



# *Age Matters*

The quarterly newsletter  
from Age Cymru

*Summer Edition 2021*

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**age Cymru**  
Creating an age friendly Wales

# From surveys to celebrations, it's been a busy few months at Age Cymru

By Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive, June 2021



Welcome to our summer edition of Age Matters. After a wet spring it's great that early summer has brought us some sunshine. It's been a busy few months at Age Cymru and we're delighted to be able to share with you the findings of the survey we conducted in partnership with National Pensioners' Convention Wales, Pensioners Forum Wales, Cymru Older Peoples' Alliance and the Welsh Senate of Older People on older people's experiences of Covid and the winter lockdown.

More than 1200 people took the time to tell us what the lockdown was like for them, we'll be sharing our findings with decision makers at all levels across Wales.

We heard from people about how challenging the last few months have been, with individuals experiencing isolation and loneliness, and suffering impacts on their physical and mental health. It's vitally important that we learn from what has been experienced, both good and bad, to plan for the future and make sure the services and support people need are in place.

We're also pleased to share with you the findings of our survey Older Carers, For the Moment, which we'll be using to influence better information and support for older carers. We found that many carers were just about coping but worried about how they will manage in the future. We're working with Carers Trust Wales to make sure older carers know what help and support is available. We also want to help them get the recognition they deserve.

At the beginning of June we celebrated Volunteers Week and the wonderful contribution our 300+ volunteers make in communities across Wales. One of our volunteers, Vic, has been making a huge contribution and you can read in this edition how he adapted online technology to deliver tai chi classes. We're also pleased to bring you news of the Age Cymru Cam Mawr/Big Step, so find out how you can step out in October and support Age Cymru with our virtual round Wales challenge. We're also delighted to update you on the new Awen Institute at Swansea University.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Age Matters and hearing about our efforts to create an age friendly Wales.



## Understanding older people's experiences of COVID – The winter lockdown survey

In March 2021 Age Cymru, together with colleagues in Active Wales, COPA, Pensioners Forum Wales, NPC Wales, Welsh Senate of Older People and Women Connect First undertook a nationwide survey to understand older people's experiences of Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions during the winter of 2020/21.

For 87% of the respondents, not seeing family and friends was their biggest challenge followed by the impact on emotional health (51%), loneliness (37%) and physical health (35%). One older female who was shielding and living alone said she was 'fed up of being lonely but that going out was one of the things she was going to find most challenging.'

### Accessing GPs

Access to GP surgeries was an issue prior to the pandemic, many people told us the pandemic has made things worse. Whilst many GP surgeries have adapted to newer ways of working, getting an appointment can be a major issue. One respondent, a female aged 55-59 from Cardiff said: "It is now

even more difficult to make appointments - our GP wants us to call at 8am to make an appointment, but then the lines are inevitably busy. They need to make better use of technology and allow those who are unable to use technology to make a telephone call."

Others told us how they have struggled with the changes that GP surgeries have made to access: "No understanding of the fact that many elderly people do not have access to or understand social media." (Self-isolating male, 80-84, Denbighshire.)

However, experiences differ, and many people had no issues with accessing GPs with some seeing improvements: "Excellent access to GP. More efficient than prior to Covid. Strict appointments times so less waiting." (Female, 55-59, Swansea)

### Looking ahead to the easing of lockdown restrictions

Similar to the last survey, 89% of respondents said they were looking forward to seeing family and friends, while 63% said they were looking forward to going out, particularly to the gym, swimming pool or church.

Sadly, there were others who said they weren't looking forward to anything: "I live a housebound life anyway because of disability in my household and during lockdown we were eventually able to have regular food deliveries and prescription deliveries. I am concerned that when lockdown is over we will struggle as service providers return to neglecting the needs of those of us who have always lived in lockdown regardless of the pandemic. (Female carer, 55-59, Bridgend) Others told us about their concerns regarding crowds: "Having been confined for such a long time I am afraid to go out." (Female, 70-74, Neath Port Talbot)

### **Deterioration of physical and mental health**

Some respondents told us of how their physical and mental health has deteriorated during lockdown and they have concerns about whether they are now mobile enough to go out more: "With the lack of real movement for one year, I find it very difficult to be out and about without feeling tired and discomfort. I feel my physical ability has gone down to a third and this is very worrying." (Female, 70-74, Cardiff)

Concerns around a loss of physical fitness often went hand in hand with concerns about the lack of facilities in public places wondering whether they could access public toilets or places to rest: "When I am able to go out I will need toilets around and seats to be able to rest." (Female, 85-89, Torfaen).

In the coming months we will be using our findings to highlight older people's experiences and to make the case wherever and whenever we can for positive change and progress towards an age friendly Wales.

### **Views of the second lockdown from 50+ Forums in Wales**

**"Living alone during the second lockdown, which was through the winter time, made many older people feel so lonely and isolated as no one could come in and visit. All contact was made from the doorstep and the cold, wet and miserable weather made things even worse. Very short days, dark at 3.30pm made evenings long and lonely. Many older people went to bed early just to get the day over with but then woke in the middle of the night and were unable to sleep as their pattern of sleep had changed. I even heard one or two who went to bed hoping that they didn't wake up in the morning. At least through the first lockdown people could go outside into the garden and get fresh air but through the winter time this was not possible."**

Lynda Wallis, Vale of Glamorgan 50+ Forum

**"This is another excellent report that highlights the problems many older people had to deal with over the second phase of the pandemic. It is essential that as society recovers from Covid, that the views of older people are put front and centre and what they say is acted on. Reinstating services and support that older people rely on must be given a high priority, especially in the NHS and Social Care"**

Steve Milsom, Caerphilly 50+ Forum

# Unpaid older carers just about coping finds survey

Despite the challenges they face, unpaid older carers say they are 'just about coping' according to 'For the Moment – a summary of findings from older carers' launched to mark Carers Week (7 – 13 June 2021). Undertaken jointly by Age Cymru and Carers Trust Wales, the survey sought the views from older unpaid carers across Wales who were not in receipt of formal support.

The survey of more than 300 respondents found that although older carers have concerns, 51% said they have not tried to access any support due to not knowing what was available, reluctance to seek help, or not having the time due to work commitments and caring responsibilities. Others said they feel what they do is just a natural part of family life; 'she's my wife and I should help her.'

However, some of the older carers said they would like some help with, for example, organising respite care. Others said they'd appreciate emotional support for both themselves and for those for whom they provide care. While some said they felt lucky to have support from friends and family, others reported feelings of exhaustion, abandonment and isolation.

Many of the respondents said they were worried about the future of the person they provided care for while over two thirds said they had concerns about their finances. They also said they wanted easily accessible information to help them plan for the future with 73% saying they would be happy to receive this information online.

Age Cymru's chief executive Victoria Lloyd says: "Covid 19 and its related restrictions have been challenging for all of us but particularly so for carers who have had to cope with all their usual responsibilities but with far less support from both formal and informal sources of care. And with community



venues such as libraries, day centres and places of worship closed there has been little opportunity for any respite for carers.

"It is, therefore, remarkable and a testament to their dedication, that so many carers say they are still just about coping and carrying on with their responsibilities given the challenges they have had to face over the last 15 months."

Kate Cabbage, Head of External Affairs for Carers Trust Wales says: "The COVID19 pandemic has undoubtedly amplified the challenges facing many older carers who have consistently told us that they can struggle to access appropriate information, advice and assistance and to have much needed short breaks and respite from their caring role.

"Today's research shows that whilst unpaid carers continue to show incredible resilience in difficult circumstances there is more that can and should be done to make sure they get the recognition they deserve and the support they need."

The survey is part of a national partnership project between Age Cymru and Carers Trust Wales that's funded by the Welsh Government. For more information about the survey or to share your caring experiences please call Andrew Jenkins on 029 2043 1555 or email [andrew.jenkins@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:andrew.jenkins@agecymru.org.uk). To view a copy of the survey in full please visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/carers](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/carers)



## Nearly 90% of those supported by our Dementia Advocacy service feel lonely and isolated

Age Cymru research shows that 87% of the people living with dementia who are supported by our Dementia Advocacy service, experience loneliness and isolation<sup>1</sup>. And with Covid-19 related restrictions disrupting opportunities to meet friends and family, many people living with dementia said that they often felt bored and did not have opportunities to socialise or get involved in volunteering and other activities.

Loneliness is a major issue among older people, with research indicating that being lonely can reduce age expectancy and worsen a person's health. To tackle the issue, Age Cymru has launched a dedicated Dementia Advocacy Project – a service that gives people with dementia the opportunity to have their say about the things that matter most to them, like living in suitable accommodation and retaining their independence for as long as possible. The service also offers opportunities for people with dementia to join social clubs, volunteer and visit friends and family by helping them to access support that they may not be aware of.

An older person who recently received

support from an Age Cymru Dementia Advocate, said: “The weekends used to be something I would dread, it feels like such a long time with no-one to speak to. And the more time I spent alone the more anxious I felt about going out. The advocacy support I received made me feel much less isolated. Even hearing a different voice has made a difference to me. I don't feel rushed, I don't feel like I'm a problem, I just have someone listening.”

Benedict Hodge, Project Manager for the Dementia Advocacy Project at Age Cymru, said: “Sadly, loneliness is an issue many people with dementia face – but you don't need to struggle alone. Our dementia advocates enable people living with dementia – and their loved ones – to access the support and services they need and make their voice heard. We can provide everything from helping people access practical support to building up social confidence and liaising with social services or healthcare providers. We're passionate about helping people with dementia to retain their identity and independence and make informed decisions about their lives, finances, and care.”

To find out more about the Dementia Advocacy Project or contact your local dementia advocate, visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy) or contact Benedict Hodge on [benedict.hodge@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:benedict.hodge@agecymru.org.uk)

<sup>1</sup> Figure based on data gathered by Age Cymru from 32 telephone calls and 100 referrals.

# Creating workplaces where older people can thrive

Through age-inclusion initiative Age at Work, Age Cymru and responsible business network Business in the Community Cymru (BITC) are working with employers in Wales to ensure they're creating workplaces where older workers can thrive.

Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive, Age Cymru said: "We are all living for longer, which means that the majority of us are likely to be working for longer too."

In Wales, one third of the workforce is aged 50 and over, so recruiting, retaining and retraining older individuals is essential for businesses and the wider economy."

Age at Work helps businesses to identify and address gaps in their approach to being an age-friendly employer and can support organisations to put the right support structures and policies in place to support older workers that may experience health issues or have caring responsibilities that affect their ability to stay in work.

Those seeking work or a change of career are also offered online career and life-review webinars that provide support and guidance



to stay in work, find work and plan for life post-work that cover wellbeing, finances and work-life balance.

Jill Salter, Age at Work Programme Manager, BITC said: "Businesses in Wales see the opportunities, benefits, experience and insight that older employees can bring to the workplace. We are already working with organisations including Legal & General, Swansea Building Society, RHA Wales, Gower College Swansea and Dŵr Cymru, to name a few."

Is your organisation interested in finding out what free support is available to become a more age-friendly workplace? Find out more at: [www.bitcni.org.uk/ageatworkcymru](http://www.bitcni.org.uk/ageatworkcymru), email [jill.salter@bitcni.org.uk](mailto:jill.salter@bitcni.org.uk) or call 07793 443893.

## Age Cymru to launch Cam Mawr/Big Step – our virtual 'round Wales' challenge

In July 2021 Age Cymru will be launching Cam Mawr / Big Step, a fundraising initiative supporting Age Cymru and local Age Cymru partners. We're encouraging people to raise money by walking or running on our behalf in any part of Wales during the month of October.

In 2020-21 Age Cymru together with local Age Cymru partners provided more than 137,000 instances of support to thousands of older people across Wales. We helped more than 25,000 people with information and advice, we helped older people claim more than £13million of benefits and entitlements,

and we made more than 33,000 calls to our 'Check in and Chat' service. Through Cam Mawr / Big Step we're asking people to help us to support to older people by raising much needed funds to keep these services going and help us create an age friendly Wales.

We hope that through this fun, virtual challenge that can involve individuals, families, friends, workmates, or any combination of these, we can achieve the two million steps which would take us around the circumference of Wales when combining the Wales Coastal Path with the Offa's Dyke Trail.

To find out more or if you, or anyone you know, would like to take part in the event please contact the project lead, Amanda O'Shea on 029 2043 1555 or email: [amanda.oshea@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:amanda.oshea@agecymru.org.uk)

# Iris Prize invites older LGBT people to take part in film making project

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people who are 50+ have been offered an exciting opportunity to become part of a film-making project with the Iris Prize - an international film festival that's hosted in Cardiff each year. The Festival has been awarded funding from The National Lottery Community Fund to make films with ten community groups who represent different parts of the LGBT+ community.

Rachel Dawson, who represents Age Cymru on the project, says: "While we have funding for three years we're not expecting anyone to commit for such a length of time. At this stage, we would just like anyone from the LGBT community in Wales who is interested in making a film to contact us so we can bring everyone together to explore what ideas are out there. We're getting really excited about what ideas might emerge!"

## About the Iris prize

The Iris Prize did a series of community films a couple of years ago and they're all still available to view on YouTube. They did one with Ty Dewi Sant nursing home: [Live and Let Live by Ty Dewi Sant Care Home - YouTube](#).

Last year's Iris Prize 'Best of British' films are available to watch free of charge. Two of the most-watched films are themed around older people: Wings ([Wings - All 4 \(channel4.com\)](#)), is a short and uplifting film about a lesbian couple in later life. While Rhiw Goch ([Rhiw Goch \(On the Red Hill\) - All 4 \(channel4.com\)](#)), centres on two gay couples whereby the older couple leave house to the younger couple following years of friendship and support. It also chronicles how they experienced rural Welsh life as gay couples.

For more information about the project contact Rachel Dawson on 029 2043 1555 or email [Rachel.Dawson@AgeCymru.org.uk](mailto:Rachel.Dawson@AgeCymru.org.uk)

**IRIS PRIZE**

## ARE YOU LGBT+ AND 50+? INTERESTED IN FILM?

Age Cymru and Iris are looking at ways to collaborate for the upcoming Iris in the Community project

- Work with professional filmmakers
- Explore LGBT+ issues
- Gain filmmaking skills

Contact [rachel.dawson@agecymru.co.uk](mailto:rachel.dawson@agecymru.co.uk) for a chat about the project

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COMMUNITY FUND**



## Planning for the future

Planning for the future and putting your affairs in order can provide peace of mind and security for both you and your loved ones. That's why Age Cymru offers a range of services to help you plan for your future, now and after you've gone.

Our Later Life Planning Officers are fully trained and accredited in will writing and estate planning by The College of Will Writing. They hold the Society of Will Writers' Wills and Estate Planning Certificate and are professional members of the Society of Will Writers. Our Later Life Planning Service can help with the following areas:

### **Will Writing**

Making a will is the only way to be certain that your wishes will be met after you die. Maybe you haven't got around to it or you've deliberately put it off, but the process can be quite simple.

### **Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)**

No one has the right to automatically take control of your finances or your care (not even your spouse). They need your authority. A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) is a way of giving someone you trust the legal authority to make decisions for you, if either you can't make them yourself or don't want to.

### **Advance Decision (Living Will)**

While you have mental capacity, you can make choices about your care. This includes the types of medical treatment you want, or would refuse, if you were unable to make or communicate your own decisions in the future. An Advance Decision (sometimes called a Living Will) is legally binding and health professionals must follow it.

### **Safe Document Storage**

The original, signed document is the only legally binding version of your Will, so it's important that it's kept safe. We offer a low cost, secure solution for document storage through The National Will Archive.

Our Later Life Planning service is aimed primarily at people living in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and The Vale of Glamorgan. However, please still contact us if you live outside of these areas as we or one of our local partners may be able to help.

Call the Later Life Planning Team on 029 2043 1555 or email: [LLP@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:LLP@agecymru.org.uk) for more information and a list of prices for all our Later Life Planning services.

# Research project places older people at the centre of innovation

The Awen Institute is a new research project that's bringing together leading researchers with older people and the creative industries to co-produce products, services and environments for an increasing older population. Part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Welsh Government, the institute is being led by Swansea University, in partnership with University of South Wales and University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

In the consumer market, people aged over 50 account for £320 billion of annual UK household spending and 75% of the nation's wealth. This represents a significant commercial opportunity for industry and highlights the necessity for businesses to understand the needs of older people. The 'creative industries' is a broad term for sectors such as advertising, architecture, art, design, fashion, technology, performing arts, broadcasting, media, museums and gaming. These sectors make almost £92 billion for the UK economy and support almost three million jobs.

Estimates show by 2025/30 around 25% of the creative industries market will rely on older consumers. While this offers a major opportunity for creative industries, it also presents a challenge, with businesses under-prepared to meet the needs and aspirations of this new and rising demographic. The Awen Institute is developing research with the creative industries that improves our understanding of ageing and later life in the context of three broad interrelated research areas: Health and Wellbeing - effective experiences, products and services in the creative industries; Place - design for age-friendly and dementia-supportive places; and Work - creative solutions to the challenges and opportunities of working until later in life.

A state-of-the-art 'Living Lab' research facility has been built at Swansea University to enable this research to be undertaken. The Living Lab comprises a flexible space to develop products in different simulated environments, such as a workplace, home, shop, health and social care environments, and public places (museums, media). It also includes a versatile virtual reality facility and a café lab, to provide relaxed spaces for developing ideas. This central hub connects with existing local environments and venues such as creative spaces for arts, film, music and performance where researchers and innovators can work together with older people to develop new products, services, experiences and environments.

If you're interested in getting involved, you can contact the Awen Institute by emailing [AwenInstitute@Swansea.ac.uk](mailto:AwenInstitute@Swansea.ac.uk) or visit [AwenInstitute.com](http://AwenInstitute.com)

## Retired IT consultant keeping older people fit, healthy and connected during lockdown

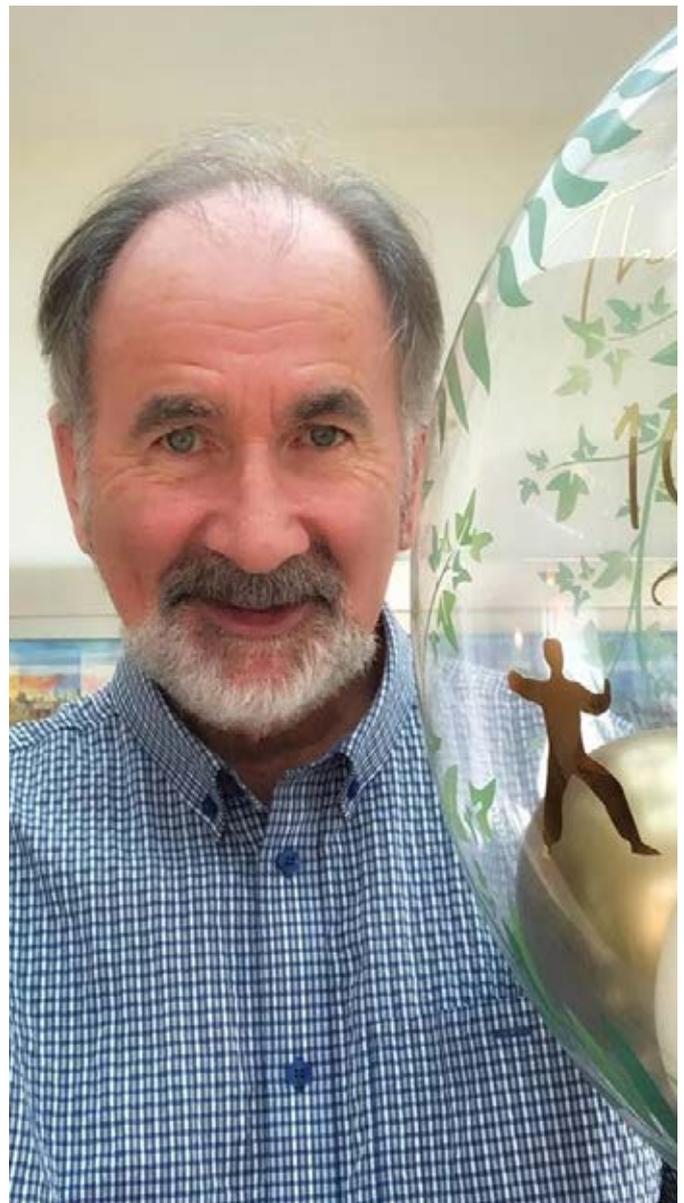
Age Cymru volunteer Vic Spears is still keeping his Tai Chi classes of more than 60 older people fit, healthy and connected despite lockdown restrictions.

The retired IT consultant used his professional knowledge of IT systems to help move more than half of his attendees from a community hall and on to a video conferencing platform. He tried several formats such as Facebook but has now settled on using Skype as many of his attendees had already used the platform for communicating with friends and relatives.

Since lockdown the Cardiff based instructor has delivered an astonishing 117 online classes. He noticed that as more people became used to the online classes more and more people started arriving five or ten minutes before the class started just so they could have a chat with one another, mirroring what they did at the live classes.

Vic says: “Many of the people attending said the twice weekly classes gave them a structure for the week as they had nowhere to go during lockdown. Others said they found it easier attending as they didn’t have to worry about finding parking spaces or catching the bus in time. By keeping the classes going the attendees don’t seem to have suffered some of the muscle deterioration that has affected other older people during lockdown.

“It is very satisfying knowing that my volunteering helps older people to become fitter, stronger and healthier as well as combatting isolation and loneliness. If anyone is thinking of becoming a volunteer I would highly recommend it as it is so rewarding and helps you to develop as a person and learn new things during retirement”.



Age Cymru’s chief executive Victoria Lloyd says: “We have a wide range of volunteering opportunities at Age Cymru from making befriending calls to supporting people to get their voice heard, and from volunteering in care homes to leading Tai Chi classes like Vic, so why not get in touch to find out how you could volunteer your support for older people.”

Why not visit our website to see how you can get involved in volunteering [www.agecymru.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/volunteer)

## Our HOPE project is here to help older people with everyday matters

If you know of an older person that needs help accessing services such as utilities, housing, primary care, benefits or perhaps they may need help to reconnect with their community now that COVID 19 restrictions are easing, then speak to a member of our HOPE project. Particularly if the older person is not being heard leading to frustration and stress. The HOPE project is here to help.

HOPE has trained Independent Volunteer Advocates who'll listen and support the older person to say what matters most to them. The

project will enable older people to tell service providers what they want with the support of an independent advocate.

As well as supporting older people to access services, the project can also help them to understand their rights, and it can help them to explore their options and choices so that they can make an informed decision.

Contact our friendly HOPE team about the support available or the opportunity to become a volunteer advocate by emailing [advocacy@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@agecymru.org.uk)

For more information about the HOPE project, please visit our website: [www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy) or call 029 2043 1555.

## Woolly warriors needed in Wales for the innocent Big Knit

The innocent Big Knit campaign has returned and Age Cymru is calling on the knitters and crocheters throughout Wales to get their knitting needles out to help raise urgent funds for older people most in need. There are six exciting new hat designs for this year, including a rainbow, rabbit, cupcake, pom pom, fox and bird. These knitting and crochet patterns are all available to download.

This is the 18th year that innocent has been running the Big Knit in partnership with Age Cymru and woolly warriors are needed again this year to craft some little hats to sit on innocent smoothie bottles. For each be-hatted smoothie sold, Age Cymru receives 25p.

Age Cymru's chief executive Victoria Lloyd said: "We need people throughout Wales to join us and help knit as many miniature hats



as possible. It's been a challenging time for everyone, but this is a really fun campaign to get involved in and it's a great activity to do whilst we're all spending more time at home.

"The money raised from these little hats will make a big difference to the lives of older people in Wales, many of whom have been badly affected by the pandemic. Every hat knitted will help to fund our hugely important services, including our crucial Information and Advice Services."

For more information on The Big Knit or to download the patterns, visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/bigknit](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/bigknit) or contact Amanda O'Shea on 029 2043 1555. Please send completed hats to Age Cymru, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5TD. Hats will go on sale in February 2022.

### Get in touch

If you have a story for Age Matters then please get in touch with the editor Michael Phillips 029 2043 1545

### Age Matters

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