



# *Age Matters*

The quarterly newsletter  
from Age Cymru

*Winter Warmth Edition 2021*

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 **ageCymru**

Creating an age friendly Wales

# Facing the challenges of winter with confidence

By Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive,  
November 2021

As we leave autumn and enter winter many of us are thinking about what the coming months will bring. Colder and shorter days means there are fewer opportunities for us to get out and about and meet others. Outbreaks of Covid are still occurring in communities across Wales while rates of flu infections are expected to rise as we've not been exposed to germs as much as usual. And if those are not challenging enough our energy and food bills are rising due to global shortages in gas supplies. **It's quite the winter cocktail.**

Which is why we've produced a special winter warmth edition of Age Matters that's packed full of information and advice to support older people through winter. We feature our Spread the Warmth campaign that contains lots of tips on keeping warm and healthy. We look at what's happening in the gas industry and highlight how the Government will ensure gas supplies will continue to reach our homes.



Our local communities play a vital role in supporting older people, and we look at some of the practical measures people can take to provide support and re-assurance to their older neighbours.

We feature the remarkable story of how our Friend in Need service, that pairs an older person who lives alone with a volunteer for a weekly friendship call, rekindled the Welsh language for Muriel.

And we hear about some fantastic work from our Age Cymru partners, with Age Cymru Powys offering free home energy checks while Age Cymru Gwynedd a Mon are busy delivering more than 300 hot meals a week to older people living alone.

We know there are many challenges facing older people but there is plenty of support out there, so make sure you seek the information you need to live a more comfortable, safe and stress-free life this winter.



## Spread the Warmth with Age Cymru

Spread the Warmth is Age Cymru's national campaign to raise awareness of the health risks that cold weather can have on older people. Changes to our bodies as we get older mean that cold weather and winter bugs affect us more than they used to. This winter we will also need to live with Covid, which we know can have more of an impact the older we are. The good news is there are many things we can do to help keep well during winter.

**Keep moving** and try not to sit still for more than one hour. Even a little bit of activity can help you to keep strong and mobile. Find out more about our physical activity programmes such as tai chi, Nordic Walking and our chair-based exercise programme called LIFT (Low Impact Functional Training).

**Eat well** by sticking to a routine and try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. It's a good idea to keep your cupboards well stocked with some basic non-perishable foods in case you can't get out due to illness or bad weather. You should also aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Make sure you get your **winter vaccinations** as this winter respiratory viruses are expected to be more widespread as we were less

exposed to them during lockdowns. Those aged over 50 are eligible for a COVID-19 booster jab. And it's not too late to have your first jab either. The flu vaccine is also available to anyone aged over 50 free of charge. Contact your GP or local pharmacy to arrange a vaccination.

Try to **warm your home** to a steady and comfortable temperature throughout the day. It's also a good idea to keep your bedroom window closed at night when the weather is coldest and close the curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.

Help **stop the spread of germs** by regularly washing your hands with soap and water or antibacterial gel if you're outside the home. You should also try to catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue and avoid close contact with those who are unwell.

**Wrap up well** by wearing plenty of layers especially when you go out. The cold weather can increase the risk of a heart attack, stroke, and hypothermia. If you, or another person, is experiencing any of these call 999, or 112 from a mobile, immediately.

For more information on our Spread the Warmth campaign call 029 2043 1555 or visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth)

# Changes to energy prices

This winter, you'll probably notice your energy bills rising. This is due to increased global demand which has seen a rise in the price of gas, causing some energy suppliers to go bust.

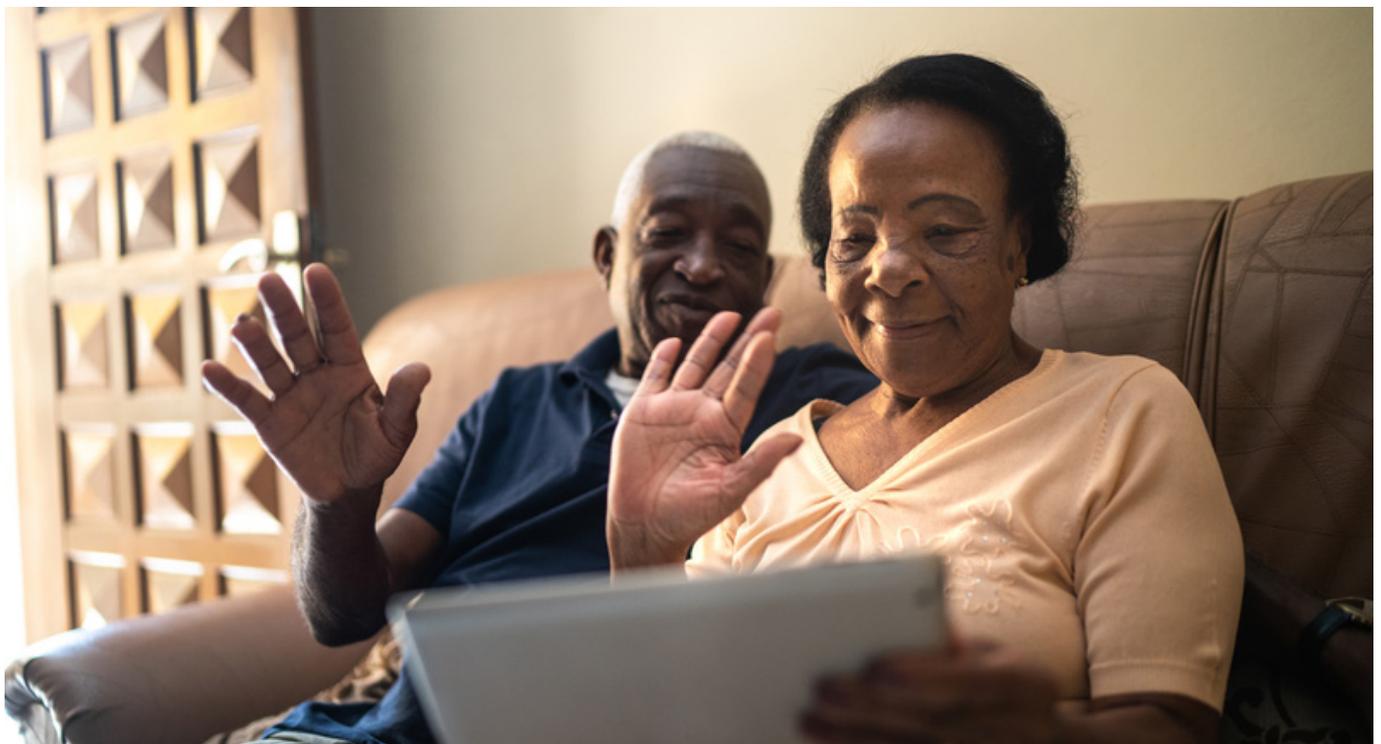
As a result, Ofgem, the energy regulator, increased the energy price cap from 1 October 2021 which means that customers may see their energy bills rise.

Nevertheless, bills will go up for lots of households this winter. On average bills are expected to increase by £139 for the year.

For those using a prepayment meter, the average increase will be around £153.

When an energy supplier goes bust, Ofgem will assign you to a new supplier so your gas and electricity supply will continue as before. It's worth keeping hold of or downloading copies of your latest energy bills and to take photographs of your latest meter readings.

Any customers that were in debt with their previous supplier will still have to repay it while any customers who were in credit should receive a refund.



## Support with paying your energy bills

If you receive Pension Credit you could be entitled to an extra £140 this winter through the **Warm Home Discount** scheme. If you're eligible, you should automatically receive a letter between October and December.

You may also be entitled to a **Winter Fuel Payment** of between £100 and £300 this winter depending on your age, who you

live with, and what benefits you receive. If you're over the State Pension age of 66 and receive the State Pension you should be paid automatically between November and December.

We have a range of information on ways you might be able to get help with energy costs – for example, by making your home more energy efficient. Contact Age Cymru Advice on 0300 303 44 98 or email: [advice@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advice@agecymru.org.uk) for more details.



## Supporting older people in your community this winter

This winter it's more important than ever that people come together and look out for one another.

Healthcare services are open and ready to help, so check in with older people you know and make sure they get the healthcare they need. If they're worried about doing an online consultation, reassure them that they can get a face-to-face appointment should they need one.

When it becomes cold it can get harder for people to get out and about so offering to run a few errands or doing an online shop could be a big help to someone.

Make time for older relatives, friends and neighbours. Darker nights and miserable weather can make it harder for people to get out and about. Calling for a chat or dropping a card with your telephone number on it shows that someone cares and, at the same time, offers some much-needed reassurance.

When it's icy or wet outside, it's easier to slip and fall. Helping to keep paths and driveways clear, salting steps and slopes, and power-washing green mould could make a huge difference.

# Age Cymru's friendship service rekindled the Welsh language in an 83 year old valleys woman

Muriel Rogers was born and bred in Fochriw, now part of Caerphilly County Borough where she grew up in a solid Welsh-speaking family. Her grandparents, parents, brother, uncles, and aunties all spoke Welsh in the home and in the nearby chapel.

As time passed, Muriel's circle of Welsh speakers began to diminish as older relatives passed away, including her beloved mother who only ever spoke in Welsh to Muriel, while others moved out of the village to find work. Eventually she was the only one of the original Welsh speakers left in the village and so she now had to live her life through the English language.

Living alone someone suggested she should join Age Cymru's **Friend in Need** service whereby the Charity pairs an older person living alone with a volunteer for a weekly friendship call. Muriel agreed and was paired with an undergraduate from Swansea called Kadun who also spoke Welsh.

At last Muriel could now have a real conversation in her mother tongue! Kadun has become her Welsh-speaking link to the outside world and brought back so many



Muriel Rogers



Kadun Rees

wonderful memories of her Welsh speaking childhood.

Age Cymru's chief executive Victoria Lloyd says: "There are lots of older people like Muriel living alone in Wales with little opportunity for conversation and friendship. So if you think you could become a Kadun and bring so much joy by linking up with an older person for a weekly friendship call, in English or Welsh, please get in touch with our Friend In Need service on 029 2043 1555 or visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/befriender](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/befriender)

## Winter wrapped up - a guide to keeping safe, warm, and well this winter

Each year Age Cymru updates its Winter Wrapped Up guide to help older people both survive and thrive the winter period. The guide covers a wide range of issues such as coping with Covid and winter flu infections to keeping yourself and your home warm.

For more information about some of the issues in this guide or to order a free copy call Age Cymru Advice on 0300 303 44 98 or email: [advice@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advice@agecymru.org.uk) You can also download a copy of the guide from [www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth)

## HOPE's advocates supporting older people with everyday challenges

Do you or an older person you know need help accessing services such as utilities, health, housing, and benefits advice? Or, perhaps you want to reconnect with your community as Covid restrictions ease? Well Age Cymru's HOPE advocacy team is here to help. Here are two stories of how our HOPE Independent Volunteer Advocates recently supported older people with everyday problems.

Ms Stephens needed support to get a new boiler installed in her property. She was anxious about not being able to afford it before winter set in and having to go without heating or hot water during the coldest time of the year. She spoke to her HOPE advocate who contacted the Welsh Government's Warm Homes Nest scheme who then provided a grant towards the cost of a new boiler. She also contacted

Care and Repair Cymru who recommended an accredited plumber to Ms Stephens and the boiler was installed in time for winter.

Ms Thomas had no hot water in her flat for eight months despite contacting her lettings agency several times. Ms Thomas was becoming increasingly frustrated as the issue remained unresolved for such a long time. She spoke to her HOPE advocate who contacted the lettings agency on her behalf and eventually they sent a representative to the property to look at the boiler. Finally, the issue was resolved, and the agency agreed to replace the broken boiler. Ms Thomas was delighted to finally have access to running hot water.

To find out more about HOPE, email [advocacy@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@agecymru.org.uk), visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy) or call 029 2043 1555.

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## Free home energy checks in Powys

Older people in Powys who are on a low income, suffering long-term health conditions, and living in a hard-to-heat home could be eligible for a free home energy check from Age Cymru Powys.

Through the sessions, the Charity can provide advice and free energy saving kit to clients through its Home Energy Officer. They can replace light bulbs with more energy efficient ones, provide draft proofing, install heat reflectors behind radiators, and insulate hot water tanks.

They can provide a wide range of advice at home or over the telephone and cover issues such as electrical safety, health conditions related to cold homes, energy use, how heating systems work, and various money matters.

The sessions can also cover the legal rights and responsibilities of energy suppliers, payment methods, priority service registers and sources of further support.

For further information call 01597 825908, visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/powys](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/powys) or email [enquiries@acpowys.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@acpowys.org.uk)

# Serving up hot delicious meals throughout Gwynedd and Anglesey

When Age Cymru Gwynedd a Mon originally set up their meals at home service in 2019 there was little take up. However, once Covid arrived they were overwhelmed by requests for their meals at home service.

The Charity's chief executive Eleri Jones says: "Since March 2020 we have consistently provided more than 300 meals a week with the number expected to grow as winter arrives. We provide a healthy nutritious meal, such as roast dinners, for those who cannot cook for themselves or who may want a treat now and again.

"The service, which is undertaken by both employees and volunteers, is also a wellbeing call for many customers who might only see the driver for that particular day. So, a quick chat to check that the clients are safe and well is priceless for both the older person we support and their families."

For more information call 01286 677711 or email [info@acgm.co.uk](mailto:info@acgm.co.uk)



Edwin Thomas



Marnel Pritchard



## Fundraising activities

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 can knit little woolly hats for our Big Knit campaign. For more details about our fundraising events please visit: [www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved)

# Help make this Christmas a little brighter for lonely older people

Christmas is supposed to be a time of joy but imagine having no one to share those special festive moments like wishing someone a Merry Christmas or exchanging festive cards and presents. Sadly, that is the reality for thousands of older people in Wales.

However, with your support, we've been reaching out to older people throughout the year. Our Friend in Need service gives older people the vital gift of a free weekly telephone friendship call. This year, we've made more than 12,500 calls to older people.

While our Age Cymru Advice service has handled more than 21,000 enquiries so far this year on issues ranging from bereavement and loneliness to claiming financial entitlements and heating your home.

With all the challenges currently facing older people, demand for our services is increasing so please help us to be there for everyone who needs our support. Please visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/brighter](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/brighter) to see how you can help make this Christmas a little brighter.



## 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 more details please visit: [www.agecymru.org.uk/donate](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/donate)

## Get in touch

If you have a story for Age Matters then please get in touch with the editor Michael Phillips on 07794 366 224 or email [michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk)

## Age Matters

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