprehensive and high-quality services.

## Summary

Establishing a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons, with a supporting legal framework and an independent budget, would ensure that we are all treated fairly and with dignity in older age. It would promote and protect the rights and interests of older persons at a systematic and an individual level.

Irish policies and services need to be responsive to our dynamic society. Our current system is not suited to the new reality of Irish demographics or the growing population and diversity of older persons. The people Age Action talks to often feel invisible to the state, overlooked in policy decisions, and frustrated by the lack of support available to navigate bureaucratic systems. The Commissioner has the potential to overcome all these problems. As one person asked us, “Who do we go to? We have to go to somebody.”

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would serve as crucial infrastructure to enable a holistic, forward-looking, and rights-based approach to ageing policy and services. It would be an independent voice to Government on the rights of all of us as we age, providing evidence and improving efficiency and effectiveness.

A Commissioner would support existing legislation, such as the Equality Acts, and cooperate with and enhance the powers of public bodies, such as the Ombudsman. It would complement its counterpart in Northern Ireland and facilitate parity and collaboration across our border. It would fill existing gaps, particularly for issues that are complex, cross-sectoral, long-term or below the level of an immediate risk of harm but which still impact the lives of older persons. In common with other jurisdictions, a Commissioner would not duplicate the functions of other organisations.

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would have multiple functions.

- **Examine** systemic issues affecting older people, including by funding research and analysis to fill gaps where there is inadequate evidence to inform public policy.
- **Investigate** complaints from older persons where their rights have been violated.
- **Review** the adequacy of policy, legislation and services affecting older persons.
- **Advise** Government on matters concerning older people, including by reference to international best practice.

Age Action is renewing its call for Ireland to establish a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons that can perform these functions effectively and independently. This proposal is supported by wider civil society. Based on comparison with similar bodies, including the existing Commissioners in Wales and Northern Ireland, an office of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons could be established on an annual budget of €2.5 million.

## Introduction

This paper renews Age Action’s proposal for Ireland to establish a Commission for Ageing and Older Persons. We sought this in advance of the 2020 general election and published a proposal in 2022.<sup>1</sup> This proposal is supported by wider civil society.<sup>2</sup>

One of Age Action’s core asks of political parties in advance of the next general election is to commit to the establishment of an independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons.

## Role and Functions

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons is necessary to address issues of rights or discrimination that arise systemically across a wide range of Government responsibilities, rather than a singular policy problem.

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- **Review** the adequacy of policy, legislation and services affecting older persons.
- **Advise** Government on matters concerning older people, including by reference to international best practice.

## Independent Voice Against Ageism

The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) seminal Global Report on Ageism defines ageism as the use of age “to categorize and divide people in ways that lead to harm, disadvantage and injustice and erode solidarity across generations.”<sup>3</sup> It can manifest in institutional settings and interpersonal dynamics or be self-directed.<sup>4</sup>

The UN and WHO identify ageism as a global concern. In the *Global Report on Ageism*, published to mark the start of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, the WHO linked ageism to poorer physical and mental health, social isolation, and earlier death. Polling conducted by Age Action on ageist attitudes in Irish society confirm that it is also prevalent here, demonstrating the relevance of the WHO’s findings.<sup>5</sup>

A chief task of the Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would be to raise public awareness of ageism, to take steps to break down negative or demeaning stereotypes of ageing and older persons, and to make recommendations regarding institutional policies and practices that perpetuate ageism.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/commissioner\\_for\\_ageing\\_and\\_older\\_persons\\_position\\_paper\\_june\\_2022\\_2.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/commissioner_for_ageing_and_older_persons_position_paper_june_2022_2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, [https://www.thirdageireland.ie/assets/site/files/default/AASNGOs\\_Telling\\_It\\_Like\\_It\\_Is\\_Combatting\\_Ageism.PDF](https://www.thirdageireland.ie/assets/site/files/default/AASNGOs_Telling_It_Like_It_Is_Combatting_Ageism.PDF)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/combating-ageism/global-report-on-ageism>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/combating-ageism/global-report-on-ageism>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/are\\_we\\_ageist\\_poll\\_findings\\_december\\_2022.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/are_we_ageist_poll_findings_december_2022.pdf)

## Best Practice

As outlined in more detail below, Commissioners in other jurisdictions have established themselves as centres for best practice in promoting and protecting the rights and interests of older persons. They have done this through public information campaigns, the provision of toolkits, casework assistance, engagement with government departments and public authorities, issuing of formal guidance, and conducting research.

## All-of-Government Remit

Part of the challenge for achieving effective ageing policies is that many of the issues older persons face are cross-departmental. We need holistic, joined up approaches to guarantee the success of policies pertaining to older people. The Government has recognized the requirement for partnerships between Government departments and all sectors of society in the context of health promotion. The *Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan* provides a roadmap built on a cross-society approach “involving Government Departments, local authorities, public bodies, schools and education institutions, businesses and employers, sports, cultural, creative and voluntary groups, communities, families and individuals.”<sup>6</sup>

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would have a remit across all the diverse issues relating to older age. It would be perfectly placed to draw together the implications of different policies and services in terms of their impact on current and future older persons. This would in part be accomplished through appropriately regular contact with various actors across the state.

## Research and Analysis

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would commission research and analysis in areas where there is a need for greater evidence to inform public policy relating to older people. These areas include:

- the need to examine COVID-19 response measures in nursing homes, and their impact on the rights and interests of older residents, to learn lessons and build trust and confidence in the sector;
- a lack of comprehensive action, implementation, or resourcing of the National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013, even following attention drawn to it with the unanimous recommendation of the 2017 Citizens Assembly that the Government urgently prioritise the implementation of the 2013 Strategy;
- ongoing lack of sustainable funding for health and pension systems, and continued reliance on tax receipts to fund spending overruns such as the ongoing overruns in health spending averaging €500 million annually in recent years despite warnings by the Fiscal Advisory Council;<sup>7</sup> and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/441c8-healthy-ireland-strategic-action-plan-2021-2025/>

<sup>7</sup> The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council has noted that this could undermine Government’s ability to implement policy (2015) and undermine the sustainability of public finances (2019) as we move to a greater percentage of the population aged over 65. The National Risk Assessment has also noted the financial risks associated with health and pensions since 2017. See Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (2019). *Fiscal Assessment Report*. Available at <https://www.fiscalcouncil.ie>

- increasing exclusion of those not using the Internet. Without adequate representation of those not online, it has effectively resulted in a sizeable proportion of the older population being prevented from participating on matters related to public policy, retaining control over their affairs, accessing cheaper goods or services, or having access to basic or improved public services such as driver licencing appointments or telehealth healthcare options.

### **Engagement with Older Persons**

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would have regular and meaningful contact with older persons. This would inform all aspects of its work, such as determining its research areas and developing best practice guidelines. This contact would occur in myriad ways, including contact led by older persons themselves, to whom the Commissioner should be readily accessible. The Commissioner should engage with diverse groups of older persons, including the harder to reach members of our ageing population.

As well as improving the quality and impact of the Commissioner's work, this would also strengthen the public's trust in the office and afford older persons greater peace of mind. In Age Action's 2022 pre-budget survey of older persons, 92.3% agreed with the proposal of establishing a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons, including two-thirds (65.7%) who strongly agreed. In Wales, the establishment of the Older People's Commissioner partly resulted from a groundswell of grassroots support and continues to be trusted by and popular among Welsh older persons.

### **Investigation of Complaints**

A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would be empowered to investigate complaints raised by older persons when they are disadvantaged or treated unfairly by a public body. In our advocacy and engagement with older persons in Ireland, Age Action has identified a pronounced need for a service to support older persons in seeking remedies.

The Ombudsman delivers a vital service to the people of Ireland in investigating complaints against public bodies. Yet in going through complaint procedures, older persons may have specific needs or preferences that a specialized body like the Commissioner is better equipped to fulfil. These needs could include to remain offline in engagement with state actors or to be assisted in their decision-making by parties authorised under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Acts. The Commissioner would also differ from other authorities in focusing on quality of life and rights issues, rather than stricter matters of regulatory compliance.

The Welsh and Northern Irish Older People's Commissioners also have the capacity to investigate complaints raised by the public, despite the simultaneous existence of an ombudsman tasked with responding to complaints about public services. Their governments recognized that a more tailored approach can be required for older persons. Similarly, the Ombudsman for Children, which exists in Ireland alongside the Ombudsman, has legal powers to investigate complaints raised by or on behalf of children. The Act establishing the Ombudsman for Children amended the Ombudsman Act 1980 so that the Ombudsman did not have authority to investigate complaints that

came under the remit of the Ombudsman for Children.<sup>8</sup> A similar mechanism could be included in legislation establishing the Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons.

## The Consequences of the Absence of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons

There is a gap in the institutions of the state when it comes to ageing and older persons, the consequences of which demonstrate the need for the Commission. These consequences are only going to become more urgent and pronounced as our population ages.

Most of the 717,000 people aged 66+ in Ireland do not have access to representative bodies or state resolution mechanisms that are available to employees or business owners. They often feel excluded by the system and have shared with Age Action that, “There’s a lack of people to help you with something” and “We never seem to find out when something is happening.”

A Commissioner would address this gap by bringing representation and transparency to issues relevant to older people. A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons could also support the programme for government’s pledge to make Ireland age-friendly, not least by providing an authoritative voice for the rights and interests of older persons.

The UN and other international organisations identify older persons as a group that deserve special recognition. The Developmental Welfare State report by NESC also recognised older persons as having distinct needs that ought to be prioritized.<sup>9</sup>

The Constitution of Ireland recognises the state’s duty to safeguard the interests of people when they reach old age or if they are affected by disability. Age discrimination has been largely prohibited for decades by the Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts. Yet there is a lack of infrastructure to monitor whether the rights of older persons are respected, protected, and fulfilled. While there has been an Ombudsman for Children since 2004 alongside a full Government Minister for Children and Youth Affairs since 2011, there is no equivalent independent authority tasked with promoting the rights and interests of older persons.

### An Ageing Population

There are already over one million people aged 60 or older in Ireland, representing one in four adults. This number is projected to reach 1.4 million by 2035, and the number aged over 80 will double to 340,000.<sup>10</sup> Life expectancy at birth is now an average of 79.6 years for men and 83.4 years for women. For those who reach age 65, life expectancy is on average 83.3 years for men and 86 years for women.<sup>11</sup> The proportion of the population aged 65 or older is expected to reach around a quarter (25%) by 2050. Not only are older persons a substantial portion of our population, but there is great diversity among them. The WHO states that a considerable proportion of the diversity in older age is due to the cumulative impact of inequities across the life course, arising

<sup>8</sup> Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002, S12.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nesc.ie/publications/the-developmental-welfare-state/>

<sup>10</sup> CSO population projections, <https://data.cso.ie/table/PEB07>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/ltv/irishlifetablesno172015-2017/>



from people's physical and social environments and the impact of these environments on their opportunities and health behaviour.<sup>12</sup>

The state has an obligation to guarantee our rights to security, health, and overall dignity in older age. Older persons have long had their rights inadequately protected and overlooked in national policies and programmes. This will create an increasing number of problems in our changing society if we allow it to continue. Establishing the Commissioner in the face of such changes will strengthen our capacity to prepare for the future and ensure that Ireland is a better place to live and grow old for everyone.

## Issues Facing Older Persons

Older persons in Ireland face many challenges, often resulting from oversights in planning for the needs of an ageing population.

- While there was reduction in 2023, poverty and deprivation among older persons rose significantly in the period 2020-2022 due to the non-indexation of the state pension, and the relatively large number of older persons whose incomes are just above the poverty threshold.<sup>13</sup> Nearly a third (30%) of older persons rely on the Department of Social Protection for over 90% of their income.<sup>14</sup>
- There were 119 people aged over 65 living in emergency homeless accommodation in February 2018, which represented an increase of 40% in just two years, including up to ten older persons who are vulnerable to sleeping rough.<sup>29</sup>
- As of May 2021, there were 114 men aged 65-79 in prison, with varying sentence lengths, including 26 sentences for 10+ years and 14 sentenced for life. There are also five men aged 80+, two of whom are jailed for life. The prison system is not set up to provide the care or support older persons may need if they remain imprisoned in advanced older age.
- The experience of COVID-19 demonstrated how ageism can shape public policy to the detriment of older people. The equality and human rights impacts of COVID-19 have been significant and felt disproportionately by older persons.<sup>15</sup>
- Home care in Ireland is characterised by long waiting lists and under-staffing, as well as the potential for abuse, neglect, or the delivery of inappropriate or inadequate services. As the government moves to develop a regulated system of home care which will undoubtedly radically change the sector, there will be a need for an independent expert who can monitor and inform the situation and ensure that the rights and interests of older care recipients are protected.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2023/poverty/>

<sup>14</sup> Murphy M A and O'Connor N (2023) *Spotlight on Income in Older Age*.

[https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/published\\_age\\_action\\_spotlight\\_on\\_income\\_in\\_older\\_age.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/published_age_action_spotlight_on_income_in_older_age.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Human Rights Commission (22 July 2020) *Submission to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee, Inquiry COVID-19*. Available at <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2063/covid-19-ehrc-submission.pdf>

- Nearly 50% of women aged 65+ in rural areas, and around 28% of men, say they have “unmet” transport needs. 70% of older persons without a driving licence are women. More than half of all women aged 75 or older do not have a driving licence.<sup>16</sup> Lack of transport often leads to withdrawal from social activities, with consequences for older persons’ wellbeing and health.
- Age Action estimate that two-thirds of older persons (65%) are digitally excluded. This is either because they are not using the internet or because they lack the digital devices and/or necessary skills to navigate the internet safely. This limits their ability to access public services online.<sup>17</sup>

The unique and compounding challenges faced by older people in Ireland demonstrate the need for a Commissioner to fill gaps in ageing policy.

### **Impact of Commissioners Abroad**

The work of the Welsh and Northern Irish Older People’s Commissioners has impacted diverse areas of policy and practice.

The Commission in Northern Ireland:

- intervened to resolve situations on behalf of individual older persons, such as obtaining housing adaptations for people with disabilities,<sup>18</sup> and deals with a growing number of complex cases involving older persons (111 cases in the last three years), each of which involves dealing with multiple agencies across government departments;
- provided advice to government and information to older persons during the pandemic on a range of issues including COVID-19 risks for older people, care homes, vaccinations, and accurate and transparent reporting of outbreaks and deaths of care home residents;
- influenced the Policing Plan and led to it including targets specifically relating to older people for the first time;<sup>19</sup>
- ran a campaign to support older persons to check that they were receiving the benefits to which they were entitled, resulting in up to 66% of older persons saying that they felt reassured and encouraged to request a benefits check because of the Commissioner’s involvement;<sup>20</sup>
- met with and influenced political parties to include positive language around ageing and older persons in their election materials;<sup>21</sup> and
- campaigned for adult safeguarding legislation including providing the government with pre-legislative advice, culminating in an assurance by the Health Minister that such a Bill will be introduced.<sup>22</sup>

In Wales, the Commissioner:

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<sup>16</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/reframing\\_ageing\\_state\\_of\\_ageing\\_in\\_ireland\\_2022\\_published.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/reframing_ageing_state_of_ageing_in_ireland_2022_published.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital\\_inclusion\\_and\\_an\\_ageing\\_population.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital_inclusion_and_an_ageing_population.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.copni.org/media/1120/the-commissioners-report.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.copni.org/media/1120/the-commissioners-report.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.copni.org/media/1120/the-commissioners-report.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.copni.org/media/1120/the-commissioners-report.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.copni.org/media/1686/copni-annual-report-2019-2020.pdf>

- established the Action Group on Abuse in 2020 which served as the basis for the National Action Plan on Prevention of Abuse of Older People launched by the Welsh Government, the first of its kind in the UK;<sup>23</sup>
- informed reports by Government Committees on many subjects, including mental health inequalities and participation in sport;<sup>24</sup>
- conducted the largest ever Welsh review of older persons' quality of life in care homes, with the recommendations leading to a range of improvements in that sector;<sup>25</sup>
- influenced the development of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2022-2026, including the revision of the draft strategy to include a sub-group/work stream on the needs of older people and children and young people;<sup>26</sup>
- developed guidance for Local Authorities and Health Boards on ensuring access to information and services in a digital age, and regularly shares examples of good practice adopted on foot of this guidance;<sup>27</sup> and
- made recommendations which were incorporated into the Welsh LGBTQ+ Action Plan.<sup>28</sup>

No office currently exists within the Irish state that is well suited to making these kinds of interventions.

## Creating a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons

It is time to respond to the gaps and risks and to establish a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons. We need independent advocacy and oversight to maintain our rights and dignity as we age.

### Legal Form

The Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons should be established under an enabling act that guarantees its full independence and describes its purpose and functions. Legislation could be developed modelled on the examples provided by Wales and Northern Ireland.

### Budget

The Commissioners for older persons in Wales and Northern Ireland operated on budgets of €1.9 million and €1.1 million respectively, for populations of 669,000 people

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<sup>23</sup> [https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-08/consultation-document\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-08/consultation-document_0.pdf)

<sup>24</sup>

[https://olderpeople.wales/library/Consultation\\_Responses/Consultation\\_Responses\\_2022/220318\\_Participation\\_in\\_Sport\\_in\\_Disadvantaged\\_Areas.pdf](https://olderpeople.wales/library/Consultation_Responses/Consultation_Responses_2022/220318_Participation_in_Sport_in_Disadvantaged_Areas.pdf) <https://senedd.wales/media/ni2fnoub/cr-ld15305-e.pdf> <https://senedd.wales/media/1uchw5w1/cr-ld15568-e.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> [https://olderpeople.wales/library/chrfollowupreport/A\\_Place\\_to\\_Call\\_Home\\_-\\_Impact\\_Analysis.pdf](https://olderpeople.wales/library/chrfollowupreport/A_Place_to_Call_Home_-_Impact_Analysis.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-strategy-2022-2026.html>

[https://olderpeople.wales/library/Consultation\\_Responses/Consultation\\_Responses\\_2022/OPCW\\_VAWDSAV\\_Response\\_220128\\_final.pdf](https://olderpeople.wales/library/Consultation_Responses/Consultation_Responses_2022/OPCW_VAWDSAV_Response_220128_final.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://olderpeople.wales/resource/ensuring-access-to-information-and-services-in-a-digital-age-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-health-boards/> and <https://olderpeople.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Section-12-Guidance-Summary-of-responses.pdf> and <https://olderpeople.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Ensuring-Access-to-Information-and-Services-in-a-Digital-Age-Good-Practice-Examples.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/lgbtq-action-plan-wales> <https://olderpeople.wales/news/response-to-publication-of-welsh-governments-lgbtq-action-plan/>

aged 65+ in Wales and 315,000 people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, compared to around 766,000 people aged 65 or older in Ireland.

In 2020, the Irish Ombudsman for Children operated with a budget of €2.9 million, which provided the necessary staff and resources to actively promote the rights of around one million children and young people.

Based on these comparisons, the state could establish a substantive and professional office of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons on an annual budget of €2.5 million.

### **Learning from Other Jurisdictions**

We can learn from other jurisdictions (especially the experience in Wales and Northern Ireland) in establishing the roles and responsibilities of a Commissioner. The Tables in the Appendix show fully the remit and scope of Commissioners in other jurisdictions. Commissioners often:

- examine systemic issues affecting older people;
- review the adequacy of policy, legislation and services affecting older people;
- undertake best practice research and consultation;
- provide advice and recommendations to Government on matters concerning older people;
- champion the future proofing of policy, legislation, and practice to support responsive policy planning;
- promote the social, economic, and cultural contribution of older persons and challenge discriminatory attitudes; and
- investigate complaints from individual older persons about unfair treatment.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales has reported extensively on her work. It includes:

- helping older persons to challenge the decision-making and practice of public bodies and services, and to navigate complex systems in distressing circumstances;
- campaigns, toolkits, and training to address and reduce ageism and discrimination;
- practical resources and toolkits to help older persons make their voices heard, to engage with local government and to influence and challenge decisions;
- formal guidance to local authorities on wellbeing plans and to the police on understanding how to identify cases of neglect;
- reviewing and reporting to government on health boards' implementation of safeguarding legislation; and
- numerous meetings and briefings to Ministers and Parliament on debates affecting older people, expert responses to relevant government consultations, influencing legislation, and membership of boards and panels.

## Learning from International Guidance

Recently, momentum has been building towards an international convention on the rights of older persons and against age discrimination.<sup>29</sup> A Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons would ensure that infrastructure is already available in Ireland to ensure that the everyone's rights can be realised as we age. As a member of the UN Security Council and an active supporter of international human rights norms in its foreign policy, Ireland should be at the forefront of championing greater international recognition of the human rights of older persons.

2022 marked 20 years since the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Political Declaration of the Second World Assembly on Ageing (April 2002),<sup>30</sup> where Ireland, as a UN member state, committed to “recognise that persons, as they age, should enjoy a life of fulfilment, health, security and active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their societies.” Ireland also endorsed the commitment to “enhance the recognition of the dignity of older persons and to eliminate all forms of neglect, abuse and violence.”

The existence of a Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland contributes to the equality and rights envisioned under the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, and the establishment of a similar office in Ireland would strengthen the equality and rights agenda of our shared island. It would also contribute to the current UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-30)<sup>31</sup> and a tangible response to the UN Global Campaign Against Ageism.<sup>32</sup> Supporting these initiatives through establishing a Commissioner would reaffirm Ireland's commitment to the global equality and rights agenda at both the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

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<sup>29</sup> *Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention*, A resource for promoting dialogue on creating a new UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. See

[http://www.inpea.net/images/Strengthening\\_Rights\\_low\\_res\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.inpea.net/images/Strengthening_Rights_low_res_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/madrid-plan-of-action-and-its-implementation.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-campaign-to-combat-ageism-toolkit>

## Appendix: The Remit and Scope of Commissioners in Other Jurisdictions

Location	Northern Ireland	Wales	Scotland	England	Australia (NSW)
Date est.	2011	2006	Draft Bill 2006	N/A	2019
Name	Commissioner for Older People	Commissioner for Older People	<i>Commissioner for Older People Bill 2006 (not enacted)</i>  <i>2018/19 Campaign for Commissioner for Ageing</i>	<i>2013 Proposed Older People's Commissioner;</i> <i>2019 Campaign for Commissioner for Ageing</i>	Ageing and Disability Commissioner
<b>Scope</b>					
Safeguard interests	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advise government on matters concerning older people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promote awareness	✓	✓	✓		✓
Encourage best practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Review adequacy of laws	✓	✓	✓		✓
Review adequacy of services	✓		✓		✓
Elimination of discrimination	✓	✓		✓	
Promote participation and positive attitudes	✓		✓	✓	
Complement existing regulatory and safeguarding bodies		✓		✓	✓
Actively engage with older people	✓	✓	✓		
Promote opportunities	✓	✓			
Champion future proofing				✓	

Location	Northern Ireland	Wales	Scotland	England	Australia (NSW)
<b>Functions</b>					
Investigations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Research	✓	✓	✓		
Enter premises other than private homes	✓	✓			✓
Legal proceedings	✓	✓			
Request response to recommendations	✓	✓			
Review advocacy, whistleblowing, and complaints arrangements	✓	✓			