

Age Matters

The quarterly newsletter from Age Cymru

Summer 2024

General Election 2024

From pensioner poverty to digital exclusion, we highlight the key challenges you face today

A spotlight on mental health and wellbeing

Guide to help you have more money in your pocket



www.agecymru.org.uk

facebook.com/agecymru twitter.com/agecymru

No quiet summer for us with a general election announced



Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive

Rishi Sunak surprised all of us, Age Cymru included, when he announced his intention to hold a general election on 4 July 2024.

We were delighted to publish our Blueprint for older people in Wales setting out the key issues we wish to see the new UK Government tackle, from pensioner poverty to digital exclusion and from keeping homes warm to bank closures. Many of these issues were raised in our 2024 What matters to you survey which I know many of you completed.

We feature two articles that will hopefully encourage and help you to claim all your benefits and entitlements.

Last year we helped older people claim more than a quarter of a million pounds worth of Attendance Allowance and £150k in Pension Credit.

We'll also share our latest information regarding BT's switchover to digital voice as it plans to turn off the old analogue system. And we feature the Welsh Government's advice on how to make better use of your local nurse practitioners.

And as usual we're also asking you to do some work and tell us how the Welsh Government proposals to raise the social cap from its current level of £100 could affect you and your loved ones.

But if all the electioneering and campaigning gets too much for you then you can switch off and attempt a dog-based cryptic quiz devised by one of our volunteers. It will either make your toes curl or drive you barking mad!

Have a great summer everyone.

General Election 2024:

From pensioner poverty to digital exclusion, we highlight the key challenges you face today



Polling stations open at 7am on 4 July, where you'll get the chance to exercise your voice as the next UK Government is chosen. MPs can use their platform to talk publicly about the concerns you as constituents raise.

The incoming government will need to work closely with the Welsh Government and consider the rise in demographic changes when proposing policies and to ensure that policies are practical when implemented.

For this general election, Age Cymru has brought together a Blueprint for older people in Wales which focuses on areas which are under the responsibility of the UK Government. We're campaigning on the following key areas:

- Improving older people's rights and tackling ageism
- Tackling pensioner poverty
- Managing money
- Consumer protection
- Digital exclusion
- Keeping warm at home
- Welsh language.

These are the issues that you've told us matter to you. But to see changes happen, we need to hear your voices throughout this election campaign to make sure that no one is left behind or issues are not swept under the carpet. We'd like you to speak with your local candidates about the issues in our blueprint and encourage them to become Age Champions in the next parliament.

We'll continue to campaign on these issues after the election and make sure your voices continue to be heard.

If you have a story across any of our campaigning issues or you would like a paper copy of our blueprint, call our Public Affairs Officer Rhian Morgan on 07944 996943, email rhian.morgan@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/election.



Claiming Attendance Allowance and other benefits could help you increase your income by more than £6,000

Claiming benefits such as Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit could help you increase your annual income by more than £6,000. That's why it's important that you and your carers, if you have them, explore what benefits and entitlements you might be able to claim, as millions of pounds go unclaimed in Wales each year.

Last year we supported claims worth more than a quarter of a million pounds in Attendance Allowance and £150,000 in Pension Credit. Added to a range of other benefits and entitlements, the charity enabled older people to claim nearly £800,000 in total, worth on average £6,378 for each claimant.

Age Cymru's Information and Advice Manager Nel Price says "It's deeply frustrating that so many older people in Wales are struggling to pay their bills and are forced to cut back on their social activities when so much money is left unclaimed each year.

"Attendance Allowance is one of the biggest sources of support that goes unclaimed as many people mistakenly believe that you need to have a carer attending your home to claim it, which is simply not the case. It is a benefit for those aged 66 or over who may need extra help to stay living independently at home."

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/advice.



A spotlight on mental health and wellbeing

We know that as we age there can be increasing life experiences that impact on our mental health. The longer we live the more likely we are to experience the loss of family and friends, become more socially isolated and lonely, or take on difficult caring responsibilities. However, this doesn't mean that poor mental health is just part of ageing.

At a recent event called A spotlight on the mental health and well-being of older people held by Age Cymru at Senedd Buildings (Welsh Government) we called for a clearer focus on older people's mental health. With this focus backed by adequate and sustainable funding not only for statutory and third sector mental health support but also for services that underpin a good quality of life such as the availability of public transport, access to social care, and support for older carers.

Speaking at the event, Age Cymru's head of policy Heather Ferguson said

“We need to understand why some older people aren't accessing the help they need when they need it. We very much welcome the identification of older people as a group requiring specific support to protect their mental health and wellbeing in a Welsh Government consultation which will hopefully shine an overdue spotlight on older people's mental health needs in Wales.”

Also speaking at the event, sponsored by Mike Hedges MS, was the Welsh Government Minister for Mental Health and Early Years, Jayne Bryant MS, Claire Morgan, director of Carers Wales, Age Cymru Powys' Gail Colbridge, and Care & Repair in Powy's Rachel Owen.

If you'd like to share your experiences of accessing mental health services, contact the Age Cymru Policy team on 0300 303 44 98 or email policy@agecymru.org.uk.

Age Cymru launches Listen and Connect for those of you feeling lonely and isolated

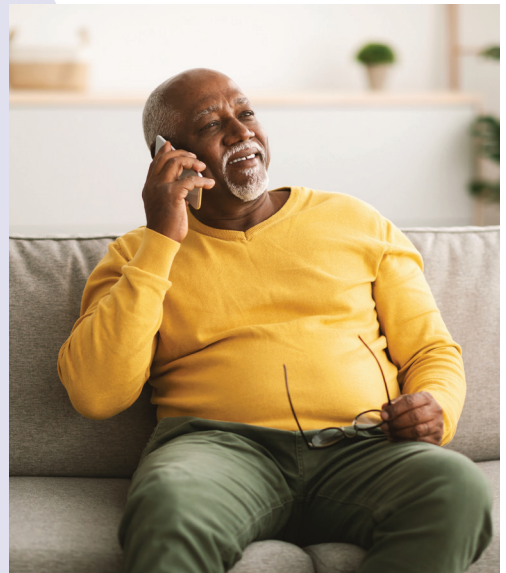
Age Cymru has launched a telephone listening service for those of you who may be experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The service offers a safe space where you can talk to volunteers on a non-judgmental, confidential, and compassionate basis.

Volunteers will give you time and space, listen to your story, hear your concerns while offering reflection and support to help you find your own way forward.

Volunteers may also provide useful resources and put you in touch with helpful services.

To contact the service call 0330 055 4818 Monday to Friday between 10am and 4pm. Calls are charged at a local rate. If you'd like to know more about the Listen and Connect service, call 07425 422683, email CAPlisten@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/CAP.



More money in your pocket

Claiming the right benefits for you



Money matters



Guide to help you have more money in your pocket

We've updated our free guide

More money in your pocket to help you explore what benefits and entitlements you may be able to claim.

The easy-to-read guide includes a range of information on various benefits and financial entitlements such as State Pension, Pension Credit, help with Council Tax, Housing benefit, help with urgent or one-off expenses, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance.

It also includes details on where to find more in-depth information from our range of factsheets.

To order a copy of *More money in your pocket*, or any of our other guides and factsheets, call 0300 303 44 98. Our advice line is open between 9am and 4pm, Monday – Friday. You can also email us at advice@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/advice.

Could you benefit from our HOPE project and get the support you need to engage with professionals and your community?



HOPE (Helping others participate and engage) is a partnership project between Age Cymru, Age Cymru local partners and Age Connects Wales partners across Wales.

It enables older people, aged 50 and above as well as carers, to engage with professionals, participate in their communities and understand their rights. Volunteers can help older people to access information to make informed choices and have their voices heard.

Volunteers are recruited by Age Cymru to provide independent advocacy support to older people and carers so they can help shape the key decisions affecting their lives and avoid getting into a crisis situation. The volunteers are given full training to provide support over the phone, via video call, or where appropriate face to face, to help those who may not know where to turn.

One of our independent volunteer advocates, Janis Lai, talks about her experiences of delivering the HOPE project.

“Having worked with a variety of clients independently, it has definitely opened my eyes to the challenges older generations had to face and how vulnerable they are in such a vastly changing society, so being able to offer them the support they need and work with them to achieve a common goal has been an incredibly rewarding journey.

In addition to HOPE’s supportive and encouraging team, volunteering has been smooth sailing and undoubtedly worthwhile as I have honed skills that are highly beneficial to aspiring lawyers such as myself. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to and be a part of such an impactful mission.”

If you think you could benefit from our support, or you would like to volunteer with the HOPE project please call 029 2043 1555 or email advocacy@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy

Banks now more likely to reimburse you if you've been scammed

Banks will be expanding their reimbursement obligations in October this year which means you're more likely to get your cash back if you've been tricked into handing over money for goods or services that never materialised.

This means it's more important than ever to report a scam to your bank as well as other organisations such as the police or local government trading standards. Current figures suggest that only one in seven scams are reported.

If you experienced a scam, please come forward to report it. By reporting what happened to you, you can get support and could help prevent others from being scammed.

In the first instance contact your bank and then report the scam to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. However, if you ever feel you're in immediate danger dial 999 and ask for the police.

For more information about Age Cymru's work on scams, or if you'd like to share your experiences of scams, contact Sam Young on 0300 303 44 98 or email sam.young@agecymru.org.uk.



If you're over 50 and live in Powys, why not give your finances a free MOT?

If you're over 50 and live in Powys why not take advantage of Age Cymru Powys' new service called Money MOT that is designed to help you take control of your money matters.

The new service will support you to assess your current financial situation and plan for your future. You'll be given a personalised report to help you improve your financial wellbeing from midlife through to retirement.

The charity is also offering fun group courses across Powys on money management topics including numeracy skills for maximising income, reducing expenses, and budgeting.

For more information call Age Cymru Powys on 01686 623707, email enquiries@acpowys.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/powys.

Welsh Government proposals could raise your social care costs by up to £1,300 per year



The Welsh Government's proposals to increase social care costs have raised significant concerns. Currently, there is a cap on social care payments at £100 per week under the 'Fairer Charging' rules in Wales. However, if the proposed changes come into effect, people needing to access these services might see their care bills rise by £15 to £25 per week, amounting to an annual increase of up to £1,300.

This potential hike in costs is particularly worrying because social care services are essential for helping older people maintain their independence. These services include personal care and respite care for unpaid carers and their loved ones. Age Cymru wants the Welsh Government to limit any increases in social care costs to match inflation, to prevent placing additional financial burdens on those who rely on these crucial services.

If you or someone you know pays for social care and is affected by these proposed changes, please share your experiences and concerns with us. Call Helen Twidle on 0300 303 44 98, email helen.twidle@agecymru.org.uk.

Your experiences could be vital in shaping future policies and ensuring that social care remains accessible and affordable for those who need it most.

Age Cymru nominates Mary Lloyd Jones as its first Changemaker for challenging ageing stereotypes – who will be yours?



Age Cymru has nominated the internationally renowned painter, printmaker, and author Mary Lloyd Jones as its first Changemaker, an accolade that celebrates people who have not only challenged ageing stereotypes but who have also trailblazed in their field.

Mary, who will be 90 this year, grew up in Devil's Bridge near Aberystwyth. Her works have been described as multilayered using devices that reflect an interest in the beginnings of language, including early man-made marks and the ogham and bardic alphabets.

Mary's work draws on the influence of ancient cultures and languages and holds a particular preoccupation with the context of her own landscape.

In previous years she has received two honorary fellowships to Trinity College

Carmarthen and Aberystwyth University and an Honorary Doctorate of the University of Wales, Cardiff.

Nominate your Changemaker

If you know an older person like Mary who has defied ageing stereotypes and who has trailblazed in their field, why not nominate them to Age Cymru's Gallery of Changemakers.

Call Age Cymru on 0300 303 44 98, email gwanwyn@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/gwanwyn for a Changemaker nomination form.

Age Alliance Wales inviting you to visit one of their roadshows



Age Alliance Wales, a collection of charities providing information and services for older people, will be hosting a series of ‘roadshow’ events across Wales in 2024, and you’re all invited.

The roadshows are drop-in events taking place between 10.30am to 12pm and are all free of charge. They’ll provide information and support on a wide range of issues including arthritis, stroke, Parkinson’s Disease, and caring for a person living with dementia among others.

So, if you’d like to know more about some of the issues that may be affecting you come along to your nearest event.

St John’s Methodist Church, Llandudno
11 June 2024

Ty Pawb (FlexiSpace), Wrexham
26 June 2024

Swansea Theatre (Rooftop), Swansea
17 July 2024

Cynon Linc, Aberdare
31 July 2024

Corn Exchange, Welshpool
13 August 2024

HaverHub, Haverfordwest
4 September 2024

For further information contact Chris Williams on 029 20431 548 or email chris.williams@agecymru.org.uk

Changes to landline telephones – The questions you raised

The telephone industry is upgrading from analogue to digital landlines by the end of 2025. The change will mean that calls will be made over a broadband line instead of the old analogue network, which is becoming increasingly unreliable.

For most of you, all aspects of the switchover will be free of charge with no home installation work required. And if you do require additional support with set up, you should contact your telephone provider.

If you have telecare services, like a call alarm, either provided by the local authority or by a private company, contact your provider to check what plans they have in place to ensure that your equipment is switched over.

Following calls to our Advice line and feedback from some of our support services we drafted a series of questions which we took to BT and attached their responses.

Will call blockers, used to prevent scammers from contacting older people, still work after digital switchover?

Call blockers will no longer be necessary following digital switchover. There will be a new in-built service called Hiya that will automatically block scam calls.

Some people reported being switched to the digital system without prior notice.

BT uses an automated system that requires their customers to provide permission before they are switched. This permission may have been granted up to 40 days before.

NB* We've heard about several instances where customers reported being switched over without prior notice. If you think this happened to you, contact the complaints line using the numbers below.

If a customer has an old handset that will need replacing, will BT cover the cost?

Unfortunately, not. The customer must pay for the new handset. However, 99% of existing phones will work on the digital platform.



How long will the backup phones last in a power cut?

Ofcom requires telephone suppliers to provide at least one hour's worth of back-up. However, BT provides up to four hours of back up via a battery pack for some vulnerable people.

What will happen to those people who live in areas with poor broadband?

BT are currently working on a system to circumvent poor broadband. Until that system is fully developed people living in such areas will remain on their analogue system.

Will people using local authority commissioned support services such as personal alarms, still be able to use their equipment?

BT has data sharing agreements with all 22 local authorities in Wales to identify those using support services and then ensure that all their equipment is compatible.

What if I need more information or need to make a complaint?

Any questions or complaints can be raised by calling 150 from a landline or 0330 1234 150 from a mobile phone. You may also visit <https://www.bt.com/broadband/digital-voice>

What about other phone providers?

Virgin Media and Talk Talk are actively switching their customers while other major providers are waiting to see how matters develop. In either case it is best to contact your supplier by using the contact number at the top of your billing letter to find out more.

If you would like to share your experiences of digital switchover, please contact Michael Phillips on 07794 366224 or email michael.phillips@agecymru.org.uk. You may also visit www.agecymru.org.uk/digital-switchover

HELPWCH NI | HELP US
FCH HELPU CHI | HELP YOU



Chi sy'n dechrau'r daith at fod yn iach
Better health starts with you



llyw.cymru/HelpuNiHelpuChi
gov.wales/HelpUsHelpYou



Why Tom became a volunteer caller on our Friend in Need service

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. This is Tom's story on why he became a volunteer.

"I chose to volunteer for the Friend in Need service because I thought it a very worthwhile cause. It was something I felt drawn to do having been a long-term carer for my parents and now having friends with symptoms of dementia.

"I feel I have the qualities to be of good support and social comfort to my telephone buddy. I feel, whilst considering my own wellbeing, I can offer commitment and manage this set up comfortably from my own home.

"The support from individuals to work within this project, both with administration and training has equally been inviting. In the short time I have volunteered with Age Cymru I always feel valued and looked after. It's such a rewarding role and what a wonderful team!"

If you'd like to join Tom and become a FiN volunteer, call 0330 303 4498, email volunteer@agecymru.org.uk, or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/befriender.

And if you can't volunteer, why not donate so we can recruit more people like Tom?

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

Visit www.agecymru.org.uk/donate or call 0330 303 4498

Changing perceptions: Nurse practitioners

Did you know that when you contact your GP practice you could be offered an appointment with a General Practice Nurse or a Nurse Practitioner depending on your health concern. Here are 6 things you may not know about a nurse at your practice:

1. They are important health advisors and can help you navigate the health and care system, signposting for further information when needed.
2. Practice nurses can treat a range of health issues and can help you manage long term conditions such as diabetes, asthma, and COPD.
3. They provide a variety of screening services, including support with women's health, and monitoring blood pressure, heart rhythms and weight for cardiac conditions.
4. A practice nurse can offer routine vaccinations including flu, shingles and pneumococcal which helps protect against infections such as meningitis, sepsis and pneumonia.
5. Practice nurses with advanced practice skills can see on the day emergency patients, take medical histories, request further tests, bloods, X-rays, and other scans, and prescribe medication.
6. It can sometimes be more appropriate and quicker to see a practice nurse. Your appointments will often be longer to give the nurses time to gather all the details about your health concern, which in turn can help with getting you the right treatment.

Better health starts with you. To find out more about accessing the right service for your needs visit www.gov.wales/help-us-help-you



Age Awareness training

If customer service is central to a business, it's crucial that the needs of older people are understood.

That's why we have developed our Age Awareness training. This is designed to enhance the understanding and skills of customer service staff, improve the quality of customer service provided to older customers, ensuring that older people feel valued and their needs are effectively met.

So, if excellent customer service is central to your business, contact us to find out more.

Our training can be adapted dependant on organisational needs, including the provision of a general age awareness session. Please contact us to discuss what you have in mind.

Contact policy@agecymru.org.uk or call us on 0300 303 44 98 or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/age-awareness-training

Ready to make a real difference?

Fundraise for Age Cymru and help us be there for older people when they need us the most. Your efforts can truly change lives for the better.

Today, older people are confronting some of the toughest challenges imaginable. Many live in poverty, struggling to access basic care and maintain their dignity. Too often, they face these hardships alone, with no one to help or support them. Loneliness becomes a daily battle when the TV or radio is their only companion.

What difference will your fundraising make?

Your money will make a real difference to the lives of older people in Wales, whether they're experiencing loneliness, issues around care, or the challenges associated with the cost-of-living crisis, we will be there to help.

£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?

There are many ways that you can fundraise for us whether that's taking part in a challenge event, arranging a fundraiser with friends and family or in your workplace or school, or remembering us when you are celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, or weddings where you can ask for donations instead of gifts or set up a JustGiving page. Any support is hugely appreciated.

For more ideas of how you can support older people in Wales with vital fundraising activities and for further information, please contact us by calling 029 2043 1555, emailing: fundraising@agecymru.org.uk or visiting: www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved

Have some fun with our cryptic dog quiz

Once again Tom, one of our volunteer callers on the Friend in Need service, has sent us a cryptic quiz, this time it's based on dogs. Give it a try and see how you get on. The answers are below.



1. His voice sounds rough & sore
2. A canine for a lorry driver
3. An American bus company
4. Mr Wogan is connected to an American medical drama
5. Charles Darwin's ship
6. It goes with kick and shorts
7. A well-known wicket keeper
8. The Italian said goodbye twice
9. Pongo and Perdita were theses mutts
10. Indiana Jones weapon with an alien on the end

11. This dog surrounds the lawn
12. Sergeant Bilko character
13. This dog is a French butterfly
14. The sea fish as an alien tail
15. This dog is surrounded by spaghetti
16. Famous tea party
17. Two dogs from Canada's St Johns capital
18. This dog is from a capital in Mexico
19. Hans Christian Anderson is one
20. This mutt uses his finger a lot

11. Border Collie
12. Doberman
13. Papillon
14. Basset
15. Bolognese
16. Boston Terrier
17. Newfoundland & Labrador
18. Chihuahua
19. Great Dane
20. Pointer

1. Husky
2. Yorkie
3. Greyhound
4. Terrier
5. Beagle
6. Boxer
7. Jack Russell
8. Chow Chow
9. Dalmatian
10. Whippet

Answers

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

Editor in Chief: Victoria Lloyd,
Chief Executive

Editor: Michael Phillips,
Communications Manager