

Your Mind Matters

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Thinking about your mental health and well-being when living in a care home
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Who we are

Age Cymru is the national charity for older people in Wales.

Age Cymru works to develop and deliver positive change with and for older people.

Our vision is an age friendly Wales.

Our mission is to make life better for older people.

Together with our local partners:

- We provide information and advice.
- We deliver wellbeing programmes.
- We provide independent advocacy.
- We support carers.
- We campaign and research.

Age Cymru

Mariners House
Trident Court
East Moors Road
Cardiff CF24 5TD

029 2043 1555

www.agecymru.org.uk

Registered Charity 1128436

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For copies of this guide please contact
enquires@agecymru.org.uk

How we can help

Age Cymru Advice: our information and advice service for matters affecting people over 50 in Wales.

Age Cymru Advice is committed to being the foremost information and advice service to older people in Wales. We aim to provide effective, accessible, high-quality information and advice while offering a free, impartial and confidential service. Age Cymru Advice can assist older people themselves, their family, friends, carers, or professionals.

All of our guides and factsheets are available to download from our website, or you can contact our advice line to have copies posted to you for free.

Local support

Age Cymru Advice also acts as a gateway to our local services. Face to face support via local offices and home visits may be available to people requiring additional or more specialised support.

Getting in touch

If you want to talk to one of our expert advisers, in Welsh or English, call us on **0300 303 44 98**. Our advice line is open between 9am and 4pm, Monday – Friday.

(Calls are charged at the same rate as a call to a standard 01 or 02 number. They will also be automatically included in any landline or mobile inclusive minutes package.)

You can also email us at advice@agecymru.org.uk or visit our website at www.agecymru.org.uk/advice

What this guide is about

Moving into a care home or supported accommodation can be one of life's major changes. The associated loss and change in circumstance where you might need to receive care and share your living space with other people could understandably affect your mood and sense of well-being.

If you are feeling low or out of sorts, don't keep it to yourself; ask someone if they can help you find ways to adjust and get back on track.

Many people find it daunting or uncomfortable to talk about their feelings with others. Whatever you do, don't ignore your feelings. Talking about them helps.

Perhaps there's someone in the care home that you can talk to, whether that's the care home manager, or a member of staff you connect with or another resident. Maybe now is the time to take the first step to helping yourself feel better.

Helplines

C.A.L.L. Helpline (Community Advice & Listening Line)

C.A.L.L. is a mental health helpline offering a confidential listening and support service. They provide free emotional support and information on mental health and related matters to the people of Wales.

**C.A.L.L. Helpline: 0800 132 737
(or text 'help' to: 81066)**

Website: www.callhelpline.org.uk

Samaritans

Tel: 116 123

A free confidential helpline offering support 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

www.samaritans.org.uk

Rethinking mental health

We've all heard how important it is to look after our physical health – to stay active and eat well. However, what about our mental health? Looking after our mental health is as important but can often be sidelined.

Our mental health affects all aspects of our lives – how we think and feel, and how we cope with life's ups and downs.

If you were experiencing pain in your joints, you wouldn't struggle without help. You'd tell a doctor, carer or nurse so they could find a way to relieve your discomfort. Your mind is no different – it needs looking after too.

You are not alone

Because there aren't always outward signs, you may not be sure that anything is wrong – but mental health problems are more common than many people think. It's estimated that one in four people live with a common mental health problem like depression or anxiety.

We can all be guilty of putting our feelings to one side and thinking we'll 'deal with it later'. But we shouldn't. Addressing our thoughts and feelings is often the best thing we can do to help ourselves feel better.

Do any of these sound familiar?

'It's not really the sort of thing you talk about'

'It's just how things are when you are older'

'I don't know who to talk to about my feelings'

'I don't want to bother anyone with my problems'

'The doctor has more important things to worry about'

Good to know

It's ok to ask for help. It is now widely accepted that your mental health is just as important as your physical health. In fact, they are interconnected. Your doctor will have lots of experience in supporting people with their mental health and won't judge you for talking about it.

How you might be feeling

It can be hard to recognise symptoms of mental health problems, which means they can often be overlooked or mistaken for physical health conditions – or just part of getting older. However, there are lots of reasons why you may feel this way.

Signs that your mental health may be in need of attention

Recognising symptoms is the first step in helping yourself feel better. You might like to make a note of how you are feeling – this can help you explain what you are experiencing to someone who cares for you.

Have you noticed changes in your mood?

- Feeling low
- Feeling irritable, restless or tense
- Feeling worthless or hopeless
- Feeling like bad things are going to happen to you.

Have you noticed changes in the things you do?

- Feeling unmotivated or disinterested in the things you usually enjoy doing
- Feeling unable to relax
- Avoiding social activities and situations
- Eating or sleeping less
- Not taking care of your appearance or wanting to be cared for.

Have you noticed changes in your body?

- Moving very slowly or being restless and agitated
- Experiencing anxiety, having a fast thumping or irregular heartbeat
- Breathing faster than normal for you
- Having panic attacks.

Feelings matter

Try to keep a check on how you are feeling so you can look for help and support when you need it. Here are some signs that your mental health may not be quite how it should be.

Feeling worried

Anxiety is a term used to describe how we are feeling when we are worried, stressed, or afraid. We can all feel anxious at times especially in unfamiliar routines or environments. Anxiety can lead to a loss of appetite, changes in your physical health and feeling unable to cope. If the feelings of anxiety are ongoing then you may find it beneficial to talk to someone so you can get help to manage your health and well-being.

Feeling low

Everyone feels down from time to time. Usually this passes, but if you have been experiencing a low mood for a while then it's important to speak to someone. It's not uncommon to feel low or worried especially when you first move to a care home. It is a major life event. Taking the first step in telling someone how you feel can be daunting but this is the best way to start feeling better. Try speaking with someone, a family member, friend, or care worker – whomever you feel comfortable with.

'It feels so frustrating when you have been so independent all of your life to accept that you now need someone to care for you. I used to feel very low about it but now I see how the care helps me to get up and get on with my day – I don't know what I would do without them (carers)'

Care home resident

Good to know

It's not uncommon to feel low and worried at the same time. Doctors are used to seeing people who are experiencing low mood and anxiety and know how to help. If you are feeling like this, it is best to ask for an appointment to discuss what you are experiencing.

Feeling unmotivated

We've all felt unmotivated before – whether you can't face the day, your normal routine or mixing with other people. However, feeling unmotivated, low in energy and losing interest in the activities that are available to you for long periods can be a sign that something else is going on. Who can you speak to about these feelings?

'If we have a resident who isn't joining activities that they usually enjoy, we know something is wrong. We always ask if we can help. By talking about the way they feel we can usually find a way to help them feel better.'

Activity Coordinator

Feeling lonely

You may feel lonely for a number of reasons. Moving from your own home to a care home is life changing and although you may now be receiving the right care and support for you, this change in circumstance should not be underestimated. You may find yourself surrounded by other people but feel lonely and loneliness can have a significant impact on your mental wellbeing. Recognising that you are feeling lonely can help you find a way to get some support. You might not be the only person in the care home feeling like this so by sharing your feelings you could be given opportunities to connect with others.

'Some days I just feel so sad and I don't know why. It helps to talk to someone, to get up and go to the lounge so I'm not in my room all day.' **Care home resident**

Good to know

Age Cymru runs a befriending service called Friend in Need.

If you are 70 or over, you can register for a free weekly call by calling 029 2043 1555

Why you might be feeling like this

Ill health or disability

You may have moved into a care home because of ill health or a disability that means you now need care to enjoy a good quality of life. Accepting this level of support can be very difficult especially if you have managed alone for a long time. Be gentle with yourself, this sort of adjustment will take time. Be open about how you feel, this will help the care workers understand things from your perspective.

'I have Parkinson's disease and it can be very frustrating. I need a lot of help now and that gets me down. Some days are harder than others, I can feel frustrated and hopeless.'

Care home resident

If you live in pain because of health issues it can take its toll on how you feel, side effects of certain medications can also have an impact on your mood. You can talk to your doctor about this.

Living with other people

You may find the adjustment of living with other people difficult; it will take time to get used to how the care home works and your place in it. Even when you have lived in a care home for a while, you may continue to experience adjustments and transitions because you are sharing your living space with other people. Your mood may be affected by these changes in circumstances so it's good to be open about how this makes you feel and get the right support to cope.

Missing your old life

Moving from your home to a care home will be a big change in your life and missing some things you treasured deeply is understandable. This might be relationships, possessions, or familiar routines. Moving to a care home doesn't mean you have to give up everything; talk to the care staff about the things that are most important to you so they can understand how to support you.

There will be opportunities to form new friendships and become part of the care home community.

'I've made a good friend here that has helped. We sit together at mealtimes and join in any activities that are going on. We have a giggle. She means the world to me.' **Care home resident**

Loss and bereavement

Grieving a loss is different for everyone. This experience can be a

'I wasn't feeling myself. I didn't want to bother the staff; they are always so busy, but I knew I needed to speak to someone. It was then I heard about a visiting Chaplain. He has helped me immensely. It's so good to talk.'

Care Home Resident

rollercoaster of emotions with good days and bad days. If you are struggling to cope with loss, it may be time to find some help.

Good to know

Cruse Bereavement Support support and information to those who have experienced a recent loss.

www.cruse.org.uk offer

When to seek help

If you've been struggling with your mental wellbeing and it's affecting your life, it's time to talk to someone. Talking about the way you feel can be daunting but it is the first step to starting to feel better. You can talk to your doctor in confidence; they will listen and help you get back on track. You can ask someone you know to sit with you during your time with the doctor if you think this would help.

Different types of support

You are entitled to the same level of support for your mental health when you live in a care home as you were before your move. You will have a care plan that outlines your need for support; this should be updated regularly to cover all aspects of your life including your mental health and well-being.

You are entitled to free NHS care to help you take steps to improving your mental health. This could be:

Talking therapy

Talking to someone who is trained to help you manage your thoughts and feelings and the effect they have on your mood and behaviours.

Counselling

Counsellors are trained to listen and empathise. They won't give advice but will support and guide you to understand your problems and deal with negative thoughts and feelings.

Medication

Depending on your symptoms, you may be prescribed medication. Anti-depressants are a common type of medication. They work by increasing levels of chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters that lift your mood. There are different types of medication, and your doctor should explain which they think is best for you, taking account of any other medications you're already taking. Your medication should be under regular review so you can discuss any concerns you have.

Things you can do that might help you feel better

Be kind to yourself

It is so important to look after yourself. Giving yourself time to understand why you are feeling the way you do can help you look for the right help and support.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Recognise that living in a care home is a big change in your life and it will take time for you to adjust. Find ways to keep connected with the people you love, the activities you have always enjoyed and don't lose touch with the things that make you who you are today. The care staff will be eager to get to know you and what makes you tick.

Create structure to your days

Routine can help your mood. Setting achievable goals like going for a daily walk or visiting a friend in the care home can help build structure to your day and a sense of purpose.

'I have been given a patch of garden outside my room which I tend to most days. This gives me a reason to get up in the morning, I love to watch things grow.'

Care home resident

Keep active

Exercise no matter how gentle can improve your mental health by increasing endorphins – brain chemicals that make you happy.

Eat and drink well

What we eat and drink affects how we feel. Overeating or a loss of appetite might be a sign that your mental health needs some care. Speak to the care staff and kitchen staff about what you like to eat and drink.

Useful organisations

Age Cymru

Age Cymru Advice provide information and advice for people in later life through our bilingual advice line, publications and online. To find out if there's a local Age Cymru near you and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets call:

Age Cymru Advice 0300 303 44 98 (9am to 4pm, Monday - Friday) or email: advice@agecymru.org.uk

If you prefer, you can also contact us by letter at: Age Cymru, Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD.

Website: www.agecymru.org.uk/advice

Alzheimer's Society

Offers advice, information and support to people with dementia, their families and carers through its helpline and local branches.

Helpline: 0333 150 3456
www.alzheimers.org.uk/wales

Anxiety UK

Provides information, support and help if you've been diagnosed with, or suspect you may have, an anxiety condition.

Tel: 03444 775 774
www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

National regulatory body of care homes and domiciliary care services in Wales. Staff can provide lists of home care providers for a specific area.

Tel: 0300 7900 126
www.careinspectorate.wales

Carers Wales

Provide support and advice for carers, including benefits information.

Tel: 0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org/WALES

Cruse

Has a dedicated helpline to support people who have been bereaved, and offers free bereavement counselling.

Helpline: 0808 808 1677
www.cruse.org.uk

Depression UK

National self-help organisation that helps people cope with their depression.

Email: info@depressionuk.org
www.depressionuk.org

GOV.WALES

Website of the Welsh Government. Contains information on areas that have been devolved in Wales.

www.gov.wales

Hourglass

Works to protect vulnerable older adults and prevent abuse. Offers a 24 hour helpline and advice for people being abused or anyone concerned that someone they know is being abused.

Tel: 0808 808 8141
www.wearehourglass.org

LGBT+ Cymru Helpline & Counselling Service

Provides information, advice and confidential support on issues that affect LGBT+ people, their families and friends.

Helpline: 0800 917 9996
www.lgbtcymru.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

Provides practical, medical and financial support for people facing cancer, their carers and loved ones.

Tel: 0808 808 00 00
www.macmillan.org.uk

Marie Curie

Provides bereavement support and mental health support for people at the end of their lives.

Tel: 0800 090 2309
www.mariecurie.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation

Provides information and support on mental health.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind

Provides advice and support on mental health issues.

Tel: 0300 123 3393
www.mind.org.uk

NHS 111 Wales

Provides information about health conditions, treatments and NHS services in Wales.

www.111.wales.nhs.uk

Tel: 111

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Independent champion for older people across Wales.

Tel: 03442 640670

E-mail: ask@olderpeoplewales.com

Website: www.olderpeoplewales.com

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Ombudsman looks to see whether people have been treated unfairly or have received a bad service from a public body, such as a local authority social services department.

Tel: 0300 790 0203

E-mail: ask@ombudsman.wales

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

SANE

UK-wide charity to raise awareness and combat stigma about mental illness.

Tel: 0300 304 7000

www.sane.org.uk

How you can help

Our vision is an age friendly Wales.

Our mission is to make life better for older people.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial. In many cases our timely intervention can be life changing. We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- Call **029 2043 1555**
- Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/donate

Every donation we receive helps us be there for someone when they need us.

- £10 helps towards a fully trained expert advice worker to respond to queries from people who need the support of our information and advice service.
- £20 helps towards the cost of us producing free information guides and factsheets that provide useful advice on issues affecting people over 50.



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work.

- Call **029 2043 1555**
- Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved



Volunteer with us

All volunteer roles at Age Cymru support us to improve lives and help us work towards an age friendly Wales. However you'd like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

- Call **029 2043 1555**
- Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/volunteer



Leave us a gift in your Will

With a gift to Age Cymru in your will, you can do so much to make sure older people have the support they deserve in the years to come. Leave a world less lonely.

- Call **029 2043 1555**
- Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/legacy

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our quarterly newsletter contains details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting www.agecymru.org.uk/agematters



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.

 www.facebook.com/agecymru

 www.twitter.com/agecymru

 www.youtube.com/agecymru

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General enquiries

029 2043 1555

enquiries@agecymru.org.uk

Age Cymru Advice

0300 303 44 98

advice@agecymru.org.uk

Visit our website

www.agecymru.org.uk

What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call us on

0300 303 44 98 or visit **www.agecymru.org.uk/advice**

The following information guides and factsheets may be useful:

- Info Guide 6: Care homes
- Info Guide 24: Healthy living – looking after yourself physically and mentally
- Factsheet 29w: Finding care home accommodation in Wales



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