



Age Matters

The quarterly newsletter
from Age Cymru

Summer 2023

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 **ageCymru**

Creating an age friendly Wales

Welcome



Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive

Welcome to our Summer edition of Age Matters. In this edition you can find out about our Big Step fundraiser. We were absolutely thrilled when the Mini Vinnies Action group from St Joseph's Primary School in Cardiff told us they are supporting our Big Step fundraiser. Equally impressive was the amount of work they have done to better understand the challenges facing many older people and then following their motto by 'turning concern into action'.

We're encouraging people to seek sponsorship for committing to 10,000 steps a day – or as many as they can for the month of July to help support our invaluable advice and friendship services.

Keeping with the walking theme, read about our celebration on National Walking Month and the value of joining one of our Nordic Walking groups as a walker or a volunteer.

We've got information on the research we've conducted into applying for blue badges and for accessing social care responding to the issues people have raised with us. You can also read about the help and support we delivered last year, with our year in numbers.

Finally, we say goodbye to our colleague Eleri Lloyd Jones and say hello to Caryl Jones at Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn in news from our local partner.

St Joseph's Primary School in Cardiff signs up to Age Cymru's Big Step fundraiser

St Joseph's Primary School in Cardiff has signed up to take part in Age Cymru's Big Step fundraiser in July.

After pupils reflected on the effects of the pandemic upon their older relatives, they decided to support older people in as many ways as possible. The Mini Vinnies Action group, whose motto is 'Turn Concern into Action' did just that and organised visits to care homes where they entertained residents with music and set up pen pal partnerships with lots of older people. They even entered, and won, a St Fagans based writing competition about the past as part of Dementia Action Week.

And their latest challenge is to take part in Age Cymru's Big Step fundraiser in July where the charity will be holding its annual fundraiser to help raise vital funds for its work.

Supporters will be asked to walk 10,000 steps a day throughout the month and seek sponsorship for their efforts from friends, families, and colleagues.

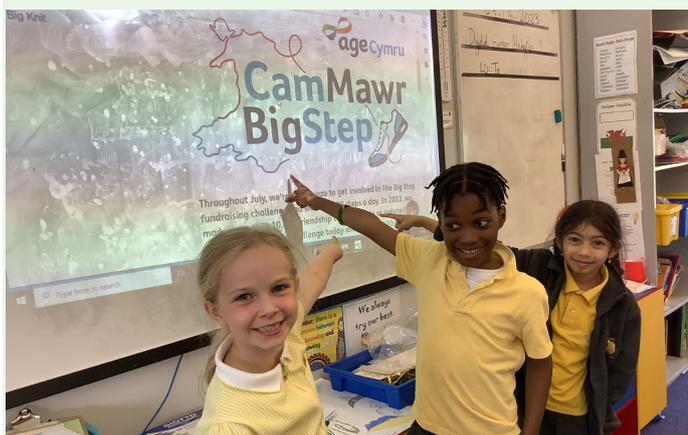
In 2022, the charity made more than 10,000 friendship calls to lonely older people, so it's challenging the public to match that achievement by completing the same number of steps each day or as near to the target as possible.

Age Cymru's chief executive Victoria Lloyd says "We were absolutely thrilled when the Mini Vinnies Action Group told us they are supporting our Big Step fundraiser. Equally impressive was the amount of work they have done to better

understand the challenges facing many older people and then following their motto by ‘turning concern into action’.”

“With the cost-of-living crisis and 220,000 older people in Wales saying they feel lonely, there’s a pressing need to reach out to even more older people which is why our telephone friendship and advice services are so important right now.”

You can help Age Cymru support older people across Wales by signing up for The Big Step and raising vital funds for the charity. Visit agecymru.org.uk/thebigstep or call 029 2043 1555. And if you raise more than £50, you’ll get a special Big Step T-shirt!



Blue Badges: local authorities in Wales need to promote alternatives to online applications

We’ve been increasingly hearing from older people who have limited or no online access and are having difficulty applying for their blue badge. People have told us that they often have to rely on family or friends to support them, or for those with no support, they’re either giving up on applying completely or experiencing unnecessary worry and anxiety.

One older person told us that they’ve been so worried about making an online blue badge application and the possibility of losing their

badge and independence that they’ve been having sleepless nights.

In response we spoke to all 22 local authorities in Wales and in most cases, it was made apparent by the people we spoke to that the best way to make an application was to go online.

We found that all local authorities provide one or more alternatives to online application processes such as face-to-face, postal, telephone, and even home visits in some cases, but some authorities seem reluctant to promote their alternatives. We also heard from several people who told us they found it difficult to find an appropriate contact number for a local authority to seek advice when having problems applying online. This all results in older people not online having a poorer experience than those that are online.

We’re calling on local authorities to better promote that people don’t have to use online technologies to apply for the blue badge parking scheme, and that alternative processes are available.

We also want older people to know that they can request an alternative to an online application process if that’s how they prefer to engage with their local authority.

Age Cymru’s chief executive Victoria Lloyd says “Putting up barriers such as only promoting online applications is going to prevent many older people from receiving their blue badge, an award that provides a lifeline in so many ways.”

“We would therefore urge local authorities to promote contact numbers in places such as local hubs, GP surgeries, places of worship, and supermarkets; places where older people visit and where they can view important information. Local authorities should also consider placing information in local directories if they don’t already do so. And if they produce any posters or advertisements, they need to make it clear that people can still engage with them offline.”

For more information about the research contact Michael Phillips on 07794 366224 or email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk



Why are we still waiting? Our research again shows increasing delays in social care provision

The number of older people receiving a social care package more than tripled in the last financial year, according to our research.

Although many more people were supported, delays in getting an assessment have increased with nearly one in five older people waiting more than 30 days. In the previous year the equivalent figure was just one in ten.

And once peoples' needs have been assessed, more than one in five had to wait more than a month for a social care package, which again has doubled compared to the previous year.

These delays have a significant detrimental impact on those individuals waiting, their carers, family and their wider support network. The delays in assessment and support being implemented means that many people rely on loved ones to provide unpaid care while they wait. In our recent annual 'What Matters to You?' survey, we found that there was an increase of 55% in the amount of people who found caring a challenge in the last 12 months, in comparison to last year. With many people who are struggling to care for loved ones.

Discussions with local authorities on the efforts they're making to clear the backlogs revealed a mixed picture. Some told us they think the expected peaks in demand for social care after the pandemic have happened, whereas others believe that the largest increases in demand are still to come.

We found that local authorities are making genuine attempts to improve the delivery of adult social services, but the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis over the last year mean that these changes are not having a large enough effect, quickly enough for older people desperately waiting for support.

Recommendations from the report are similar to last year and include an improvement in communication with people waiting for care, a bigger focus on helping those waiting the longest, and for local authorities to share good practice on what works well.

We're looking to talk with more older people, families and loved ones about their experience of waiting for an assessment of social care needs or waiting for the implementation of a care package. Please email Helen Twidle at policy@agecymru.org.uk or call 029 2043 1571.

Guide launched to help older people claim all their entitlements

Age Cymru has launched its *More Money in Your Pocket* guide to help and encourage older people claim all their benefit entitlements.

Despite many struggling to pay their bills during the current cost-of-living crisis, more than £200m worth of pension credit goes unclaimed in Wales each year which is in addition to the huge amounts left unclaimed for a raft of other benefits.

Between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, we had 73,728 visits to our benefits advice pages on our website in addition to thousands of calls to our advice line, demonstrating how important the issue of financial support is becoming to older people.

We know that some older people don't claim as they may think they're not eligible, perhaps because they own their own home or have savings. Some are put off by the claims process or simply don't realise the range of support that is available to them in older age. And others might feel they are managing or don't want to be seen as needing to claim. Hopefully, this guide will encourage older people to seek the support they need to claim all their benefit entitlements.

To order a copy of the *More Money In Your Pocket* guide call 0300 303 44 98 between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday, or email advice@agecymru.org.uk. Alternatively, you can download a copy from our website: www.agecymru.org.uk/moneyguides



Energy network companies and leading charities join forces to support older people

Older people who are in or at risk of fuel poverty are the focus of a £1million partnership launched by the UK's gas infrastructure companies with three national charities.

Age Cymru, Age Scotland, and Age UK have signed up to the collaboration that involves SGN, as well as the other gas distribution networks (GDNs) Cadent, Wales & West Utilities, and Northern Gas Networks.

The campaign will look to ensure that older people in the UK are aware of and assisted to access the support services that help increase household income, including benefits checks. It will also provide information on how to use energy safely and efficiently at home.

Rising energy bills over the past 12 months have led to more people feeling worried about their ability to stay warm, safe and healthy at home.

Therefore, the four GDNs are helping each charity in their coverage area with resources, including funding for benefits advisers, who will help older people gain access to the benefits and the monetary support they're entitled to, potentially increasing their household income by up to £2,000 a year on average.

Age Cymru's chief executive Victoria Lloyd says "We're grateful to be working alongside Wales and West Utilities to reach vulnerable older customers across Wales at a time when we know thousands of people are struggling with soaring costs. This partnership will be so important in helping us reach more older people and provide the vital support they need at such a difficult time."



Nearly 70 older people Nordic Walk around Bute Park to celebrate National Walking Month

Age Cymru Nordic Walking groups from Brecon, Cardiff, Pontypridd, and the Vale of Glamorgan, recently came together for a special Nordic Walk in Cardiff's Bute Park to celebrate National Walking Month.

With glorious sunshine in the capital, the walkers were further blessed with a complimentary afternoon tea in the Hilton Hotel next to the park.

At Age Cymru we've been setting up Nordic Walking groups throughout Wales for several years. Nordic Walking is one of Europe's fastest growing forms of physical activity and is a great way of staying healthy. You walk using a pair of specially designed, lightweight poles that provide additional support meaning you get more from the exercise.

The activity is ideally suited to help older people build core strength, keep fit, and improve their balance which are all factors that can help prevent falls – a significant concern for many older people.

Age Cymru's Healthy Ageing Officer Amy Lloyd says "Nordic Walking is one of the most effective activities that older people can do to improve their health, strength, and balance as the poles virtually double the strengthening provided by ordinary walking.

"Each group is led by trained volunteers who provide a range of walks to suit all levels of fitness and abilities. The groups also provide the perfect excuse to go for a cuppa

and a natter after each walk!"

Nordic walking has many benefits, one of our volunteer walk leaders, Sue Prosser, told us how Nordic Walking has impacted her:

Sue Prosser (top left photo, far left) Nordic Walking in the hills above Brecon

"Although I'm 70 this year, I'm in good health. I joined the Nordic walking group on retirement as I had lot of friends who were already members.

I particularly enjoy the social aspects of the group as everybody is very friendly and chatty. New members are always welcomed, and soon become firm friends.

The social aspect of the group was invaluable after my husband died, getting me out of the house with friends and enjoying the fresh air and spectacular walks helped take my mind off my grief.

I have since trained to be a leader, and now walk with different groups three times a week. We vary the walks to make the most of the beautiful area that we live in, and on Fridays adapt the walks to suit some members who are not as able as others.

I would definitely recommend people to join an activity group such as Nordic walking as it provides exercise, fresh air, stunning scenery, companionship and a sense of well-being."

If you'd like more information about Age Cymru's Nordic Walking groups, contact Amy Lloyd on 029 2043 1555, email physicalactivity@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/nordicwalking

Employers need to provide more support for their older workers finds research

Business in the Community Cymru (BITC Cymru) and the Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research at Swansea University carried out research last year on employers' perceptions and attitudes to older workers.

It found that although most organisations say they understand, value and consult with their older workers, many didn't have specific policies and practices in place to recruit and support the over 50s.

Only a third offer flexible working hours and / or part-time options and fewer than a quarter offer flexible working locations or phased retirement. Yet, the researchers argue, flexible working can support the over 50s with work-life balance, caring responsibilities, health conditions, a bridge to retirement as well as other commitments and priorities.

The researchers also say employers need to introduce a proactive approach to flexible working. For example, making a statement in job adverts about flexible working, having a conversation in staff annual reviews, and communicating the types of flexible working available. By offering more flexible working opportunities employers can benefit by attracting and recruiting the over 50s, as well as retaining the range of skills and experiences they bring to the workplace.

For more information email jill.salter@bitc.org.uk or call 07793 443893. You can find out more about the Age at Work Programme at www.agecymru.org.uk/ageatwork You may also call Age Cymru on 029 2043 1555.

Age at Work is delivered by BITC Cymru in partnership with Age Cymru thanks to support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Protect your skin from burns this summer

It can be easy to underestimate the strength of the sun in Wales, especially when near the coast, or on the water and there's a gentle breeze. However, as we age our skin becomes thinner, in fact if you're aged 65 and over your skin is often 15 times thinner than it was in your 30s and 40s. Just 10 minutes in the sun without sun protection can leave you with a nasty burn.

So, with extreme and dramatic changes in our weather it's strongly recommended that we use sun protection throughout the summer and well into September. It's worth applying sunscreen as you get dressed each morning as a base and again at least 30 mins before going outside and keep reapplying throughout the day if you can.

Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 30, ideally 50 (SPF 30/SPF 50) and with a five-star UVA and UVB protection rating, you can usually find this in small print on the back of the bottle.

Even if you only plan on sitting in the shaded area of your garden. But be mindful that the sun moves, and you could end up a short time later with sunburn. If your skin is hot to the touch, then you are already burnt. Severe sunburn can result in becoming unwell and needing specialist hospital treatment.

For more information visit our website at www.agecymru.org.uk/summer or call 029 2043 1555.



We're here when we're needed most

In 2022-23



We made 61,391 contacts with older people, their families and carers

We supported older people to claim **£832,810** in benefits and entitlements

We supported 18,490 older people

470 people with 705 issues through our **HOPE programme**



1347 people through our Dementia Advocacy project

We responded to **37,487 enquiries** to Age Cymru Advice

We made 9021 friendship calls



We responded to **31 consultations**



1785 older people participated in our physical activity programmes



Our volunteers donated 26,655 hours of their time to support older people

What older people said about our support

- “ I feel better after talking to you. ”
- “ Thank you for your help. I've never claimed for benefits before and it's so confusing. I know what to do now. ”
- “ You have been a God send. I had no idea any of these things (financial support schemes) existed. ”
- “ The help I have had was excellent. I am on my own, but I felt like I wasn't on my own with you on board. ”



For a year it was hopeless trying to get what my mum needed then a month after you stepped in with support, my mum has a good care package and the whole family are very happy. It all changed after you made contact thank you.

Please donate to Age Cymru and together we can make a difference to the lives of older people in Wales. Even a small amount can make a big impact. Donate online at: www.agecymru.org.uk/donate or call 029 2043 1555

Goodbye Eleri and hello Caryl at Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn

After more than 23 years working with Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn, ten years as Chief Officer, Eleri Lloyd Jones is retiring from her post.

One of Eleri's many achievements during her time as Chief Officer was to establish a new base at Y Cartref Bontnewydd in 2017 that enabled the charity to increase its range of services to local older people.

Eleri is leaving the charity in a healthy state as they've just secured a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund to help people with the cost-of-living crisis, in addition to support from the Smart Energy GB in Communities fund to enable the charity to provide advice and information on smart meters.

The charity's former Senior Strategic Care Manager, Caryl Jones, will replace Eleri and we'll feature Caryl in a future edition of Age Matters once she's had time to settle into her new role.

Age Cymru's Chief Executive Victoria Lloyd says "Eleri has made a massive contribution to improving the lives of older people living in Gwynedd a Môn. She has embedded the charity into the fabric of the area making strategic links with lots of stakeholders, funders, and elected representatives.

"Eleri also made a vital contribution to the wider Age Cymru family and was always

willing to share good practice with partners across Wales. She will be sorely missed by many of us within the charity. So, thank you Eleri and enjoy your next chapter."



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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