

Age Alliance Wales

*working together to support older people in Wales.
cydweithio i gefnogi pobl hŷn yng Nghymru.*



Welcome to the ninth Age Alliance Wales e-newsletter - March 2014

As practicable as possible, briefings will be bi-monthly, so if you have an item you would like included in the next newsletter, please send it to Mal Andrews by May 23rd.

Age Alliance Wales - Annual Senedd Event 2014



In Wales today, cuts to local authority services and the drive towards a more integrated health and social care service has created a pressing need to develop new ways of working that deliver better outcomes for older people at a minimum cost. Over 70 older people joined members of Age Alliance Wales (AAW) at the Senedd to highlight the role of the third sector in delivering services to

older people and to call for improved integrated working between the health, social care and housing sectors. [Read AAW briefing.](#)

This annual event was sponsored by Christine Chapman AM, and many of her AM colleagues also attended. After brief speeches by Christine Chapman AM and Richard Williams (Chair), Gwenda Thomas AM (Deputy Minister for Social Services) gave an informed and supportive viewpoint stating that the Welsh Government expects local authorities and health boards to involve the third sector in the planning and delivery of services. The DM also championed the role of the third sector in delivering vital preventative and early intervention services. This speech was followed by an interesting first hand account from Clive Penny of the issues facing and affecting an older person with support needs. [Read Clive's speech.](#)

The speeches were well received by an enthusiastic audience including a large contingent of older people from West Wales. This was then followed by a short film about a Tea Dance group from Troedyrhiw highlighting some of the many issues that affect older people and what they have done, and are continuing to do, in an attempt to address them. [View film.](#)

INFORMATION

RNIB - Getting Connected

For the last year, RNIB Cymru's Get Connected team has provided support to 1,400 blind and partially sighted people. This direct, one-to-one service has made a massive difference to people's lives, they've told us just how much – marvellous stories of going from not using a computer at all, to enrolling on an Open University course, talking with family on Skype, buying antiques online. Being included digitally.

82 per cent of blind and partially sighted people say that their sight loss is the reason they are not online. That was one of the main reasons for the production of "Getting Connected: Engaging people with sight loss in accessible technology". This good practice guide contains information for any project, community resource or service looking to support people with sight loss to become digitally engaged. It also highlights some of the best practice, information, resources and support available.

Community venues such as libraries that offer free internet access, often do not have staff with the knowledge or experience to provide teaching support to people with sight loss; and often these venues do not have the correct access technology that is vital to blind and partially sighted people getting online.

"Getting Connected" is a guide to helping people understand the assistive technology available that addresses the needs of people with sight loss, enabling them to access the internet as easily as a sighted person. Although the guidance was written and produced in Wales, it can be used anywhere, the principles are the same whether you are in Cardiff, London, Edinburgh, or Belfast – though the section on the Welsh synthetic voice will only be of interest to Welsh speakers!

We chose to launch it in November during RNIB's Switch on to Technology month, an annual event that is all about highlighting some of the great products that are out there and helping you to find answers to the common queries that blind and partially sighted technology beginners have. There are free events across the UK; this year we are focusing on three areas of technology that blind and partially sighted people have told us that they want to know more about:

- Making sense of mobile phones
- Getting online with computers and tablets
- Options for reading with eBooks and download audio books.

We've had three great technology events in Aberystwyth, Haverfordwest, and Cardiff - we helped many blind and partially sighted people learn more about how accessible technology can help them.

Getting Connected is free to download, and is available in English or Welsh, Word or PDF. Please visit our website for more information: <http://bit.ly/HAct8y>.

Homes for people with dementia and sight loss

The aim of this guidance is to support organisations and individuals when designing, refurbishing, and maintaining new and existing accommodation and other public spaces. It is based on the principles of providing a fully inclusive environment that supports people with dementia and sight loss to live as independently and safely as possible.

“Homes for people with dementia and sight loss” is based on current regulations, guidelines, and good practice. Though it was researched, written, and tested in Wales, the principles are universal. To gain a Wales-wide view, focus group members and individuals were interviewed from across Wales from both urban and rural areas.

The National Dementia Vision for Wales sets out the Welsh Government’s vision to help ensure that people with dementia, their family, friends and carers, are supported across Wales and are able to live well within their communities. This publication fully supports the priorities of the Dementia Vision for Wales and demonstrates how housing can be designed, maintained or refurbished to meet the needs of those with dementia and sight loss.

Housing associations from across Wales have told RNIB Cymru that some existing information and advice from the dementia field contradicts other best practice guidance; especially relating to meeting the needs of people with sight loss (Goodman and Watson, 2010a and 2010b).

There is also currently no definitive guidance on building EMI (Elderly Mentally Ill) wings or Extra Care homes linking in with sight loss and dementia requirements. This publication seeks to address this.

Due to the nature of dementia and the wide and varied symptoms that people experience when they have both sight loss and dementia there is not a “one size fits all” set of recommendations that will meet everyone’s needs.

Similarly as dementia progresses someone’s needs may change and further adaptations may be necessary. There are however key principles that can be incorporated when designing and refurbishing housing for people with dementia and sight loss and these are detailed in this publication.

“Homes for people with dementia and sight loss” is for everyone involved in the design, development and management of housing or other related disciplines. The guide is particularly aimed at organisations which are designing, refurbishing or maintaining existing sheltered housing stock and those building and designing new Extra Care housing and care homes. It will also be a valuable resource for managers of sheltered housing, Extra Care schemes, and care homes.

To order your free copy of the publication, please email Jo Lawson, RNIB Cymru's Independent Living Manager Joanne.Lawson@rnib.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society in Wales

Actress and writer Ruth Jones MBE was recently joined by almost 150 people, including more than a third of Assembly Members, as Dementia Friends, Alzheimer's Society's trailblazing awareness movement was launched in Wales.

Dementia Friends is an initiative that aims to give people an improved awareness of the condition. The sessions aim to improve public knowledge of dementia, by helping people understand what living with the condition might be like, and the small things that they could do to make a difference to people living in their community.

Sue Phelps, Director of Alzheimer's Society in Wales said:

'With so few people feeling they know enough about dementia, we are really excited to be able to invite everyone to register their interest in becoming a Dementia Friend. The Dementia Friends programme isn't about creating experts, it's about helping people understand a little bit more about what it's like to live with the condition and then turn that understanding into action - anyone of any age can be a Dementia Friend. Sign up to be a Dementia Friend or a Dementia Friend Champion and you can help us to transform Wales by changing public attitudes and making life better for people with dementia.'

To sign up and to find out where your nearest session is visit dementiafriends.org.uk

Swansea Care & Repair staff save a life!



***Sandra Davies,
Senior Caseworker and
Tony Berry,
Technical Services Officer***

Sandra and Tony were on a routine casework and fire audit visit to Mrs J's home. There was no answer at the door and no response to phone calls. A neighbour increased their concern when he joined them and explained that he had been trying to ring her since the day before. Tony looked over a 5-foot garden fence and noticed that the kitchen door was open and a light was on. Tony leaped over the fence and found Mrs J lying unconscious on the patio. Sandra dialled 999. Mrs J was taken to hospital with hypothermia.

As she has no nearby family, Sandra and Tony continued to see Mrs J and help with her housing problems until she was home safe again. Mrs J has now received a substantial amount of necessary support from Care & Repair to make sure she is safe and comfortable in her home.

Add to your life update from Age Cymru

'Add to your life' (ATYL) is a free NHS Wales online health and wellbeing self-assessment for people over 50 in Wales, which is being introduced across Wales in April this year. It is designed to help people over 50 to pause and think about their wellbeing and discover the simple steps they can take to stay healthy and live well for longer. The self-assessment provides people with personal, tailored feedback and advice based on their answers. All of the information provided has been quality assured and it directs people to a range of advice and support. For individuals who are not online they can contact NHS Direct Wales for telephone assistance in completing the self-assessment.

During the past few months Age Cymru has been involved in testing the ATYL website with groups of older people to gain their views on its appearance, content and usability. The feedback proved to be very positive in general and Public Health Wales/Welsh Government has been provided with a summary of the really useful suggestions to improve the website. The next stage for Age Cymru is to recruit community based volunteers and train them to assist and support people to complete the online check after its launch in April. This will compliment the work that is taking place with other organisations such as Communities First.

We are keen to work with partner agencies to identify existing/potential volunteers who would benefit from this free training and also to ensure that they can reach older people who will benefit from completing ATYL.

If you would like to work together on this exciting new initiative, or if you require further information, please contact Rhian Pearce, Health initiatives Officer, Age Cymru. Rhian.pearce@agecymru.org.uk. Tel: 029 20431555

Care & Repair: Helping nans and grampies all over Wales.....

A new film about Care & Repair was premiered during Care & Repair week at an event in the Senedd hosted by Gwenda Thomas AM Deputy Minister for Social Services

The film can be viewed at:

English: <http://youtu.be/14rckn757QM> Welsh: <http://youtu.be/CnvZ2zHVI1k>

During Care & Repair week (w/c 17th Feb) and charitable body, Care & Repair Cymru, has a simple message for older homeowners up and down Wales. If you are worried about living in poor housing, **“we can help you”**.

They say that many thousands of older people face housing related difficulties every day ranging from serious disrepair, dangerous electrics and leaking roofs, thousands more can't get around their homes, up and down stairs or use basic facilities such as toilets and baths. During the winter months, government figures show that thousands more are hospitalised or even die because they live in cold homes, and are too afraid to turn on the heating because of the cost.

Care & Repair Cymru Chief Executive, Chris Jones, said: “Last year, we helped almost 30,000 older people with their housing problems. Most of the people we help are aged over 60 and their average age is 75. 10 per cent of the people we help are over 90. Last year twenty out of our twenty two agencies helped people aged 100 years old or more. We help them tackle a wide range of housing problems by visiting them in their own homes, assessing their housing problems, making sure they claim everything they are entitled to, help them access grants or other funds, find them a reliable builder, supervise the work, or do the work ourselves with one of our skilled tradesmen”.

“Now more than ever, our services are important not only because they help improve people's quality of life, by keeping them safe, warm and independent, but also because they keep them away from places they don't want to be - ambulances, hospitals, GP surgeries and residential care homes. These places are the last place many older people want to be, and by helping them live safely at home, we reduce the demand being placed on our increasingly stretched NHS and Social Services”.

Our message to older people for Care & Repair week is that if you are living in poor housing and want some help, they can help you.

Telephone 0300 111 3333 local rate, anywhere in Wales to be connected to your local Care & Repair Agency or you can go to www.careandrepair.org.uk for lots more information about Care & Repair.

BLAENAU GWENT CARE & REPAIR – GOING THAT EXTRA MILE TO ENSURE CLIENT WELLBEING AND SUCCESS IN GETTING A CLIENT DIGITALLY INCLUDED

As written by the caseworker

I visited Mr and Mrs S in November 2013 as existing clients of Care & Repair who had already received previous visits from me, dating back to early 2012. Mr S has Parkinson's disease and had suddenly developed dementia which was progressing rapidly.

Mrs S asked if I would visit to see if there was any further assistance she could have as she was struggling to know where to go for help. I agreed to make referrals for them both to Social Services for a 'carer's assessment' for Mrs S and for a full assessment for Mr S. and to fully assess their needs and to signpost as necessary.

During the visit I asked how Mrs S was managing with her shopping as Mr S could no longer drive and Mrs S has mobility issues. She explained that she was really struggling; her daughter works full time and was due to go away for 3 weeks before Christmas. I explained about internet shopping and she said she had a computer but was unsure of what was involved. I briefly thought of referring her for computer classes in the area, but realised that her situation needed more urgent attention. "Come on" I said – "lets get you signed up for some internet shopping and have your groceries delivered!"

I then spent the next hour with her setting up an account with Tesco, going through passwords etc., then filling her 'basket' with her usual shopping favourites....it took a while, but she wrote down each step and we arranged her delivery for the following Friday. I agreed to ring her on the Monday to see if it had been successful. Monday came and she was delighted with her delivery so I agreed to return on the Wednesday to do another 'shop'. I also asked Mrs S if when I arrived she would be signed on and ready to go. On arrival I said "have you made a start?" She replied "I've nearly finished!" This was great news – I returned again the following week and she had done her Christmas order. I explained I was on leave then until the New Year and would ring her when I returned to work.

My New Year's telephone call to Mrs S has found her internet shopping with absolutely no issues and a new found confidence and enjoyment, which is lovely to see. It has also given her independence and the knowledge that she can manage if she needs to if her family are not available.

CONTACT THE ELDERLY APPOINTS NEW CEO TO LEAD CAMPAIGN AGAINST LONELINESS

National charity Contact the Elderly has appointed new CEO, Mary Rance, to further its unwavering mission to tackle acute loneliness and isolation among older people.

Contact the Elderly organises free monthly Sunday afternoon tea parties for small groups of older people within the homes of volunteers – providing a regular and vital friendship link every month.

With over 450 volunteers in Wales, Contact the Elderly is supporting almost 500 isolated older people, and as the charity gears up for its Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2015, Mary Rance will focus on increasing its network of volunteers, partners and funders to extend its vital companionship link to even more lonely older people.

Mary Rance, CEO, Contact the Elderly, said: ““I am delighted and honoured to be joining Contact the Elderly and to taking forward its vital work in tackling social isolation. Contact the Elderly plays such a pivotal role in dealing with the challenges posed by our increasingly ageing society. With almost half of all people aged 75 and over living alone, our task is to expand our services to reach out to even more lonely people year on year. I look forward to the challenges ahead and the immense rewards.”

www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk

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