



# *Age Matters*

The quarterly newsletter  
from Age Cymru

*Summer Edition 2020*

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 **ageCymru**  
Creating an age friendly Wales



# Covid 19: The story so far from Age Cymru

By Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive, June 2020



**The onset of Covid 19 was swift and severe, affecting the whole of society; but with the risk of the disease increasing with age, there were particular implications for older people as they were advised to be especially stringent in terms of social distancing and many older people received shielding letters.**

With the world turning upside down, seemingly overnight, many older people and their families became anxious. Will I be able to go out and buy food? Can I take my dog for a walk? Should I let the engineer in to repair my boiler? What can I do if my prescriptions

doesn't arrive on time? Is my carer still visiting? These were just some of the many questions that have been flooding into us.

Some older people were confused by the different approaches taken by the government in Cardiff Bay compared with that in Westminster.

Access to cash was one of the biggest concerns for older people so we developed up to date information that highlighted the special measures put in place by post offices and banks.

Since the start of the outbreak, we have liaised with colleagues in Welsh Government, the Older People's Commissioner, social services, older people's groups and other charities to make sure we have a firm understanding of the situation across Wales and to make sure we are communicating the views and concerns of older people.

On 23 March 2020 we launched our Check in and Chat service to provide some reassurances, answer basic queries and link people to local services and support. While some people just wanted to have a chat about the everyday things such as what they saw on television the previous night.

Check in and Chat has been hugely popular and we have made more than 14,000 calls to approximately 700 older people in Wales. We were delighted that our local partners and staff at the Older People's Commissioners Office, Metro Bank, Thomas Carroll and Hugh James supported us so we could reach out to even more people. With many over 75s in Wales having no access to the internet, telephone contact is hugely important for older people, as demonstrated by the

overwhelming response to the service.

At the same time, Age Cymru Advice has dealt with more than 3,000 inquiries on a wide range of issues. It has been a remarkable effort from all of our staff and volunteers who themselves are grappling with the change and uncertainty the situation has created.

At the start of June, we were delighted to launch our new volunteer led service, Friend in Need, supported by Welsh Government, where we will link older people with a volunteer for a weekly friendship call.

The response by communities across Wales has been outstanding and the support they're providing older people whether it be delivering food and medicines, maintaining gardens or simply keeping in touch, has made a huge positive difference. Wouldn't it be great if this interaction between older people and other members of the community continued after the lockdown is eased?

We're advising the many volunteers that have come forward to support older people, to work with existing charities and organisations so that we can continue to maintain robust safeguarding standards. Outside of formal volunteering, we are advising people to offer to help people that they already know. Through our Friend in Need service we've provided a range of support on our website and through Age Cymru Advice that will help.

There's no getting away from the fact we're living through a period in which we'll see unprecedented change and disruption, potentially for a prolonged period. However, we're confident that we'll also see the very best of people and our communities as we all try to navigate the difficult path ahead. We want to ensure that older people are as safe as possible, are able to access the support they need, and are able to re-engage with their communities as the lockdown eases.

We're keen to hear from people about the support that they feel will be important in the future and about the changes they've seen in recent weeks that they think should continue. Let us know what you think.

## New national project to focus on the needs of older carers

With an ageing population and an increase in life expectancy, older people in Wales are caring for longer and later in their lives. However, they often slip under the radar and don't get the support they need to carry out their role which can impact negatively on their health, wellbeing and financial security.

A new national partnership project between Age Cymru and Carers Trust Wales launched during Carers Week 2020, will look to improve services and support for older carers, carers of people living with dementia, and carers of people who have moved to live in a care home.

Over three years this project, funded by Welsh Government, will help support the early identification of older carers, create opportunities for carers to influence and shape the services affecting both themselves and the people for whom they provide care, as well as improve carers' access to information, advice and support.

Age Cymru's Chief Executive Victoria Lloyd says: "Many older carers have a strong sense of 'duty to care' which makes them less likely to self-identify or to seek support that could help them manage their caring role.

**"We need to remember that older carers form a crucial part of our health and social care system in Wales, providing millions of pounds worth of unpaid care each year. Without effective support, carers can become exhausted and seriously ill themselves."**

For more information please visit [www.agecymru.org.uk/carers](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/carers)





## Friend in Need telephone friendship service launched

In June 2020, we launched our Friend in Need service to help tackle loneliness and isolation amongst the over 70s as a result of social distancing, self-isolation and shielding.

This vital service, funded and supported by the Welsh Government with additional backing from the Welsh Local Government Association and Volunteering Wales, will connect older people with a trained and vetted Age Cymru volunteer for a free weekly friendship call.

The service will also support friends or neighbours who are providing informal help to older people and others who are social distancing, self-isolating or shielding, with activities such as shopping or collecting prescriptions. They will also be able to access a wide range of online resources.

**Age Cymru's chief executive, Victoria Lloyd says; "There are many older people living in our communities for whom feeling lonely or isolated is nothing new. Giving people the chance to connect, to share their concerns, to chat and to laugh with another human being can be a huge source of comfort."**

**The chief executive added; "Many people aged 75 or over do not use the internet so a telephone-based service is important to help keep them connected and feel less isolated"**

**Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, said: "These are challenging times for us all, but especially for those older people who live on their own. It's only natural to want to have contact with others; without it we can feel lonely and cut off. I'm delighted that the Welsh Government has been able to provide funding for this crucial service. I am sure it will be make a big difference to the lives of all those who access it."**

If you or somebody you know might benefit from the Friend in Need service, please contact [www.agecymru.org.uk/friend-in-need](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/friend-in-need).

## Age Cymru signs statement on older people being pressurised into signing 'Do Not Attempt CPR' forms

Age Cymru and a number of other older people's organisations have signed a statement calling for an end to the practice of older people being pressurised into signing 'Do Not Attempt CPR' forms.

The statement says there have been shocking examples where blanket decisions seem to be being made about the care and treatment options that will be available to older and vulnerable people.

It says many of the people affected have experienced fear and anxiety, and feel that their lives and wishes do not matter.

The statement also says that difficult and painful decisions will need to be taken in the weeks ahead, but these must be made on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the risks and benefits, and people's own wishes, through honest discussions between patients, doctors and families.

It urges governments and health services in the four UK nations to consider carefully the ways they can provide stronger leadership and guidance to ensure that people's rights are upheld and communication with vulnerable people is handled in a far more sensitive way to avoid further worry and upset as we navigate the difficult path ahead of us. It is likely that older workers will face some of the greatest impacts of the economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Programme continues to support older workers

Despite the restrictions brought about by Covid 19, the Age at Work programme, delivered in partnership between Business in the Community Cymru and Age Cymru, continues to support individuals aged 50+ to remain in or return to work to help them have enough income, stay connected and enjoy a fuller working life.

In June, Age at Work created a simple survey designed to be completed by people aged 50 and over who have, or may in future, participate in the programme, including through a mid-life review session.

Following the survey, and in response to the pandemic and ensuing lockdown, Age at Work is making its free mid-life review sessions available online.

During this time of economic uncertainty, it has never been more important for workers aged 50 and over to pause and take stock of their current and future options. Taking time to participate in a mid-life review can provide you with a holistic view of your current work, life, and financial situation, and offer guidance on your next steps.

New dates will be confirmed soon, so if you, a colleague, or family member would like to register your interest for an upcoming online mid-life review session, please contact Jill Salter on [jill.salter@bitc.org.uk](mailto:jill.salter@bitc.org.uk) or 07793 443893.





## New project to bring HOPE to Wales most vulnerable older people

Lonely and isolated older people in Wales who maybe struggling to get the services and financial entitlements that they need to live a dignified later life, are set to benefit from a new project being launched by Age Cymru in the autumn 2020.

The project, called HOPE (Helping Others to Participate and Engage), will train community based volunteers to provide advocacy support to older people and carers so they themselves can help shape the key decisions affecting their lives.

Project manager Louise Hughes says: "HOPE will support people to improve, manage or enhance their well-being across a range of issues that are personal to them. We hope to empower older people so that they can find their own solutions through timely intervention, information, and support.

HOPE will also support and help develop the existing advocacy network in Wales.

The project, which will be delivered in partnership with Local Age Cymru Partners and local Age Connect organisations, will be funded by the Welsh Government for three years.

For more information contact [louise.hughes@agecymru.org.uk](mailto:louise.hughes@agecymru.org.uk)

## EnvisAGE: our fourteenth edition focuses on poverty and the financial inclusion of older people

On the 16 June, we launched our fourteenth edition of our discussion journal called EnvisAGE. This latest edition examines issues around poverty and the financial inclusion of older people.

There are a wide range of contributions from experts in the field including Dr Victoria Winckler (Bevan Foundation), Lee Phillips (Money and Pensions Service), Adam Scorer (National Energy Action) Matthew Brindley (Care & Repair Cymru) Dr Deborah Morgan (Swansea University) and Nick Capaldi (Arts Council of Wales).

To download a copy visit: [www.agecymru.org.uk/envisage](http://www.agecymru.org.uk/envisage)



## Age Cymru appoints human rights professor as its new chair

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**Professor John Williams**  
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We're delighted to appoint Professor John Williams as our new chair of trustees. The Emeritus Professor of Law enjoyed a long and distinguished career at Aberystwyth University between 1975 and 2018, primarily researching into the human rights of older people.

During his career Professor Williams focused on the impact of the law in terms of older people accessing health and social care. He also undertook extensive research on older prisoners, the design of care homes, international law and ageing, and domestic abuse and older people.

In addition, the professor advised a number of national bodies including the National Assembly for Wales on the drafting of the Social Services and Well-being Act, and the Welsh Government's Safeguarding and Protection Advisory Committee on safeguarding guidance and regulations.

Speaking of his appointment Emeritus Professor John Williams said: "Throughout my academic career, the central theme of my work has always been about the protection of the human rights of older people, in



whatever environment they find themselves. I'd envisage that my new role with Age Cymru will enable me to further protect and promote the fundamental human rights of older people. We can only make Wales an age friendly country by placing older people and their rights at the centre of our policy and decision-making processes.

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**"Age Cymru has a strong track record in campaigning for the rights of older people in Wales and, at the same time, it is well respected amongst politicians and other policy makers so I am confident that the Charity can play a major part in improving the lives of all older people in Wales."**  
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## Vale art historian raises more than £800 for Age Cymru

An internationally renowned art historian, Stella Grace Lyons, has raised more than £800 for us after holding an online arts lecture from

her home in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Fittingly, the lecture focussed on the 20th Century artist Edward Hopper who is known for his work depicting isolation and loneliness, two areas of significant concern for the charity, especially now with many older people in Wales living under the very

challenging circumstances of Covid 19.

Such is the reputation of the art historian that more than a hundred people from across the world agreed to donate a fee in order to view the online lecture. To find out more about her online Art History talks visit [www.stellagracylyons.co.uk](http://www.stellagracylyons.co.uk)

# Victoria Lloyd remembers one of Wales' most prominent and fierce campaigners for older people

Phyllis Preece  
(19 February 1938 – 1 May 2020)

Everyone at Age Cymru, from current and former staff, to our trustees and supporters across Wales were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Phyllis Preece who died on 1 May 2020, arguably one of Wales' most prominent and fierce campaigners for older people.

Campaigning for others had always been important for Phyllis, particularly for those who didn't have much, and as a young woman she became a shop steward in the Freeman's cigar factory in Cardiff.

Phyllis' zest for campaigning did not end with her retirement, far from it. Instead she became very active in the retired trades union movement chairing committees, workshops and numerous conferences for National Pensioners Convention Wales, Pensioners Forum Wales and the Cymru Older People's Alliance to name but a few. Such was Phyllis' reputation that the Welsh Government would often invite her to sit on advisory panels.



In recent years Phyllis became heavily involved in many of the day to day activities of Age Cymru and its predecessor charities, often fronting its communication and fundraising campaigns.

Phyllis was a great networker, and on first name terms with a number of senior politicians and civil servants, including First Ministers. Phyllis would not hesitate to support us by sharing her views with key decision makers to help progress our work.

To say we will miss Phyllis is a huge understatement. We will miss her knowledge, experience, drive and honesty. But most of all we will miss a very good friend.

## 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

**Editor in Chief:** Victoria Lloyd,  
Chief Executive

**Editor:** Michael Phillips,  
Communications Manager