

Age Matters



The quarterly newsletter from Age Cymru

Autumn 2024

Join our campaign
against the
changes to winter
fuel payments

Claiming all your
benefits and
entitlements

Protecting
yourself with
vaccinations

How Pugh's
Garden Villages
are supporting our
Friend-in-Need
service

Victoria Lloyd
Chief Executive



If the summer months were dominated by the General Election, then we can safely say that the autumn months are being dominated by the Westminster Government's decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments.

The changes will mean that thousands of pensioners in Wales will miss out on payments of up to £300 to help with their heating costs if they don't claim pension credit. We believe that this is a wrong decision, and we are hugely concerned about the impact this will have on many older people's health and wellbeing.

Therefore, this edition contains important information to help you claim all your benefits and entitlements, including the all-important pension credit if you're eligible. You can also find out how to get involved in our campaign with Age UK. So far more than 500,000 people have signed our petition from across the UK.

In this edition, we've also got information on the immunisation programmes available this autumn which can play a vital role in helping to keep you well this winter as well as some handy tips on reducing your risk of falling over.

I know it's a little early to be talking about Christmas, but we couldn't help ourselves as we report on Pugh's Garden Villages who are raising money for our Friend-in-Need service by selling Christmas Pugh bears and its 'Bear in the Window' story books. They will also seek donations from customers using its Christmas tree cutting service.

And it wouldn't be Age Matters without a powerful poem from one of our volunteers, Terry, who once again highlights the importance of friendship.

Have a great autumn everyone.

Means testing the Winter Fuel Payments

We want Westminster Government to think again about their decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments which will result in thousands of pensioners, possibly in the same boat as you, missing out on up to £300 to help with fuel bills.

The changes were brought about with virtually no notice and with no compensatory measure to protect pensioners like you.

You might be one of the thousands of pensioners who will be impacted by this decision and are worried about making ends meet to stay warm this winter.

We're particularly worried about:

- Those of you who just miss out on Pension Credit because your very modest incomes, possibly from small occupational pensions, are slightly too high, particularly women.
- Those of you with high energy needs because you may have a disability or illness, or you live in an energy inefficient home which costs a lot of money to heat.
- Those of you who are amongst the estimated 56,000 pensioners in Wales who are eligible for Pension Credit but don't claim it.

Which is why together with Age UK we're campaigning hard to get the UK Government to think again. So far more than half a million people have signed our petition, with more than 26,000 of those signatures coming from Wales.

If you'd like to sign the petition, get involved in our campaign, or want more information, email Rhian Morgan at publicaffairs@agecymru.org.uk, call 07944996943 or go to www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/get-involved/campaigns/save-the-winter-fuel-payment/

If you'd like more information on claiming benefits and entitlements call Age Cymru Advice on 0300 303 44 98 Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm, email advice@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/more-money-in-your-pocket.



Have a conversation with the Age Cymru Partnership about claiming all your benefits and entitlements

The Age Cymru Partnership is urging older people across Wales to have a conversation with us as part of our 'More money in your pocket' campaign to support those of you who are missing out on thousands of pounds worth of benefits.

Our 2024 survey 'What matters to you?' found that nearly half (48%) of the 1300 people who responded said the cost-of-living crisis was a challenge in the past 12 months.

So, we're encouraging you to explore all your options, even if you couldn't claim previously, it's worth revisiting claims because your personal circumstances may have changed which could now make you eligible for certain benefits.

Following the Westminster Government's announcement that it's to restrict Winter Fuel Payments to those claiming Pension Credit.

It's more important than ever that you claim all your benefits and entitlements, especially Pension Credit as it's often referred to as a gateway benefit that can open support for you in so many other ways.

**For more information call
Age Cymru Advice on
0300 303 44 98, Monday to
Friday between 9am and 4pm,
email advice@agecymru.org.uk
or visit: [www.agecymru.org.uk/
more-money-in-your-pocket](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/more-money-in-your-pocket).**



This year's UK theme for International Day of Older People is The part we play: Celebrating the integral role of older people in our communities

To celebrate the many ways older people contribute to Welsh communities, Age Cymru volunteers were recently invited to meet the Minister for Social Care Dawn Bowden MS.

The volunteers are involved in a number of activities such as leading Tai Chi Qiong sessions, advocating on behalf of people who struggle to have their voice heard, being travel buddies, or becoming telephone befrienders.

The volunteers told the minister that volunteering is a joyous experience, and it has changed their lives for the better or made them feel a better version of themselves.

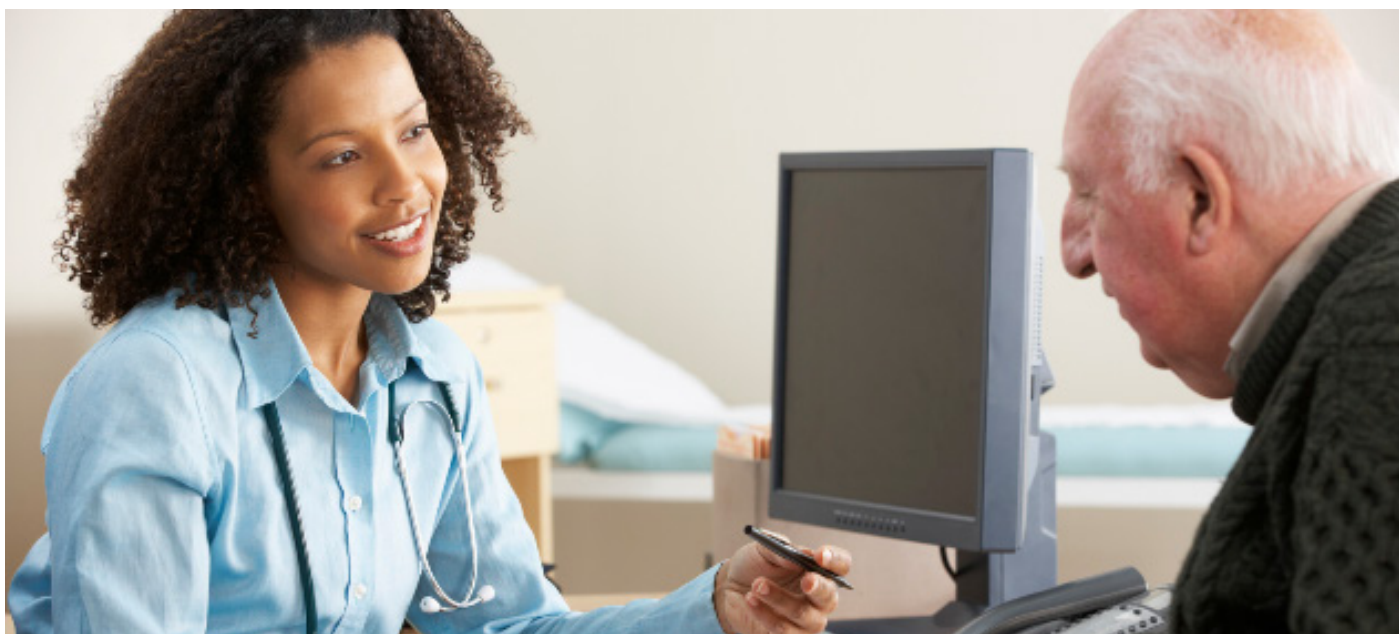
Corina Walker, aged 71, leads weekly Tai Chi Qiong sessions for older people in Cardiff. She says "Seventy-five people come to the classes each week to enjoy,

socialise, make friends, and feel part of something bigger. Most of the people who come are in their 70s and 80s. My eldest member is 94 and has been with me since I started the first class seven years ago.

"The sense of belonging and camaraderie is what keeps people coming back, as well as the wide range of benefits to health, balance and wellbeing. For many, it's an opportunity to connect and stay active, all the while building strong friendships."

For more information about Age Cymru's volunteering activities call 029 2043 1555 or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/volunteer.

Photo left to right: Victoria Lloyd, Age Cymru chief executive, with Dawn Bowden MS, minister for social care



Spread the Warmth campaign: Protect yourself now with vaccinations for this coming winter

Age Cymru's Spread the Warmth campaign is urging you to protect yourself with vaccinations now for this coming winter. Immunisation is as important in later life as it is in early childhood as we continue to benefit from getting routine vaccinations, especially in early autumn.

Some of you will need additional immunisations as you may be at an increased risk due to your age, or you may have a certain health condition. This year if you're aged 75 or over, then you can expect to be offered a new vaccination called the Respiratory Syncytial Virus or (RSV) vaccination.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

RSV infections can occur all year round, but just like most viruses, cases rise in autumn and winter. You can help protect yourself against serious illness from RSV by having the RSV vaccination when it is offered to you. The RSV vaccine won't be given at the same time as the COVID-19 and flu vaccinations. The vaccine will need to be given at a separate appointment.

Influenza (flu) and Covid-19 booster

The rollout of the Autumn/Winter 2024-25 influenza (flu) and covid-19 booster started from 1 October 2024. For those of you at an increased risk to complications of influenza, the annual flu vaccine is recommended.

With all vaccinations, it's recommended that you get your vaccination as soon as it becomes available and is offered to you. The sooner you are vaccinated the sooner

you will have immunity against the relevant circulating virus.

However, if you are already feeling unwell or have a fever, then tell the person giving the vaccination before you are vaccinated.

Also seek advice from a health professional about the different routine vaccinations that are available to you as an adult in your later years.

This information is available as part of Age Cymru's Spread the Warmth campaign which highlights the various ways you can keep yourself warm, safe, and well this winter. For more information about our campaign call Angharad Phillips on 029 2043 1555, email angharad.phillips@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/spreadthewarmth.



Is the lack of public toilets preventing you from getting out and about in your community?

Is the lack of safe, accessible, public toilets preventing you from getting out and about in your community whether you need to make a medical appointment, pay your bills, or just do some food shopping?

Well, you wouldn't be alone according to our latest annual survey where access to public toilets was cited as a major concern.

We've also heard from people who say the lack of suitable public toilets means they worry about not being able to access facilities when needed and so struggle to leave their homes, making them feel increasingly lonely and isolated.

For others, we've heard cases where some will deliberately de-hydrate themselves to reduce their need to visit a toilet when venturing out.

We will shortly be launching a national campaign on this issue, and we'd really appreciate your views, experiences, and support.

For more information email Rhian Morgan at publicaffairs@agecymru.org.uk, or call 07944996943.



With the right support you could reduce your risk of falling

Falls reduction work can save potentially thousands of older people from a life changing accident often requiring support from health and social care services, according to The National Falls Prevention Taskforce Wales during Falls Awareness Week 16 – 20 September 2024.

The Taskforce is an alliance focused on falls reduction for older people in Wales and includes Age Cymru, Age Connects Wales, Care & Repair Cymru, and St John's Ambulance Cymru alongside representatives from all seven health boards, national and local government, public, private, and other third sector organisations.

It has produced a free leaflet called Falling over is not an inevitable part of growing older that is full of handy tips to help reduce your risk of falling over, including how to check your home for potential trip hazards, manage your medicines to prevent dizziness and how to stay active to maintain strength and balance. It also highlights the importance of eating well to maintain strength and drinking enough water to prevent you feeling lightheaded.

The leaflet reminds you to monitor how many times you need to use the toilet, especially at night as this can increase the risk of falling. It reminds you to check your walking aids to make sure they are not wearing down. The leaflet also encourages you to look after your bones by eating calcium rich foods and doing some weight bearing exercises.

For more information or to order a falls reduction leaflet call 029 2043 1555, email enquiries@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/falls.

Why are we still waiting? Our research shows more needs to be done faster to help you get you the social care you need



At the beginning of September, we published our third annual report on delays in accessing social care. The report found that delays in getting an assessment, or a care package is speeding up slightly because of the efforts local councils have been making.

Despite this, nearly one in four of you are waiting more than 30 days for an assessment and one in six are waiting more than 30 days for care to be in place.

The research found that the demand for care isn't going down, and that those needing care require more than they did before the pandemic. As the population of Wales ages, much more needs to be done faster to meet these changes.

We found that many of you want improvements in the way you can get in touch with local councils. Thankfully, we found that councils across Wales are making changes to their 'first point of contact' to improve how information, advice and support can be given sooner.

We also found how short-term funding for wellbeing services and support for unpaid carers makes it difficult for councils to improve the services and support they can give.

This year we have a special focus on paying for social care. We found many that many of you are confused and frustrated with charges

for social care services. We heard of some instances where older people had been charged more than they should under Welsh law and how stressful this can be for families under pressure. However, we did hear from councils who are trying to improve how they explain the charging process and apply it correctly.

We also found poor communication between hospital staff and social care departments in some parts of Wales which can mean that some of you could end up staying in hospital longer than is necessary. But we did hear from councils who are making changes so that in the longer term, hospital admissions can be avoided.

We will use what we found through this research to campaign for change in meetings with politicians, local councils, and other officials.

If you would like to share your experiences of accessing social care, or would like more information, contact Helen Twidle on 029 2043 1555, email helen.twidle@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/why-are-we-waiting

Pugh's Garden Villages fundraising for Age Cymru's Friend-in-Need service during the run up to Christmas



Celebration events held at the Pugh's Garden Villages in Radyr and Wenvoe

Age Cymru has teamed up with Pugh's Garden Villages to raise vital funds for the charity's telephone friendship service called Friend-in-Need during the run up to Christmas.

The company will donate all the profits from the sale of Pugh's Christmas Bear and its 'Bear in the Window' book. They will also seek donations from customers using its Christmas tree cutting service.

Pugh's will also be inviting all their staff to join the Friend-in-Need service whereby they can make a friendship call and thereby help to combat loneliness and isolation.

To help launch the partnership Pugh's invited volunteers and those supported by Age Cymru to visit their centres for a free cuppa and mince pie.

Pugh's Amy Sinclair says, "We're thrilled to be partnering with Age Cymru this Christmastime through our 'Don't Bear Christmas Alone' campaign.

As a family-run business, the Friend in Need Service really struck a chord with us, and we're delighted to help raise vital funds for this service."

For more information about the fundraising activities or Age Cymru's Friend-in-Need service contact Amanda O'Shea on 029 2043 1555, email amanda.oshea@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/friend.

For more information on Christmastime through our 'Don't Bear Christmas Alone' campaign visit www.pughsgardencentre.co.uk/product-range/175/supporting-age-cymru-this-christmas

Advocacy Counts 9 finds advocacy support across Wales nearing crisis

Over the last 18 years Age Cymru has been reviewing the state of advocacy services in Wales, that is, those services that help support you to make informed choices, engage with professionals, take part in community activities, or have a better understanding of your rights.

The research is carried out every other year and this year's research in Advocacy Counts 9 found that advocacy services, advocates and the people they support are all under increasing pressure. Advocacy is a vital service, that prevents vulnerable people becoming passengers in their own lives, and helps them take control, but it's under threat.

Sadly, the number of paid advocates and services funded to deliver advocacy have all decreased since the last survey in 2022. Many of the reductions in provision are due to real terms cuts in funding. This comes at a time when more people are needing advocacy support and the challenges they face are becoming increasingly profound and more complex.

However, there has been a small increase in the number of advocacy services specifically for older people and a significant increase in the number of volunteer advocates working in a variety of advocacy services across Wales, mainly due to Age Cymru's HOPE project.

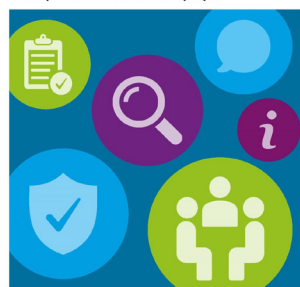
If you'd like more information about Age Cymru's Advocacy Services, either to help you access the support you need to live a more independent life, or you'd like to become a volunteer advocate to support others, get in touch with us.

For more information call 029 2043 1555, email advocacy@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy

HOPE
age connects wales.
ageCymru

Advocacy Counts 9

A review of advocacy services for adults in Wales with a particular focus on older people



The Camaraderie Club – connecting Powys veterans in a new social telephone group

Age Cymru Powys is inviting veterans aged 50+ living in Powys to join its Camaraderie Club – a new group run by veterans for veterans. The group will help foster comradeship and banter amongst members, in addition to sharing presentations of interest and providing essential advice.

The Club is based on a telephone group that enables veterans to chat with one another, reconnect with old friends, make new ones, and swap tales about times spent in the armed forces.

The charity will call members at a regular time once a fortnight where they will join a small group of other veterans on a group call lasting up to an hour. A facilitator from Age Cymru Powys will manage the calls so they are free of charge to members.

Gavin, a member who lives in LLangammarch Wells says "I enjoy the camaraderie and shared experiences with the other veterans. It's great to talk about topics of interest and things that only other veterans understand, without even having to leave the house."

If you'd like more information call Age Cymru Powys on 01686 623707 or email enquiries@acpowys.org.uk.

Age Cymru nominates the Wales Veterans Football Association for its Changemaker accolade



Age Cymru has nominated the Wales Veterans Football Association as its Changemaker, an accolade that celebrates those who have not only challenged ageing stereotypes but who have also trailblazed in their field.

The accolade was awarded following the successful staging of the Veterans World Cup in Cardiff during the summer 2024.

The four-day tournament, held at the Cardiff University Sports Fields, featured one category for the over 70s and another for the over 75s. It attracted teams from across the world including Australia, Denmark, England, Germany, Norway, USA and of course Wales.

And to put the icing on the cake Wales won the over 70s tournament and were runners up in the over 75s tournament.

But the main goal of the tournament is for older players to experience the joy, passion, health and friendship across all borders and at the same time provide an unforgettable football experience for those involved, which was very much apparent with Wales 2024.

Celebrations continued long into the night at a Gala Dinner held at the Mercure Hotel in Cardiff

with more than 500 people in attendance. During the evening Welsh goalkeeping legend Neville Southall MBE presented the winning trophies.

Nominate your Changemaker

If you know of a person or a group that has defied ageing stereotypes and who has trailblazed in their field, why not nominate them to Age Cymru's Changemakers project. Your Changemaker will be celebrated alongside our veteran footballers in an online exhibition and may be shared on social media and in the press.

For more information about the Changemakers project call Age Cymru on 0300 303 44 98, email gwanwyn@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/gwanwyn

Festive Gift Box Appeal

The Age Cymru partnership is appealing to you to fill a wrapped shoe box with gifts to help make this Christmas a little brighter. And we're delighted to be working in partnership with Age Connects Wales and Care & Repair Cymru again this year, so we can reach more older people across Wales.

Christmas can be a lonely time for some older people who have no close family to visit over the festive period. So, we hope that having a gift to open may make a huge difference. The gift boxes will be delivered to someone living in a care home or someone we know through our support services who may be alone this Christmas.

How you can help

Find a shoe box and wrap the box and lid separately in Christmas paper, or you can use a festive pre-printed box, and fill it with gifts. Then attach a label indicating whether your gifts are for a male, female, or generic. Please don't seal your gift box but place a rubber band around the closed box. We ask that you don't include personal information about yourself.

Once your gift box is filled you can drop them into your nearest local office. Please ensure your gift boxes are delivered by Friday 29 November 2024.

For more information about the gift box appeal or to find a local drop-off point near you, visit www.agecymru.org.uk/giftboxappeal, call 029 2043 1534, or email giftboxappeal@agecymru.org.uk



The Big Knit: little hats, big difference

Join us to knit little hats for innocent smoothie bottles and help raise vital funds for our charity. Every year, an army of woolly warriors take up their knitting needles and crochet hooks as part of the Big Knit for Age Cymru and we want you to join us.

What is The Big Knit?

Big Knit is a partnership with innocent drinks. We've been working together since 2003, asking you to knit little hats for the tops of innocent smoothie bottles. Every hat knitted raises vital funds to help us provide much-needed services and support. But it takes a lot of little hats to make a big difference - that's why we need as many people as possible to get knitting.

How to get involved

We've some patterns for you to try from a simple stripey bobble hat to a unicorn and everything in between. Or you can be creative and design your own. You can then drop them into your local Age Cymru office or post them to us. The deadline for us to receive your hats is 1 July 2025.

You can either download the patterns from our website or give us a call and we'll post some out to you.

For more information on The Big Knit and how to get involved, please visit www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved, call 029 2043 1534 or email fundraising@agecymru.org.uk.

Poet's Corner, By Terry

Terry has been part of the Friend in Need family for 28 months and he freely admits that the weekly Friendship calls are a lifeline for him, and they help him through each week. Without them his world would be very different. He supports us by writing wonderful poems for Friend in Need, which we adore. Thank you, Terry.

The Need for Friends

Friends help us survive this world
I've never been sure how they do it
I've never been sure why they do it
I think sometimes even they don't know the answer
However, in the last few years I've learnt
That without friends you will feel total isolation
Without friends the days seem never ending
So, when you lose your life partner
Friends are always there to help you
Even though the grief you suffer will never leave you
Friends can help guide you through
They will be there to support you on those dark days
I've been very lucky really
I have had the love of a wonderful woman
Unfortunately, she died
However, my friends helped me carry on.

Ready to make a real difference?

Fundraise for Age Cymru and help us be there for older people when they need us most. Today, older people are confronting some of the toughest challenges imaginable. Many live in poverty, struggle to access basic care, and to maintain their dignity. Too often they face these hardships alone with the TV or radio their only companion.

What difference will your fundraising make?

£10 will answer an enquiry to an older person

£15 will support friendship calls to two older people every week

How we're helping, thanks to supporters like you in 2023/24:

- 28,179 information and advice enquiries answered, offering guidance and support

- 11,594 friendship calls made, providing company and companionship

- 80.5% of older people said they were 'very satisfied' with the support they received from Age Cymru

What can you do?

You could take part in a challenge event, or arrange a fundraiser with friends, family, or colleagues. You could also remember us when celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, or weddings where you can ask for donations instead of gifts.

For more ideas of how you can support older people in Wales call 029 20431555, email fundraising@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved

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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