

July 2023



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Age Friendly Wales Newsletter

Welcome to our Age-Friendly Wales Newsletter. For this edition we would like to spotlight some of the activity that is enhancing people's well-being. This is highlighted as one of the 4 aims in [Age Friendly Wales: Our Strategy for an Ageing Society](#) and is an area of great importance, especially following the Covid pandemic.

We hope that you enjoy reading about some of the activity bringing communities together, promoting exercise and healthy ageing and helping reduce loneliness and isolation.

If you need any additional information, or would like to include a feature in a future newsletter, please contact the Older People's Rights team at [OlderPeopleandCarers@gov.wales](mailto:OlderPeopleandCarers@gov.wales)

## **SUPER AGERS PROGRAMME AND OLYMPAGE EVENTS**

Bridgend County Borough Council is committed to using a range of activity programmes to bring older adults and their communities together with a range of regular weekly opportunities. The Super Agers programme is supported at a range of venues across Cwm Taf Morgannwg and has been running for the past 4 years.



The programme shapes activities for older adults giving them the opportunity to engage with people of all ages and take part in various activities. The Super Agers programme has found that older adults particularly enjoy the social components of the activities available, as well as the help and information they can gain whilst keeping active and the peer support networks they can build close to home.



The OlympAge Games is an annual inclusive and fun filled event that supports people of all abilities to take part in games and activities. The event is an exciting feature in the Bridgend calendar which is helping develop age-friendly communities and recognises the health and well-being benefits of encouraging people to exercise. Events are organised by the Bridgend County Borough Council Prevention and Well-being Team with partners including Halo Leisure, Awen Cultural Trust, Bridgend Older Peoples Forum, Shout, and many more including Bridgend College and local schools. Teams from local community groups, care settings and day centres across Bridgend participate in OlympAge and the participants compete in a range of games such as new-age bowling and curling, table tennis, basketball and target-throw.

Over the 4 years that OlympAge, teams have come forward from a variety of community, third sector and statutory groups including groups and individuals supported by the Community Coordinators and Community Navigators.

In the lead up to events, leaders visit settings across Bridgend such as community centres, village halls and leisure centres to engage with participants, develop the teams and highlight the importance of keeping mobile. Partners also develop their own offers to increase access to the opportunity which has boosted participant numbers and given people the chance to socialise and practice in sessions at venues near them.

Over 50 Bridgend College health and social care students and young leaders from secondary schools are on hand at events to support people to take part in activities. This gives our younger community practical experience with older community members and a fun opportunity for them to help make the day a success.

The most recent OlympAge Games event took place during intergenerational week in April and was a roaring success with a great deal of positive feedback.



The OlympAge events are part of a broader community-based programme of physical activity and well-being activities aimed at improving physical and mental well-being as well as combatting loneliness and isolation across our communities.

Bridgend has also taken forward similar approaches using cultural and creative activities with partners Halo Leisure and Awen Cultural Trust.

If you wish to find out more please contact Jane Thomas in the Prevention and Well-being Team at [Jane.Thomas@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Jane.Thomas@bridgend.gov.uk)

## VIRTUAL REALITY IN CARE HOMES

The “**Inside – Outside**” project is led by Caerphilly Over 50 in collaboration with Caerphilly Council's Social Services Department. The use of virtual reality (VR) headsets in care homes is achieving positive outcomes for residents, including those with dementia.

### **Conceiving the “Inside – Outside” Project:**

The onset of the Covid pandemic heightened our awareness of the limited opportunities care home residents have to see the outside world.

Virtual reality **360°** videos, viewed through a headset, are so realistic that the viewer is 'transported' to another location. We thought that filming local beauty spots and attractions would be ideal to take into care homes. Residents with dementia might find it particularly beneficial to recall places that they remembered. We made a successful application to the National Lottery in mid-2020 to fund equipment and filming.

As soon as Covid restrictions permitted, we started the filming process. Although restrictions were lifted for the general population, we were not able to enter care homes and give demonstrations. This made it possible for us to develop a portfolio of 20 videos ready to view [[YouTube](#)]. These included walks through Roath and Margam Parks, Caerphilly Castle, and over the hills in Cwm Darran. We also added a performance from an Elvis tribute act, as well as Caerphilly Male Voice Choir at rehearsals.

## Care Home Demonstrations

Our first demonstration of VR headsets was in February 2023 in Min Y Mynydd Care Home, Rhumney where all the residents had been diagnosed with dementia. It was an amazing success demonstrating to a group of 8 residents and several carers. The carers soon took over positioning the headsets on the residents and interacting with them. At the end, they were all clamouring for us to return! Of course, we did.



In the spirit of Age-Friendly Communities co-production, we approached the manager of Caerphilly Council's care homes who had already received positive feedback from Min Y Mynydd but was still amazed at the immersive effect of using the headset. We have worked closely since

then. In particular, the Senior Care Officer has been instrumental in taking the headsets on her regular visits to the council care homes.

You can read the comments from these demonstrations in our website article:

### [Dementia Action Week](#)

Care Home residents have thoroughly enjoyed watching the **360°** videos (“*absolutely marvellous*”, “*fantastic*” and “*wonderful experience*”). Not only does watching the videos benefit the residents, it greatly enhances their interaction with their carers. One resident who had completely lost the ability to communicate became quite animated, pointing to things she recognised.



### [Resident Interaction video](#)

## The Future

The Senior Officers have agreed to embed this activity in their care home. We will spend the remainder of our grant to facilitate this by providing a further 3 headsets and a few more bespoke videos.

Our videos are not interactive but we trialled an interactive video to see how it was received. They thought walking on the seabed was marvellous!

Welsh Government has put us in touch with a technical group who are investigating the use of interactive VR and we have agreed to meet soon. We are not aware of any group using anything similar to our bespoke videos and are considering its extended application.

This concept has real potential for wider introduction beyond Caerphilly. If you wish to learn more about this project please contact Caerphilly Over 50 at [caerphillyoverfifty@gmail.com](mailto:caerphillyoverfifty@gmail.com) or visit the COPA website: <https://www.copacharity.com/2023/05/27/virtual-reality-in-care-homes/>





## SUPPORTING CARE HOME RESIDENT'S WELL-BEING

The Welsh Government is pleased to work with Age Cymru to support the well-being and mental health of older adults living in care homes. Age Cymru is leading on Welsh Government-funded projects to engage with care home residents, promote volunteering in care homes and scope the mental health support available to older people living in care homes.

We wanted to have a better insight into the lives and experiences of care home residents during the Covid-19 pandemic. The *Tell Me More* project worked with older people living in care homes using a creative combination of meaningful conversation techniques and artists to produce portraits of the residents. The short, animated film, voiced by the residents and using the portraiture, shares their views and hopes, and is very powerful testimony to the challenges they faced. You can watch the *Tell Me More* film and read the report here:

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/our-work/care-homes/tell-me-more/>

Age Cymru has built on the learning and success of the *Tell Me More* project over the last year by training care home staff and volunteers in the *Tell Me More* approach, to encourage meaningful conversations with the people they care for and find out what matters to them. This inspired care homes to create activities tailored to residents' interests and helped with the return to normality after the pandemic.



Volunteers make a positive difference in many walks of life and have a very valuable role to play in care homes. Their contribution can enrich the lives and experiences of people living and working in care homes. Age Cymru is working to increase and embed volunteering in care homes across Wales, linking with local organisations to recruit volunteers, and supporting and preparing the volunteers and care home providers for the placements. It will continue to raise the profile of volunteering in care homes and promote a sustainable volunteering model. In addition to direct support Age Cymru has published a [Care Home Volunteering Toolkit](#) to support care homes to recruit, train and manage their own volunteers.

We are interested to learn more about the mental health services and support available to older care home residents and older people moving into care homes. Age Cymru undertook a pilot project focussing on the experiences of people living in care homes in both urban and rural areas - Cardiff and Pembrokeshire - in accessing mental health support. The project also considered the specific support needs of veterans living in care homes given their background and life experience. Read the [report](#) here. Age Cymru will continue gathering and disseminating good practice in supporting people when moving into a care home. It will also work with Social Care Wales to consider how to include mental health support as part of care worker qualifications.



For further information on these projects please contact:

[CareHomeTeam@gov.wales](mailto:CareHomeTeam@gov.wales)

## AGE-FRIENDLY WALES UPDATE

### Age-friendly Flintshire

In May, Flintshire was formally welcomed as a member of the World Health Organisation's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. This is a recognition of the great work taking place to make Flintshire age-friendly and the long-term commitment to work with older people and others to make Flintshire a great place to grow older for everyone.

Flintshire has a low number of large towns with many smaller towns and villages, and a mix of industrial, commercial and rural areas. This presents an interesting challenge for the development of age-friendly communities. Initial development focused on engaging with local groups and organisations to understand priorities to enable people to live well as they aged. Local steering groups were established to identify opportunities to benefit communities across the county and provide some initial learning to inform ongoing age-friendly development.

Some of the age-friendly priorities identified include:

- Health and well-being services particularly in rural communities
- Safety of and respect for older, more vulnerable people in our communities
- Support to help people get online
- Social activities, groups and services for older people
- Information about groups, activities, services
- Transport in rural/hard to reach communities
- Training, volunteering, employment opportunities

Age-friendly development has focused on tackling these priorities.

Highlights include:

**Increasing awareness and understanding about people living with dementia**

Staff and pupils in primary schools learn about dementia and are encouraged to make pledges to become a dementia friend (Alzheimer's society Dementia Friends initiative).



A number of pupils have also taken part in creative arts projects, and performed to their families, and older people from the local community. Feedback confirmed the project has increased confidence and understanding of dementia.

### **Helping people to get online and increase digital skills**

The Covid pandemic highlighted the benefits of being online. Those who were digitally included were able to maintain contact with family and friends, join virtual activities and shop online. Working with partner organisations, Aura Libraries, Coleg Cambria, and Sheltered Housing teams, digital tablet loans and community training sessions have helped those who want to get online. For those less confident, support is provided through Flintshire Connects offices and community hubs to access online services.

### **Increasing confidence for older people to reconnect with their communities**

As highlighted in the Older People's Commissioner for Wales report "[Leave no-one behind – action for an age-friendly recovery](#)" support was needed to help community groups and venues to re-open following the pandemic. Many groups rely on older volunteers to organise activities and following prolonged periods of shielding, confidence and mobility had reduced significantly. Aura Leisure helped to address this by running gentle exercise classes in the rural community of Hope and Caergwrle. Covid support grants also enabled groups to purchase

essential equipment and supplies to restart. Flintshire Local Voluntary Council worked with Social Services to recruit volunteers to restart activities and build sustainability.

### **Raising awareness about what's on in the community**

Feedback confirms that although there are often many activities and groups taking place in communities, there can be a lack of information about what's on, when and where. Groups are being supported to develop community "What's On" leaflets shared in community venues, libraries, leisure centres, notice boards and published online. Information is also collated and shared by a dedicated Social Services Ageing Well Officer, and through Flintshire's Well-being network, Older People's network and by social prescribers.

Development of the [Age-Friendly Flintshire website](#) will also provide a focal point for sharing age-friendly good practice across Flintshire.

The success of this exciting project will be ensured through continued engagement with long-established older people's networks and close links with community groups, such as the 50+ Action Group. The Ageing Well team has developed an Age-friendly Flintshire action plan to provide a focused and collaborative approach to making Flintshire a great place to live for people of any age.

To find out more please contact Flintshire's Older People Engagement team at [opengagement@flintshire.gov.uk](mailto:opengagement@flintshire.gov.uk)

## **Anglesey joins the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities**

Anglesey has recently celebrated becoming the latest county in Wales to join the World Health Organisation's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

Becoming a member of the network marks a county-wide commitment to breaking down barriers to ageing well and secures Anglesey's status as an age-friendly island.



Much work has been done in recent months to support the work of creating an Age-Friendly Anglesey, which has included:

- The reintroduction of **Older People's Forums** after the pandemic and taking on community feedback to make the move from larger, central forums to smaller more local forums. Since March, eleven Older People's Forums have been held out in the community all across Anglesey and have been very well received.
- Hosting various **50+ Open Days** within the county's Leisure Centres which enable older people to access information from various services and charities face to face, have a go at different leisure activities for free, and enjoy some lunch and the chance to socialise.
- Producing and distributing over 2,500 copies of our **Anglesey Community Transport Directory**, which has information on all Community Transport schemes based on the island.

#### [Anglesey Community Transport Directory \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/anglesey-community-transport-directory)

- Producing a **Community Buildings Directory** to support more services to take their provision for older people out to the community
- Arranging numerous **Scam Awareness** trainings for older people in the community

Future plans include the continuation of Older People's Forums and the upcoming launch of a new Age Friendly Anglesey newsletter to help keep Anglesey's residents updated on all developments and the support available to them to help them age well.

Anglesey's Age-Friendly Champion, Councillor Gwilym Jones noted:

“On behalf of the Isle of Anglesey County Council and the island as a whole, I'd like to thank the Welsh Government and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales' team for their support during our journey to becoming members of the network. We look forward to building on this important relationship, and to develop exciting plans for the residents of Anglesey.”

If you'd like to learn more about Age-Friendly Anglesey, please contact the Age Friendly Communities Development Officer, Sioned Young on [sionedyoung@ynysmon.llyw.cymru](mailto:sionedyoung@ynysmon.llyw.cymru) or 01248 751 832.

# EISTEDDFOD

## National Eisteddfod: Question Time

**Title: Age-Friendly Wales - Culture, Sport and the Arts**

**Location: Welsh Government Stand**

**When: 8 August 2023, 15:00 - 16:00**



We know the importance of mental health and physical health if we are to live well and reach our full potential - Culture, sports and the arts have a huge role to play in achieving this goal , If we are serious about achieving our vision of an Age-Friendly Wales where everyone looks forward to getting older, we need to ensure that the opportunities to get involved, to visit and to volunteer meet the expectations and aspirations of older people across Wales.

On the panel will be:

- Brian Davies, Chief Executive, Sport Wales
- Lleucu Siencyn, Director of Arts Development, Arts Council of Wales
- Nia Williams, Director of Learning and Public Programmes, National Museum
- Aled Evans, Manager, Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn

- Rhian Gibson, Director of Communications, Engagement and Partnerships, National Library of Wales



You will have the opportunity to hear about the vision of the guest speakers but also the opportunity to ask your questions. The Deputy Minister for Social Services will also be present and keen to discuss your ideas.

We shall look forward to seeing you.

## Thank you for reading our newsletter!

### ABOUT

This newsletter is produced by the Older People's Rights team in the Welsh Government and showcases good practice from a range of partners across Wales.

Find out more on the web:

[Our Strategy for an Ageing Society](#)

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