

Age Matters

The quarterly newsletter from Age Cymru

Winter 2024/25

**Protecting
yourself from
winter viruses**

**Update on
our winter fuel
campaign**

**Groundbreaking
toolkit for care
home residents
launched**

**More than a
million views
for our online
photography
collection**



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The cold weather we've experienced at the start of the New Year is a blunt reminder of the challenges that winter can bring.

That's why this edition leads with practical advice on how to protect yourself from winter viruses, as well information on how to obtain our free annual guide called *Winter wrapped up* that gives hints and tips on how to stay healthy and what benefits might be available to you, and we highlight the latest information about our winter fuel payment campaign.

We've an update on the Wales Against Scams Partnership joint initiative with North Wales Police to provide older people in their area with door stickers reminding them not to hand over money on their doorstep. Let's hope this is a first step and other areas follow suit.

We also feature two examples from our network partner Age Cymru Dyfed, describing

how they've been able to transform the lives of older people; one through timely information and advice, and another using online technology.

And we're very proud to say that *This Is Older*, our groundbreaking online collection of photographs of older people, has now received more than a million views.

Hopefully businesses and organisations will use this opportunity to replace tired images of wrinkly hands, when they want to represent older people, with more realistic and vibrant photography.

Keep yourselves safe and I hope you enjoy this edition.

Victoria Lloyd
Chief Executive



Protecting yourself from the winter viruses

Bugs and winter viruses love the cold weather, helping them spread more easily from person to person. The NHS will offer vaccinations to you if you're considered more at risk from catching a virus such as flu, covid-19, or the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). But there are also other ways you can keep well such as washing your hands more often, and with more care.

If you touch your face, eyes, nose and mouth then any viruses that you've encountered can enter your airways. So, try to avoid doing this.

We used to be told to cover our mouths with our hands, but now we know that by catching our

coughs and sneezes with our hands we're more likely to spread our germs when we touch things afterwards.

The advice is now to catch a cough or sneeze into the fold of your arm, so you're less likely to spread germs with your hands.

Here are a few tips about what you can do to help avoid catching bugs and viruses.

- Catch a cough or sneeze in a disposable tissue
- Dispose of your used tissue in a bin or toilet
- Wash your hands with soap and water regularly but especially after blowing your nose, catching a sneeze, or rubbing your nose or eyes.
- Always wash your hands after you've returned from being out, especially after using public transport, shopping trolleys and baskets, and touching door handles.
- Wipe surfaces around your home, such as door and cupboard handles, television remotes, and light switches, with disinfectant.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a snood or scarf if you're feeling cold.

For more information on staying well this winter visit www.agecymru.wales/spreadthewarmth or call 029 2043 1555 for advice.



Age Cymru's Winter Wrapped Up guide

Our *Winter wrapped up* guide is updated every autumn, underpinning our Spread the Warmth campaign. It contains lots of advice on health-related matters such as vaccinations, keeping active, and staying warm whilst out and about.

The guide also covers topics such as heating your home efficiently and

safely, ways in which you might be able to reduce your heating costs, and how to access financial help with your bills.

Contact Age Cymru Advice on 0300 303 44 98 to order your free copy, or you can email us at advice@agecymru.org.uk.



Campaigning to reverse the changes to claiming winter fuel payments

Age Cymru is continuing to campaign to get the UK Government to reverse their decision to means-test the winter fuel payment. We're also urging the Welsh Government to provide support for energy bills by expanding the eligibility criteria for the discretionary assistance fund or to provide other financial support.

We're particularly concerned about those of you who are: just above the threshold to receive pension credit; one of the 56,000 older people in Wales who are eligible for pension credit but who are not claiming it; living with a disability or an illness and who need to heat your homes throughout the day.

Many of you have told us that you will now have to choose between eating, heating, and using hot water this winter.

Since the launch of our campaign, we've been promoting a UK-wide petition alongside colleagues in England, Northern Ireland, and

Scotland, that has so far received nearly 600,000 signatures, 29,794 of whom are from Wales. The petition is available to sign online until 11 February 2025. To add your name to the petition visit: www.agecymru.wales/save-winter-fuel-payment.

If you've been impacted by the decision and would like to share your story with us, contact our public affairs officer, Rhian Morgan on 07944 996943 or e-mail rhian.morgan@agecymru.org.uk

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.wales/more-money-in-your-pocket.



North Wales: new stickers to help you protect yourself from doorstep scammers

From the start of 2025 North Wales Police will begin distributing stickers designed to remind residents in their area not to hand over money to anyone at the front door, regardless of the stories that scammers might tell.

They are designed to be affixed to the inside of the door so you can see their clear warning before opening the door. They'll be accompanied by a short leaflet providing information on common doorstep scams and how to report a scam.

The stickers, funded by the Office of the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, have been designed by members of Wales Against Scams Partnership led by Age Cymru, along with North Wales Police, and Trading Standards, together with assistance from dementia support groups. It's hoped that similar stickers will be rolled out across the rest of Wales following this pilot.

If you encounter a scam or a suspected scam, you should report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040, or online at www.actionfraud.police.uk. You can also report scams to the police on 101.

Age Cymru launches groundbreaking toolkit to place residents at the centre of their care

Age Cymru has launched Supporting the wellbeing of older care home residents - A toolkit to bring together helpful resources to enable care homes, families, friends and residents to create the ideal environment for residents' wellbeing.

This toolkit, funded by the Welsh Government, has been informed by conversations with residents and professionals across care homes in Wales, as well as local authorities and health boards, drawing on a huge wealth of knowledge and experience.

It's designed to focus on the four main stages of life in a care home: moving successfully into a home; taking part in meaningful activities; finding a sense of purpose; and having a dignified end of life.

Mirroring the principles underpinning the Welsh Government's Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the toolkit strives for residents to feel safe and protected, able to learn new things, and have personal dignity throughout their time at the home.

Age Cymru's Kelly Barr, who co-ordinated the toolkit, says "Care homes have faced unimaginable pressures and challenges over the last few years, and despite this, we have heard incredible examples of how care homes continue to put residents at the centre of their care. They also want to integrate residents' families and carers into their lives as well as those active in the local communities. Older residents should be able to take part in activities that matter to them, feel useful, learn new skills, and stay connected to people that matter to them."

Care homes staff, friends and families can download a copy of the toolkit at: www.agecymru.wales/carehomes, call 029 2043 1555, or email kelly.barr@agecymru.org.uk.



Could you, or someone you know, benefit from the support of our dementia advocacy project?

Could you, or someone you know, benefit from the support of our dementia advocacy project, as we know that people living with dementia in Wales can face a unique set of challenges in almost all areas of their lives.

Age Cymru's independent dementia advocacy project is committed to championing the voices of anyone 18+ living in Wales with a diagnosis of dementia. We can help raise your voice with professionals, including healthcare staff, social workers, housing officers and people working in third sector organisations. This means that people living with dementia have the chance to be heard in all aspects of their lives.

Typically, our advocates can help people with something life changing such as moving from

living in their own home to a different care setting, planning for the future, and accessing care and support when needed, and to make sure they know their rights, and for those rights to be upheld and respected.

Equally important, our advocates can help people to stay connected to the things that matter most to them such as their long-held passions or interests.

If you think that we can support you, or someone you know who's living with dementia, call 029 2043 1555, e-mail dementiaadvocacy@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.wales/advocacy.



More than a million visits made to groundbreaking photography collection

Since its launch in 2023, Age Cymru's online image collection of realistic photographs of older people in Wales has been viewed more than a million times and has been used by various organisations across the UK, Australia, and the US, to promote their work.

The collection, called *This is Older*, was funded by the Arts Council of Wales to provide images that better represent the diversity and experience of older people like you, living in Wales today. It largely features photographs taken by one of Wales' most renowned photographers Jon Pountney, whose unique approach has enabled him to capture older people doing the things that matter most to them whether it be gardening, swimming, or singing in a band.

From a scooter riding skinhead to a mountain sheep farmer, and from wild swimmers to allotment keepers, the gallery reflects the wide range of older people living in Wales and their equally diverse interests. Whether it's documenting someone's newly acquired skills or biggest passion, the photographs capture the joy and vigour that can be found in later life.

If you're able please visit the library on Getty Images' free to use online platform Unsplash and let us know what you think about the photographs. You can access the site via Age Cymru's *This is older* web page: www.agecymru.wales/thisisolder. For further information call Kelly Barr on 029 2043 1555 or email kelly.barr@agecymru.org.uk.



Help us help you get the right care, in the right place, first time

This winter, make sure you know which NHS services and health professionals can help you get the right care, in the right place, first time.

For fast advice and treatment this winter, visit your local pharmacy. Many community pharmacies offer advice and treatment for common infections, and most pharmacies in Wales can offer treatment and advice for 27 common ailments like indigestion, eye infections and warts through the Common Ailments Service.

NHS 111 Wales offers urgent health advice, both online and on the phone, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can use the online symptom checker or, if you call 111, you'll speak to a highly trained call handler to make sure you are offered the right care.

Your mental health is important too. For confidential listening and emotional support, the CALL Helpline can also provide free support around the clock by calling 0800 132 737, or you can email call@helpline.wales. If you need to talk to a mental health professional urgently, call NHS 111 Wales and press option 2.

Looking after yourself in winter is so important, and accessing the right services, first time will help to ease pressures on emergency services and GPs, and make sure you receive the help you need as quickly as possible.

You can find more information on accessing the right NHS services at www.gov.wales/helpushelpyou.

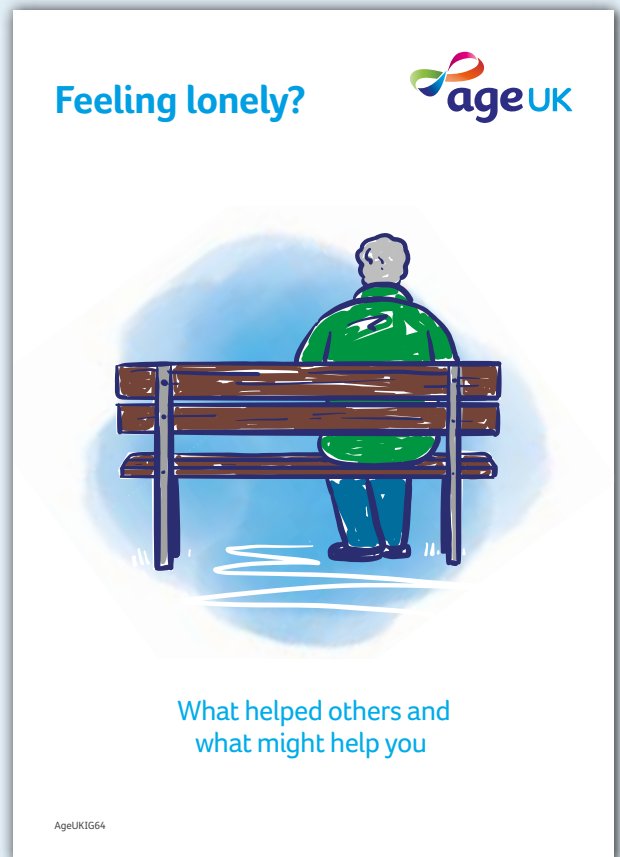
New guide to help you cope with loneliness

Age UK has launched a new guide called *Feeling lonely* to help you cope with bouts of loneliness. The guide says everyone feels lonely from time to time and while it sometimes passes there are occasions where it doesn't.

Based on group discussions with older people and carers about their experiences of loneliness, it looks at what helped them, who did they turn to for support, and what advice they'd give to others who are feeling lonely.

It explores what loneliness can feel like, some of the circumstances that can lead to feelings of loneliness, and what might help you start to feel better.

To obtain a free copy *Feeling lonely* call 0300 303 44 98 or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/information-resources.



Navigating your healthcare options: What you need to know if you're waiting for surgery or treatment

NHS Wales is working hard to reduce waiting times for surgery and treatment. If you're currently on a waiting list, there's some good news that could help you receive care more quickly.

If you're waiting for surgery or treatment, depending on your clinical needs, you may be offered an appointment outside your health board area. This could mean receiving treatment at a hospital in another health board area, at a regional centre, or even with an external provider. These options are designed to ensure that you receive the quickest and most specialised care available.

Being treated outside your usual health board area can have significant benefits. For instance, you might be able to see a specialist sooner or access treatments that are not available locally. This approach aims to reduce waiting times and improve the overall quality of care you receive.

If you're offered an appointment outside your health board area, it's important to understand the logistics involved. Your health board will advise you whether you're eligible for support with any travel and transport needs. This support can help ease any concerns about the distance and ensure that you can attend your appointments without added stress.

Remember, the goal is to provide you with the best possible care, as quickly as possible. If you have any questions or need further information, don't hesitate to contact your health board. They are there to help you and ensure that your healthcare journey runs as smoothly as possible.

For more information visit
www.gov.wales/helpushelpyou.





How Age Cymru Dyfed transformed the life of a 76-year struggling with chronic pain, poor housing and financial challenges

A 76-year-old client living in a private rented property with her adult son who has disabilities, faced significant challenges due to health issues, financial hardship, and living in an unsuitable home.

The client experienced chronic pain from arthritis and had difficulty navigating her stairs, even with a stairlift in place. Her son's limited mobility further complicated their living situation. Financially, the client's income consisted of a state pension and a small private pension, while her son received part-time wages, and some benefits.

Following Age Cymru Dyfed's intervention the client was able to claim a higher rate of attendance allowance, pension credit, full council tax support, and housing benefit, thereby significantly improving her financial stability and overall well-being.

Recognising her struggle with the stairs, the charity also supported the client's registration for social housing resulting in the client being

awarded top banding status and therefore improving her chances of securing a more suitable home.

To enhance her social life, the charity assisted with a successful blue badge application, making it easier for her friend to take her out. They also contacted her energy supplier to ensure she received paper bills, thereby reducing her anxiety about managing utility bills.

Throughout the process, the client's independence and confidence grew and she now knows how to access support if needed and is in a more secure financial and housing position.

For more information on the work of Age Cymru Dyfed's Information and Advice services contact Lynn Hughes-Davies on 03333 447 874 or email lynne.hughes-davies@agecymrudyfed.org.uk



A story from a carer whose mother used our Friend in Need service

My mother, who sadly passed away last year, was registered disabled and there were times when I was required to help with her mobility. However, in 2020, (when my mother was 88 yrs of age), four days before the COVID-19 lockdown, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and Dementia.

Hence contact was made with the Memory Clinic at Llandough Hospital in the Vale of Glamorgan, where I asked for some support, and they advised me to contact Age Cymru's befriending team, Friend in Need

Once the initial introductions were concluded, my mother looked forward to the volunteer calling her once a week. However, although we could go out, we always had to get back home in time for the volunteer's call.

During the call I knew she would be occupied for a while, giving me the chance to get on with a few jobs such as cleaning and washing up, and I took advantage of these moments as a brief period of respite for me.

For those of us who do live on our own, the weekly calls provide an extra level of monitoring of the person we support, and I am eternally grateful for the service offered by Age Cymru.

The interaction offered by the team and their volunteers to people who do not have opportunities to leave their homes to socialise is vital and should not be underestimated. Thank you for being there.

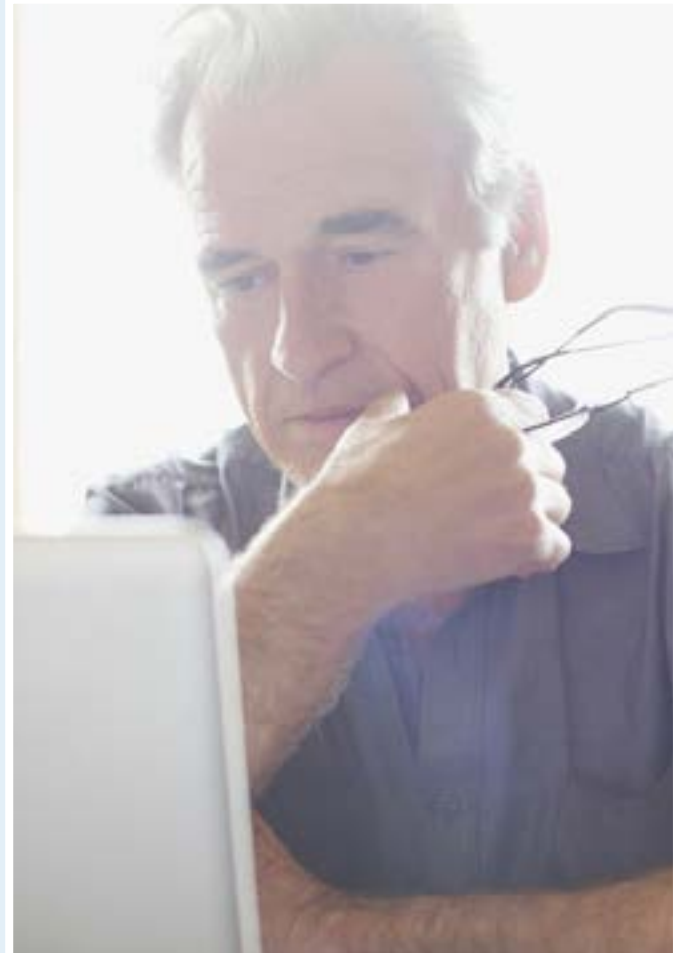
In June 2020, we launched our telephone befriending service called Friend in Need (FiN). The service provides a free weekly 30-minute telephone friendship call for people in Wales who are 70 or over. If you'd like to become a FiN volunteer and make friendship calls to older people, call 0330 303 4498, email volunteer@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/befriender for further information.

Age Cymru Dyfed: Transforming lives through digital skills

An 84-year-old Newcastle United fan felt there was nothing interesting online. But with the help of Age Cymru Dyfed, he's discovered engaging online content tailored to his interests that includes watching the highlights of his beloved Newcastle United on YouTube and tuning into The Black and White Army podcast for matchday discussions.

He's also created a Spotify playlist which he listens to through his Alexa speaker. So, with his newly acquired digital skills the client now enjoys football, podcasts, and music every day across his devices, thereby transforming his digital experience.

For more information on how Age Cymru Dyfed is transforming lives through digital skills contact Peter McIlroy on 03333 447 874 or email p.mcilroy@agecymrudyfed.org.uk



Tell us your stories about growing older in Wales

If you have an experience, good or bad, about growing older in Wales then we'd like to know about it. We can use your stories to inform our policy making so we remain relevant to the lives of older people in Wales. We can also use your stories, if we have your permission, to influence politicians and other decision makers, in addition to highlighting issues in the media. So, if you think you have a story to tell, please get in touch.

Call Michael Phillips on 07794 366224 or email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk.



Poet's Corner, By Terry

How do I manage?

How did I manage before you?
I'm not sure I did?

How did I manage when we were
together?

Easy you knew how to manage me
How do I manage now you're gone?
Again, that's easy as I don't
Or should I say I didn't

And that's because Friend in Need arrived
They found me someone to phone weekly
My Friend gets my mood swings
My Friend never judges me
My Friend makes me laugh
And all this as a Volunteer
An unpaid Volunteer who cares
So now while I still struggle
I now have a way to cope
All that's due to Friend in Need

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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