



Age Matters

The quarterly newsletter
from Age Cymru

Autumn Edition 2021

www.agecymru.org.uk

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age Cymru
Creating an age friendly Wales

Funding our services to meet an increasing demand will be one of our key challenges

By Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive, September 2021



This year, the months have passed by quickly and autumn is already upon us. We're delighted that over the summer our physical activity programmes have been getting back into communities across Wales. It's great to hear that people have been able to enjoy our Walking, Nordic Walking, Tai Chi and LIFT sessions where they have become available. These sort of activities, which can help you improve your strength, form some of the key messages in our Falls Awareness Campaign that you can read more on p9.

You can also find out how you can get involved with the Age Cymru Big Step fundraising campaign. Over the last year our support has been in more demand than ever. Call numbers to Age Cymru Advice have been at record levels and our friendship services grow month on month. To help make sure we continue to be here for the older people that need us, we're encouraging people to support us by counting steps in October and working with us to raise the funds to deliver our vital services. Read on to find out how to get involved.

To continue the activity theme, in this issue you can find out about some wonderful volunteering opportunities. We're recruiting volunteer advocates in communities across Wales to help people put forward their views, wishes and feelings and we're also recruiting volunteers to support Sporting Memories. Without our volunteers we couldn't reach the thousands of people every month that we do, and we're so grateful for the difference they make.

Covid-19 continues to be the backdrop for all of our work and we know that many people will be reassured by the recent news that Covid Boosters will be provided to over 50s in the coming months. In our next issue of Age Matters we will focus on the things we can all do to keep well this winter and thinking about how we can Spread the Warmth.

Until then, stay safe.



The Big Step - Age Cymru launches its fundraising drive for October

This October, Age Cymru is launching its Big Step fundraising initiative. We're inviting supporters to walk, run, or cycle any part of Wales and help the Charity complete the 1,047-mile circumference of the country. As this is a virtual event people can accrue their steps or miles anywhere from the Wales Coastal Path and Offa's Dyke Trail, to a back garden or even a treadmill. The challenge can be as big or as small as people choose.

Registered participants will simply record their step totals or mileage and submit them to Age Cymru to help us achieve our two million steps target. Of course, as this is a fundraising event, we're encouraging supporters to seek sponsorship to help us deliver core advice and friendship services.

Last year Age Cymru Advice dealt with more than 25,000 enquiries on a wide range of issues such as money and benefits, care,

and rights. Money can be tight as more than 120,000 older people in Wales currently live in poverty, while it's estimated that some 80,000 households in Wales that are eligible for Pension Credit are not claiming it.

Loneliness is also a major issue for older people with 220,000 saying they have felt lonely during later life, more than 100,000 saying they speak to three or fewer people a week, while 330,000 claim a few minutes of conversation would make a huge difference to their week. Last year the Charity's staff and volunteers made thousands of friendship calls to older people across Wales.

To download a fundraising pack and further details about The Big Step initiative, including ideas on walks and special landmarks to look out for, please visit www.agecymru.org.uk/thebigstep

Volunteers with a love of sport needed for project supporting older adults

Age Cymru and the charity Sporting Memories are urging sports lovers to step forward and volunteer for a unique project linking older people with their sporting memories by getting together online or in person.

Sporting Memories supports older adults who are living with conditions such as dementia, depression or loneliness. By bringing adults together to talk about and remember sport, Sporting Memories re-ignites people's positive memories and encourages companionship and gentle exercise that in

turn can help improve the physical and mental well-being of participants.

Volunteers facilitate a group around a table for a cuppa and a chat at a local community venue. When Sporting Memories' clubs were suspended due to the pandemic, sessions moved online. However, with restrictions lifting, face-to-face clubs are gradually re-opening.

The in-person and online sessions provide a great source of support for carers. And while carers are welcome to stay, they often use the opportunity to go for a coffee, shop, socialise or share stories with the other carers.

For more information about Sporting Memories and their work, visit:

www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com

To find out more about these volunteering opportunities please call Zoe Newland on 029 2943 1555.

An estimated £175m in benefits goes unclaimed by older people in Wales each year

Age Cymru estimates that approximately £175m of state benefits goes unclaimed each year amongst the over 60s in Wales, money that could lift thousands out of poverty and enable many to live a more independent and dignified later life.

There are many benefits available to older people that could help with housing costs, care needs or general day-to-day living expenses. We've recently launched our free guide *More money in your pocket* that covers State Pension, Pension Credit, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Housing Benefit and help with heating costs.

The guide looks at the range of financial support available to help people with their wellbeing, including Attendance Allowance if

you need help to stay independent at home due to an illness or disability and Carer's Allowance if you look after someone. The guide also covers help with health costs such as dental treatment, glasses or contact lenses and certain travel costs to receive NHS treatment. Age Cymru's chief executive Victoria Lloyd says: "I would urge anyone over 60 to think about what benefits may be available. These payments are designed to help older people meet the costs of later life. It's really important that people are able to claim the funds that are rightfully theirs, funds that could make a real difference. Making a claim is not as difficult as you may think and there is help out there should you need it."

To download a copy of the guide visit:

www.agecymru.org.uk/moneyguides

To order a paper copy of the guide, or to have a chat about claiming benefit entitlements call Age Cymru Advice, on 0300 303 44 98. Our bilingual advice line is open between 9am and 4pm, Monday – Friday.



Artists enable care home residents to voice their experiences of the pandemic

A group of artists working with Age Cymru are holding conversations with care home residents across Wales as part of a project to explore and capture how this group of older people experienced the pandemic and what they look forward to the most as restrictions begin to ease.

The project, called Tell Me More, encourages residents to talk about what it was like to live in a care home during lockdown.

The artists contact residents through Zoom and use open conversations to gather the residents' thoughts, wishes and experiences and crucially give them the opportunity to voice their experiences of lockdown and the pandemic.

As the conversations are taking place, the artists create a portrait of the resident and send it to them as a thank you in recognition of their participation.

For our pilot, animation software was applied to the portraits and the recorded conversations to produce a unique and creative method of capturing residents' voices.

With additional funding from Welsh Government, Age Cymru is taking the project to more care homes across Wales so it can capture the voices of 100 residents by December 2021.

Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan says: "Care Home residents have been some of the most affected by the pandemic. After being isolated from family and friends, it is fantastic that we have been able to fund a project that gives care homes residents a voice and brings their experience to life. It is vital we hear these stories as we look to move forward and recover from the pandemic."

Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/tellmemore for more information.



Older people must have access to cash, says Age Cymru

Following a spate of reports throughout the summer about banks closing many of their high street branches, Age Cymru is urging governments at all levels and the banking sector to view access to cash in the same way as we do with access to clean water, electricity, postal services, and broadband. In other words access to cash is essential to run our daily lives.

The government in Westminster opened a consultation in the summer on new legislation that it said will 'protect people's ability to access the notes and coins they need for their daily lives'. Ideally, this should mean that businesses and people will be able to access cash withdrawal and depositing facilities within reasonable travel distances. It should also mean that our communities will uphold the acceptance of cash for everyday goods and services.

Over the next six months Age Cymru and its partners Age UK, Age Scotland and Age NI will be working with the government

at Westminster, the banking industry, and consumer groups to help protect access to and acceptance of cash as part of the wider Access to Cash Action Group.

We will state the case that bank closures across Wales has arguably affected older people more than other age groups as more than half of the over 75s in Wales don't have access to the internet and fewer still access internet banking.

We'll emphasise that many older people living on limited budgets prefer to use cash as they find it easier to budget their weekly finances as well as pay for services such as gardening and window cleaning. And we'll highlight the vital role that bank branches play for older people in terms of financial inclusion and as a source of information and security for those worried about fraud and scams.

Finally, we'll emphasise that bank branch closures have made it more difficult for shops and businesses to operate on local high streets, places where many older people find it easier to visit as opposed to out-of-town facilities.

If access to cash has become an issue in your community please share your story with us. Email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk or telephone 029 2043 1555.

Swansea University and Age Cymru to host consultation events on landline telephone switchover

In May 2025, the landline telephone system in the UK will switch from analogue to an internet-based system. Following the switchover, it will not be possible to make a telephone call via a landline with no internet connection.

Age Cymru and Swansea University's Awen Institute, which helps develop innovation

for older people, are working together to investigate how this change might affect older adults. A series of online consultation events with older people, academics, and other stakeholders will explore the issues that might arise and what solutions may be required.

If you would like to take part in one of the online events please email martin.hyde@swansea.ac.uk. If you can't make any of the meetings you may still email Dr Martyn Hyde with your views using the same email address.

Details for the three events are as follows:

Thursday 18 November 2021 - 10am to 12pm

Tuesday 7 December 2021 - 2pm – 4pm

Wednesday 19 January 2022 - 10am – 12pm

Volunteers needed to become Independent Volunteer Advocates



Ella Turner

Age Cymru's HOPE project is recruiting anyone over the age of 18 years old to become Independent Volunteer Advocates to help support people (aged 50+) and carers in their local communities.

The HOPE project supports older people to have their views, wishes and feelings listened to; get the right support when they need it; understand all their options and choices; access services such as health, housing and benefits; and communicate with companies such as utilities, banks, insurance providers and other professionals.

Louise Hughes who oversees the HOPE project says: "Volunteers can use their professional or lived experiences to help others and see first-hand the difference you make to someone's life."

This is what some of the beneficiaries told us: "The volunteer has been an angel, I am very grateful to everybody at Age Cymru, the staff are angels. I didn't have to worry because I had the volunteer supporting me and she was my rock."

"I was very anxious about the situation with my energy supplier and didn't know where to start. I have enjoyed our conversations and I feel happier now. "

"I was going back and forth and nothing was happening, then I spoke to the volunteer who was really helpful and put my mind at rest. I'm not longer worried about whether I'm going to be able to wake up and have a

hot shower or bath or not”

“I think you’re doing a really good job and not many people know about you so I am going to put word out”

Ella Turner, an Independent Volunteer Advocate based in Cardiff says: “This opportunity has enabled me to build confidence and develop skills. It has been a wonderful experience as a whole.”

To find out more about becoming an Independent Volunteer Advocate, or if you or anyone you now may need the support of the project, please call 029 2043 1555, e-mail advocacy@agecymru.org.uk or visit: www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy

Project delivers free in-home support for older people in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot

More than 100 older people have received free in-home support this year thanks to a project run by Age Cymru West Glamorgan.

The Charity’s Practical Assistance Project, launched in January of this year, has delivered more than 500 hours of free in-home support to 131 clients and their carers in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

The project, funded by the WCVA, provided local people and their carers with up to four weeks of free in-home support, assisting with tasks such as cleaning, preparing meals, and providing companionship enabling carers to take a break.

The project has been such a success that the Charity has now launched a permanent Home Support Service offering competitively priced in-home support from DBS checked, professionally trained staff. This is also a dementia friendly service.

Age Cymru West Glamorgan chief officer Connor James says: “Despite the project coming to an end, we’re delighted to be able to continue offering this much-needed support as a paid Home Support Service offering a similar range of services. We’re adapting our services to help older people transition out of lockdown and reintegrate into their community, and the Home Support Service is just one way that we can help people stay independent in their own homes for longer.”

One service user says: “The free support that I received from Age Cymru West Glamorgan was so beneficial to me. My Home Support Worker was such a big help and the extra support she gave me has meant everything to me, so much so that I’ve continued with the paid service, which is really good value for money. I want to thank Age Cymru West Glamorgan for being there when I needed them.”

For more information about the Charity’s Home Support Service, please call 01792 589654 or visit <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/west-glamorgan/our-services/home-support-service/>



Connor James

Read our tips on falls prevention

With Public Health Wales forecasting that more than 700 older people in Wales will die from a fall this year, with a further 7,750 requiring hospital based treatment, it's more important than ever that we do all we can to help prevent a fall.

Age Cymru has formed a partnership with Care and Repair Cymru and Age Connects Wales to deliver the Falls Awareness campaign. The campaign has been running for a number of years. It urges older people to gain an understanding of the following key practices in falls prevention:

Stay active - exercises designed to improve muscle strength can reduce your risk of a fall by improving your posture, coordination and balance. Find out more about our physical activity programmes, like tai chi and LIFT (Low Impact Functional Training)

Eat well - it's important to keep an eye on your appetite and try and make sure you're eating well. Getting enough energy is important in keeping up strength and preventing falls.

Keep hydrated - make sure you're drinking plenty. If you don't drink enough it's likely that you'll start to feel light-headed which will increase your risk of a fall. Try to drink about six to eight glasses of fluid a day.

Take care of your eyes - get your eyes and glasses checked regularly - at least every two years. This will detect any vision problems early, before they cause you to lose your balance and coordination.

Check for hearing problems - talk to your doctor as soon as you think your hearing has deteriorated, as a problem with your ears can severely affect your balance.

Manage your medicines - certain medications can make you feel faint or dizzy and affect your balance. Let your doctor know if you experience side effects like these after taking any medication - they may need to check the dose or look at alternatives.

Support your bone health - keep your bones healthy and strong by eating calcium-rich foods, getting enough vitamin D from sunlight and doing some weight-bearing exercises.

Choose the right shoes - problems with your feet or shoes can affect your balance and increase your risk of tripping or falling. Talk to your doctor about any foot issues.

Make your home free of trip hazards - remove loose rugs and mats at the top and bottom of the stairs as well as any trailing wires around the home. Install a night light near your bed so you can see where you're going if you have to get up at night time.

For further information on falls prevention please visit: www.agecymru.org.uk/falls

Could you support an older family member, friend or neighbour to get online?

People in Wales are being urged to help get more of the nation's older residents online. The call has been issued by Digital Communities Wales after the most recent National Survey for Wales (2019-20) found 41% of people over 75 and 19% of people aged 64-75 are classed as digitally excluded.

Digital Communities Wales' Dewi Smith says: "For a lot of older people who are not online, the best person to help them is a trusted friend or family member who knows them well and can work with them one-to-one to overcome any fears and build their confidence – they need someone to be their Digital Companion."

Peter from Carmarthen is one of those already helping others in his area to get online where previously they have not had the means or expertise to do so. Peter, 73, has been a digital volunteer for more than 10 years and is currently using his background in IT to help others as a volunteer with U3A Carmarthen, Age Cymru Dyfed and RVS. Peter says: "There's certainly a feel-good factor, and volunteering is certainly about that, but you can also learn a lot too."

Digital Communities Wales was launched in conjunction with Age Cymru, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Government. More information on how to become a Digital Companion, or to introduce someone you think could benefit from the scheme, visit: <https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/digital-companions/>

Free support to get warm for the winter



With winter on the horizon, it's important to make sure older people are able to keep warm and comfortable during the colder months. The Welsh Government Warm Homes Nest scheme has installed energy saving home improvements in more than 46,800 homes since 2011 and has helped thousands of customers reduce their energy bills.

Nest offers everyone free, impartial advice on saving energy, money management, and benefit entitlement. The scheme also provides free energy saving home improvements to eligible customers, such as new boilers, central heating systems, or insulation. The Nest team can help you find out if you're eligible for these improvements with a quick phone call.

"Dealing with Nest has been so easy from that initial phone call it was all dealt with! I was kept informed of everything, but I didn't have to run around making calls or sort things out, that helps more than anything. My home is so much warmer, and it makes such a difference when you just turn on the tap and there's hot water!" – Rhondda Resident

If you, or someone you know, is struggling to keep their home warm or cope with energy bills, call Nest on freephone 0808 808 2244 or visit [nest.gov.wales](https://www.nest.gov.wales) for more information.

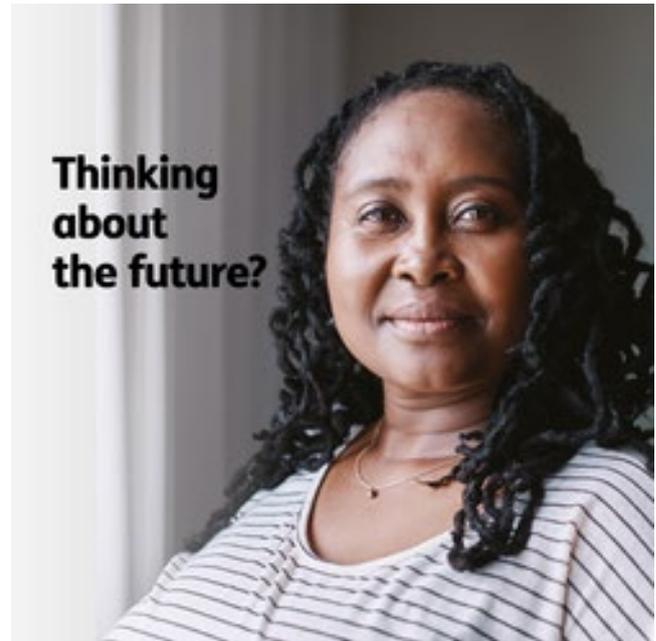
Planning for later life

We may plan to buy a house, purchase a car and take a holiday, so why don't we plan for the next phase of our life? Research carried out with people over 50 indicated that many of them wanted help or support on planning for their later life. So Business in the Community Cymru developed the Mid-Career Review webinars.

The webinars provide an opportunity for individuals aged 50+ to take time out to review their own circumstances regarding work, wellbeing and finances, access information and plan for a positive future.

Data from participant surveys shows that individuals' resilience has increased with 65% being more confident to make decisions about their future. Also, 75% were more aware of issues they should be considering at age 50+, including retirement options and access to information to increase financial awareness. Three quarters of participants would recommend the webinars to others.

"I thought the Mid-Career Review webinar was very informative and gave me all the information I needed. The session was extremely useful, and now I feel a lot more



confident in organising my financial affairs" – male, age 55

The Webinars are part of the Age at Work programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered in partnership with Age Cymru, to support the over 50s. The webinars will take place each month throughout the year. For more information, or to register your place visit Wales Mid-Career Review webinars or contact anna.nash@bitc.org.uk

Help us raise vital funds to continue supporting older people with our services

Demand for our vital services is increasing rapidly. Please help us be there for older people who desperately need our support.

Making a donation

There are many ways you can donate to our Charity from leaving a legacy to making a donation in memory, or you can simply donate online right now. For details of how to make a donation please visit:

www.agecymru.org.uk/donate

Fundraising

There are all sorts of fundraising events available. For the more energetic fundraiser we could link you up to a challenge event, or perhaps a half or even a full marathon.

For those who prefer more gentle pastimes we have the Big Knit where you'll be tasked with knitting little woolly hats. For more details of our fundraising events please visit:

www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved

Later Life Planning



Planning for the future and putting your affairs in order can provide peace of mind and security for both you and your loved ones.

That's why Age Cymru offers a range of services to help you plan for your future, now and after you've gone.

Our Later Life Planning Officers are fully trained and accredited in will writing and estate planning by The College of Will Writing. They hold the Society of Will Writers' Wills and Estate Planning Certificate and are professional members of the Society of Will Writers.

Our Later Life Planning Service can help with the following:

Will Writing

Making a will is the only way to be certain that your wishes will be met after you die. Maybe you haven't got around to it or you've deliberately put it off, but the process can be quite simple.

Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)

No one has the right to automatically take control of your finances or your care (not even your spouse). They need your authority. A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) is a way of giving someone you trust the legal authority to make decisions for you, if either you can't make them yourself or don't want to.

Advance Decision (Living Will)

While you have mental capacity, you can make choices about your care. This includes the types of medical treatment

you want, or would refuse, if you were unable to make or communicate your own decisions in the future. An Advance Decision (sometimes called a Living Will) is legally binding and health professionals must follow it.

Safe Document Storage

The original, signed document is the only legally binding version of your Will, so it's important that it's kept safe. We offer a low cost, secure solution for document storage through The National Will Archive.

Our Later Life Planning service is aimed primarily at people living in **Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and The Vale of Glamorgan**. However, please still contact us if you live outside of these areas as we or one of our local partners may be able to help.

You can trust Age Cymru to provide a quality service and ensure your wishes are communicated with empathy and sensitivity.

Call the Later Life Planning Team on **029 2043 1555** or send us an email at **LLP@agecymru.org.uk** for more information and a list of prices for all our Later Life Planning services.



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Get in touch

If you have a story for Age Matters then please get in touch with the editor Michael Phillips 029 2043 1545

Age Matters

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