

Age Matters

The quarterly newsletter from Age Cymru

Spring 2024

Tell us what matters to you
in our 2024 survey

Be wary of offers
to insulate your loft with spray foam

Hear how one of our walk leaders gets a buzz from volunteering



Spring has sprung!



By Victoria Lloyd,
Chief Executive

After a very long winter with either relentless rain or cold weather, sometimes at the same time, spring has finally arrived. And even if the weather isn't improving much at least the days are getting longer and the daffodils have finally made an appearance.

Spring is traditionally a time when people start thinking about becoming active and there's plenty of information in this edition to get you going, particularly if you're looking for volunteering opportunities.

We feature Clare Gabriel, our volunteer walk leader in Cardiff who explains all about the benefits she gets from volunteering, such as having a sense of achievement from giving back to your community, meeting new friends, and getting out and about in the fresh air.

We also feature our new Community Assistance Project (CAP) which is recruiting volunteers to support older people in local communities.

And for those of you who want to shape and influence your communities and local services, we highlight our new guide to creating older people's forums.

We're also asking you, our readers, to do some work! We've just launched our annual survey for 2024 which is attached to this newsletter, and we'd really appreciate it if you would complete and return it to us. It's crucial that we get to know about what's happening in your life and what changes you'd like to see.

We're also keen to hear about your hospital transport experiences after hearing some terrible stories.

Finally, we're delighted that two of our readers have contributed pieces to the newsletter with a quiz and a poem. Perhaps we could make such contributions a regular feature of Age Matters.

I hope you enjoy this edition and perhaps it will inspire you to get active this springtime!

Enjoy!



Tell us what matters to you

National survey of the current experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales

Would you like an opportunity to tell decision makers in the Welsh Government, health and social services, and other key service providers what your priorities are for the year ahead? And what changes you would like to see improve your and your loved one's life?

Then make sure you complete Age Cymru's fifth annual survey so we can better understand your views and current experiences. You will have noticed a copy of the survey inserted into this paper edition of Age Matters, while a pdf version has been linked to the electronic newsletter.

More than 5,000 people have responded to this annual research since the first survey was launched in 2020, and the information gathered has provided us with a vital insight into what matters to you

regarding issues such as health and social care, finances, caring, transport and work.

It's also helped us to inform and influence key decision makers and helped shape our own policies and campaigns, so they reflect your priorities.

And if you'd like to help us campaign directly on any issues raised in this survey, please tell us. We're always looking for people like you to tell us your stories to help us to raise issues with the media, politicians, and many other key stakeholders.



How to complete our survey

Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/annualsurvey to complete the survey online.

Complete the paper copy inserted into the middle of this newsletter or for additional paper copies call 029 2043 1555 and return via our freepost address: AgeCymru, FREEPOST RTZG-JHGC-RYJJ, Ground Floor, Mariners House, Age Cymru, Trident Court, East Moors Road, CARDIFF CF24 5TD

The deadline for completed surveys is Friday 29 March 2024

Contact Michael Phillips for an informal chat on 07794 366 224, 029 2043 1555 or email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk.



Digital Switchover coming to Wales in spring 2024

According to BT, the whole telephone industry will be switching from landline to broadband services across the UK by December 2025. And in Wales the process will happen sometime this spring which will be backed by a large marketing campaign in April 2024.

Age Cymru has been told that for most customers, digital switchover will simply involve connecting your home phone handset to a router rather than the phone socket on the wall. And if you don't have a router BT will send you one completely free of charge. You'll also get to keep your existing number.

For most customers all aspects of the transition will be completely free of charge with no home installation work required. So, if somebody does request some form of payment it's probably a scam which you should report to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. If you feel threatened or in any danger, then call the police.

BT customers will be contacted four weeks before making the switch to help ensure you have everything you need.

However, anyone deemed to be a vulnerable customer, for example those aged over 75, or those who use a personal healthcare alarm, or who have no mobile signal, will be given extra time by the telephone provider to address their specific needs should they need it.

If anyone uses a personal healthcare alarm, they need to check with their providers that they have everything they need prior to the switchover.

While BT are by far the biggest provider of telephone services in Wales there will be other companies organising their own digital switchover so, please check with your supplier about the steps you may need to take.

If you have any questions regarding digital switchover, call Michael Phillips on 07794 366224, email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk or visit Age Cymru | Changes to landline telephones (ageuk.org.uk).

Be wary of offers to insulate your loft with spray foam

Have you recently been contacted by companies offering to insulate your loft with spray foam to cut back on your fuel bills? Well be very careful as there are rogue traders misleading people who are worried about their soaring energy bills.

The Wales Against Scams Partnership (WASP) is urging you to seek advice before agreeing to insulate your lofts with spray foam.

The Partnership warns that while spray foam is legal, it is only appropriate in specific and very limited circumstances and should only be applied by specialists. Improper use can cause structural damage to your home and make it very difficult for you to sell your property, as mortgage lenders are becoming increasingly cautious about spray foam.

Age Cymru's policy officer Sam Young, who heads WASP, says "We understand that many of you are worried about how you are going to pay your fuel bills and as a result may become enticed by 'tempting' offers from rogue traders.

"But we urge you to seek expert advice before agreeing to any major structural work. You should also ensure you're claiming all your entitlements. Millions of pounds worth of support, including £200m worth of Pension Credit, go unclaimed in Wales each year.

"Age Cymru publishes a free guide called More Money in Your Pocket that offers information about a range of benefits and how you go about claiming them."

If you want to talk to someone directly about benefits and entitlements, and any of the issues raised in this article call Age Cymru on 0300 303 44 98 (charged at a local rate) Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm. You may also email advice@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/cost-of-living.



Hospital Transport – what's your experience of the service?

Age Cymru has received several reports of people experiencing significant problems when using hospital transport.

We've heard stories of people missing their medical appointments because their journey has taken so long. While others who had appointments later in the day had to use a taxi to get home because the hospital transport had finished in the middle of the afternoon.

We're concerned that the stress and cost of these journeys may mean that some patients will opt out of attending clinics altogether.

Age Cymru wants to campaign to improve hospital transport, but we need your help to build our body of evidence by telling us about your experiences of the service and how it's affected your treatment and illnesses.

Post pandemic, fewer people are using public transport in Wales, which has meant that several key routes have been axed leaving many of us without a viable link to our nearest hospital. While the cost-of-living crisis has meant that taxis are simply no longer an option for many of us.

Therefore, the need for an efficient and effective hospital transport system is more important than ever. So please share your experiences, good or bad, with us. Call Michael Phillips on 07794 366224 or email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk.



Clare in a red hat with her walking group

Walk leader says volunteering provides her with a special buzz and huge a sense of achievement

Former journalist Clare Gabriel is urging any of you with spare time to think about volunteering because you'll gain as much satisfaction as those you support.

Clare currently volunteers as a walk leader for Age Cymru. The charity's walking groups promote physical activity to improve health and wellbeing.

The walks give people like you an opportunity to get fit whilst enjoying the outdoors, and to socialise in a fun and friendly setting.

The walks are carefully planned to suit all abilities, so don't worry if you think your fitness levels are not what they used to be! The social element is just as important for the walkers, with most walks ending with a cuppa and a chat.

And don't worry if you've never led a group previously as all volunteers are given full training from Age Cymru's Physical Activity team. You'll also get all your expenses reimbursed.

Volunteers often say the best part about getting involved in the walking groups is the camaraderie, friendship, and the sense of

achievement you get. It also provides an opportunity for you to discover more of your local area and become more physically active.

Clare says "I lead my walk on a Monday morning, so I always get a great buzz at the start of the week. I've made some everlasting friendships, and we even organise group meals from time to time.

"I also get a great sense of satisfaction from giving something back to my community, something that will help people whether they need gentle exercise, companionship, or both. I spent years working indoors so it feels great to be outside in the fresh air."

Age Cymru has a range of physical activity opportunities to suit all abilities such as Low Impact Functional Training (LIFT), Nordic Walking, Walk and Talk, and Tai Chi Qigong.

For more information about volunteering or joining a group, contact the Physical Activities Team at Age Cymru Call 029 2043 1555, email physicalactivity@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/physical-activity.



Age Cymru opposes proposal to raise social care cap

Age Cymru recently opposed a proposal from a local councillor to raise the social care cap above its current limit of £100.

The charity's chief executive Victoria Lloyd said 'We don't think this is the right solution to ensure that people get the care and support they need at the time they need it.

"The social care system and the way we pay for care both need fundamental change. Seeking to raise additional money from those who need care will do little to achieve the investment needed to transform services.

"Many older people live on low, fixed incomes, and are already facing higher food and energy bills as well as significant hikes in council tax.

"We're worried that an increase in the cost of care will lead older people to cancel services that are keeping them safe and well. This could have significant impacts for those individuals in terms of their overall wellbeing. At the same time, it seems to move us further away from the stated aim of providing care that is free at the point of need.

"Rather than place the responsibility for paying for social care on those most in need, local government, the Welsh and UK governments, need to work together to find a sustainable way of funding the social care system so older people can get the care they need to live a life of quality."

If you pay for an element of your social care, please let us know how you feel about the proposal to raise the current cap of £100 a week. Contact Michael Phillips on 07794 366224 or email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk.

Guide to help you shape your own community



Have you ever thought that you'd like more influence on how local services and amenities work in your community? Well, now's your chance as Age Cymru is supporting people just like you to develop local older people's forums so you can share your views, develop your own agenda, and ultimately shape your own community.

Forums can influence a wide range of issues from local transport to healthcare, and from housing to banking services, in fact any service that matters most to you.

To support you in setting up a forum, the charity has launched a Forum Resource Manual that looks at the background of the forum movement in Wales, provides information and advice on how to set up and run a successful forum, and offers practical advice on campaigning. Forums can cover just a few streets or whole towns, whatever suits you best.

Typically, busy forums hold open days, produce newsletters, initiate petitions, conduct

research, write press releases, and apply for funds. The guide provides specific advice on how to use the media to publicise issues and how to engage with politicians to bring about change.

Age Cymru's National Partnerships Manager Chris Williams says "We live in a very noisy world with dozens of radio and TV channels together with lots of digital media platforms whose focus is rarely on older people.

"Therefore, it can be difficult for older people to have their voices heard and thereby shape their communities, so they reflect their own needs and aspirations.

"Developing a forum can help you have a louder voice and more influence with key decision makers in your communities. Hopefully, this guide will encourage many of you to get your local forum up and running."

To order your free copy of the Forum Resource Manual call Kathy Lye on 07944 996965 or visit our website www.agecymru.org.uk and search for the Forum Resource Manual.



Become a Community Assistance Volunteer

Our Community Assistance Project (CAP) needs your help to support older people in your community

The Community Assistance Project (CAP) involves Age Cymru, local Age Cymru Partners and Age Connects Wales partners across Wales, and we are currently looking for volunteers. The project provides two services for older people:

Assist and Connect

This is a face-to-face service which links volunteers with a member of their community requiring support. We work with the older person to understand what they may need to support their wellbeing, as well as helping them to deal with life's ups and downs. Support could take the form of (but not limited to):

- Access to social interaction and opportunity to meet new people
- Access to information, advice, guidance and other support
- Low level support around the house
- Feeling safe in the neighbourhood
- Managing personal affairs
- Support independence.

Who are we looking for? Anyone aged 18 or over who is willing to support an older

person in their community by giving an hour or more of their time once a week.

Listen and Connect

This is a listening service for people who may be experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation. The service provides a safe space where people are listened to and supported to explore the issues that are important to them.

Who are we looking for? We're looking for anyone aged 18 or over who can give two to three hours a week to take calls from older people who are phoning for a chat.

What support is provided?

All CAP volunteers are provided with full training and are supported every step of the way. Volunteers are given the opportunity to connect with others and gain a sense of satisfaction that comes from making a real difference to the lives of the people we support.

If you'd like more information or to apply to become a Community Assistance Volunteer, please call the CAP team on 07425 422270, email CAPenquiries@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/cap.



Could you benefit from the support of our HOPE project?

For some older people, dealing with everyday issues such as accessing GP services, getting the best support from our energy suppliers, or simply taking part in community events can become more difficult.

However, anyone aged over 50 or anyone caring for an older person can seek support from our project called HOPE (Helping others participate and engage) which is free of charge.

Trained volunteers provide support to help you access vital services and the information you need to make informed choices, engage with professionals, take part in community life, and better understand your rights.

Our HOPE project helps you to have your voice heard when important decisions affecting your life are being made.

HOPE, a partnership project by Age Cymru, local Age Cymru partners, and Age Connects Wales local partners, is available throughout Wales.

If our HOPE team can help you to raise your voice and access the support you need, please get in touch. Call 029 2043 1555, email advocacy@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy.

Age Cymru Gwent turns 50

Age Cymru Gwent has reached a golden milestone and will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year so its Chief Executive Officer, James Shaughnessy, gave Age Matters a whistle stop tour of the charity's work.

It's been an absolute privilege to have supported the successive generations of older people we have engaged with since our inception, and it's clear that with the continued rising cost of living, the impact of energy costs and the worrying lack of social care, our support is now needed more than ever across Gwent.

We will be running various campaigns across Gwent this year promoting our 'Independent Living' ethos where people can learn more about our services such as Information and Advice, Resilience and Prevention after a hospital stay, and Help at Home practical support.

One service user told the charity "Things are different now since my husband suffered his heart attack, but you helped us get all the assistance we didn't know we were entitled to. We were supported with benefit applications, you helped arrange help in the house and got things sorted when we were just trying to get through each day. We really couldn't have done it without you, we cannot thank Age Cymru Gwent enough for being there when we needed them most".

James says "As the 2021 census results have shown, the population of older people within Gwent has grown significantly in the last decade. Our mission is to build on the tremendous current work and ensure we can reach everyone in Gwent who needs us. Together, we can support older people in the way they need, and when they need it".



If you live in Gwent and want more information about the charity's numerous services, call 01633 763330 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/gwent.



Looking for a fulfilling way to spend your spare time? How about becoming a volunteer for Age Cymru West Glamorgan

Volunteering as an older person is a fantastic way to socialise, learn new skills, or expand on existing ones, all the while providing crucial support to others.

Age Cymru West Glamorgan is encouraging those aged over 50, and with lived experience, to get in touch and find out more about volunteering.

Recently, a group of six new volunteers joined the team with an induction session focusing on an introduction to the charity, communication techniques, dementia awareness, equality and diversity, and health and safety.

They also had first hand insight into the issues that directly affect older people across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend and how to provide support that is tailored for them and their loved ones.

The benefits of volunteering include:

- Improving your mental health, wellbeing and confidence
- Meeting new people
- Learning new or building on existing skills
- Feeling valued and part of a team
- Making a valuable change within the community

For more information visit our [website here](https://www.agecymruwestglamorgan.org.uk), email volunteer@agecymruwestglamorgan.org.uk or call 01792 648866 to speak to a friendly member of our team.

HOPE's wellness events



Age Cymru together with their HOPE project partners Age Connects Wales and the Age Cymru local partners recently held a series of Wellness and Wellbeing events.

HOPE (Helping others participate and engage) is a partnership project delivering independent advocacy for older people (50+) and their carers across Wales.

The events provided information and support to help those aged 50 or over, and their carers, to keep well during these somewhat challenging times.

There was a wide range of information and advice available on issues such as advocacy, claiming benefits, housing, community safety, volunteering, and how to reduce your energy bills.

Complimentary teas and coffees were also available to help people feel at home and thereby more likely to engage with the advisors.

To date events have been held at Wrexham, Holyhead, Aberystwyth, Porthcawl, Newport and Cardiff.

Further events are being planned in Conwy and Brecon in mid-March so keep your eyes peeled for one near you.

Feedback from Ceredigion County Council

“The event in Aberystwyth Museum was very well organised. The cakes were delicious and there was enough seating for people to sit down and enjoy their refreshments. We handed out blankets, radiator reflectors, and draught excluders to people. Please keep in touch if there are any other events you would like us to support”.



Keeping fit and well while you prepare for treatment or surgery

If you're currently waiting for treatment or surgery, it's important to make sure that you do all you can to be as fit and healthy as possible. Staying active, eating a healthy, balanced diet, and quitting smoking will all help you to 'wait well' and boost your overall health and wellbeing so that you're better prepared for your treatment and recovery.

Being fit and active is one of the most important things you can do to support your health and wellbeing. It helps to maintain a healthy weight, reduces stress, lifts mood and strengthens bones and muscles. There are many ways to exercise - including strolls with friends and family, dog walking, chair exercises and local classes and groups, to name a few.

A healthy and nutritious diet is always important, but even more so when you're preparing for treatment or surgery. Eating well will make sure you have good energy reserves and will help you recover quicker and feel better sooner.

If you are a smoker, preparing for treatment or surgery can be a good time to work

towards cutting down or even stopping. This will help increase your chances of avoiding complications and having to stay in hospital longer.

Many operations are cancelled because people aren't fit or healthy enough to undergo them. Waiting well can prevent your condition getting worse and help you prepare for your treatment, so your operation is a success.

People who are fit and healthy can recover from surgery quicker and with fewer complications, spend less time in hospital and often get better quicker.

So, remember, how you prepare in the time leading up to treatment or surgery can have a big impact, not only on your recovery but on your long-term health. Speak to your health professional if you need advice.

For more information on health and wellbeing, you can also visit www.gov.wales/help-us-help-you. If you want to check any symptoms or find local NHS services, visit [NHS 111 Wales](http://NHS111Wales.com) online. Or call 111 to speak to someone about any urgent symptoms.



Daring to Dream: making space to talk

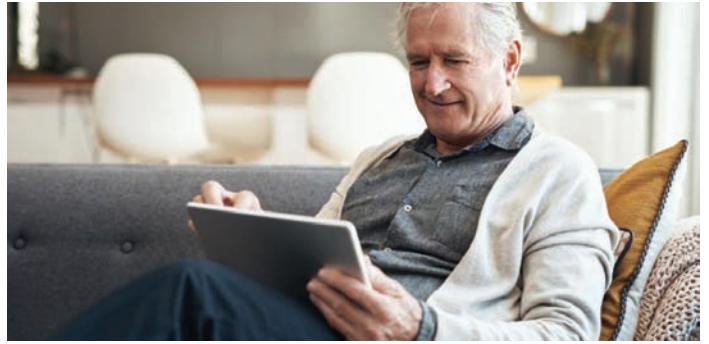
Daring to Dream is a Welsh charity focused on supporting the emotional health of adults in Wales living with a physical illness. That is roughly half of all adults in Wales or approximately 1.2 million people. Our focus is all about making space for people to talk.

First, we raise awareness of the need to support the emotional health of adults living with illness. We encourage everyone to give those we are close to space for them to talk about and express their emotions relating to diagnosis, treatments, and the daily impact of living with health issues.

Secondly, we help by making space to talk by creating interior designed, comfortable, and comforting quiet rooms, relatives' rooms, and patient day rooms in hospitals. These are physical spaces that enable and support tough and emotional conversations. Spaces where family members can comfort each other and take time to step back from supporting their loved ones.

Thirdly, the message we promote via Lleswyl, our flagship and free wellbeing festival, is to encourage all of us to make social space for those we know who are living with illness. We want Lleswyl to encourage everyone to include and make time and space for those living with an illness.

By so doing, we enable people to talk about their emotions, express them in a shared safe space, and enable them to focus on what they really want to do and thereby enjoy their life to the fullest within the challenges of an illness. For more information about Daring to Dream call Barbara Chidgey, Chair, on 07989 385114 or visit www.daringtodream.wales.



Poetic tribute from one of our friends in need

In recent months we've noticed that quite a few of our readers are beginning to interact with Age Matters, which is wonderful to see. In this edition we feature one of the many poems penned by Ted which is a reflection and a tribute to our Friend in Need telephone service and to his two callers.

You phone I answer

It's so lovely to hear your voice

You ask how I am

Although you may already know

Then you ask if I would write

Again, you know I'll always say yes

How can I turn you down

After all I owe you so much

You found me a friend

And you yourself are a friend

Both of you seem to understand me

Both of you care

**Even though both of you have partners I feel
the warmth you exude**

So always let me help when you can

Because I owe you so much

And there is no other way I can repay you

Even my thank you is too little

All I can ask of the two of you

Is to take care and remember one thing

The world needs wonderful volunteers like you

Ted..... February 2024

Tom, one of our Friend in Need callers, turns quiz maestro

Thomas Jenkins is a caller on our Friend in Need service and despite his many illnesses, including cancer and a muscle-wasting condition, he remains active and positive.

Tom, as he prefers to be called, thoroughly enjoys chatting to new people, trying to make them laugh, and to feel more connected to life. And when he's not chatting on the phone, Tom is a bit of a quiz maestro, so he has kindly written a special cryptic quiz for Age Matters on famous people. Have some fun trying to navigate Tom's cryptic clues. The answers are underneath but no cheating mind!

M-male **F**-female

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Roman 50 is with the heavy weight in the Amercian toilet (M) | 11. The birds beak dropped (M) |
| 2. The receipt opened the pearly ones (M) | 12. Franks off to the red planet (M) |
| 3. One of the Muppets is going crazy (M) | 13. The flat fish is in front of the prince (M) |
| 4. The wine jar asked for extra (F) | 14. The prince climbed over the wooden structure (M) |
| 5. The suit maker was very quick indeed (F) | 15. This famous duck broke wind (M) |
| 6. A movement in the trees scared the blackbird (M) | 16. The old coin with the famous ghost (M) |
| 7. The male goat went on vacation (F) | 17. I heard this actress drove a small car (F) |
| 8. The festive song became a chess piece (F) | 18. The sun rose with a foreign language (F) |
| 9. The glove puppet was wrapping a Christmas decoration (F) | 19. Tell the duchess to cook it in water (F) |
| 10. She was in wonderland with the barrel maker (M) | 20. The fools and horse's character is in the American state (M) |

- And the answers.....**
- 1.** ELTON JOHN
 - 2.** BILL GATES
 - 3.** OSCAR WILDE
 - 4.** DEMI MOORE
 - 5.** TAYLOR SWIFT
 - 6.** RUSSELL CROW
 - 7.** BILLY HOLLIDAY

- 8.** CAROL KING
- 9.** JUDY GARLAND
- 10.** ALICE COOPER
- 11.** BILL WITHERS
- 12.** BRUNO MARS
- 13.** RAY CHARLES
- 14.** HARRY STYLES

- 15.** DONALD TRUMP
- 16.** BOB MARLEY
- 17.** MINI DRIVER
- 18.** DAWN FRENCH
- 19.** KATE BLANCHETT
- 20.** DENZEL WASHINGTON

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

Age Matters

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