# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Celebrating International Day of Older People** |
| **DATE** | **01 October 2024** |
| **BY** | **Dawn Bowden MS, Minister for Children and Social Care** |

This year’s UK theme for International Day of Older People is: ‘*The part we play: Celebrating the integral role of older people in our communities.*’

To celebrate the many ways older people contribute to Welsh communities, I met with a group of older Age Cymru volunteers whose experiences encapsulate the Day’s theme. The volunteers lead Tai Chi sessions, advocate on behalf of people who struggle to have their voice heard, or act as travel buddies and telephone befrienders.

The volunteers told me that volunteering is a joyous experience, and it has changed their lives for the better or made them feel a better version of themselves. One volunteer said that Tai Chi had helped to tackle their depression, and being able to support others use the practice as a tool to improve their mental health is a privilege.

The older volunteers play an integral role in their communities by helping the people they support to gain the confidence to have their voices heard or to become part of a social group. The volunteers also signpost information and advice or give someone who feels isolated a phone call to look forward to each week.

Too often older people are portrayed as passive recipients of social care but the volunteers show how wrong this assumption can be and provided a stark contrast to the often negative images of older people as a drain on society.

As the Strategy for an Ageing Society moves into its third year, Welsh Government has throughout this period funded innovative approaches to working with and for older people. These projects are delivering real benefits for Wales’ ageing society. With our support, local authorities are working in partnership with the third sector and older people to create age friendly communities. I am delighted to be part of this collaborative approach, helping Wales to become part of a global movement towards improving services for older people to the extent that we are now noted as an international example of good practice.

To build on this momentum, it is vital that we all celebrate older people and challenge ageist stereotypes. The strategy’s vision is for a Wales where ageism does not limit potential and people look forward to growing older.

On International Day of Older People, and as we begin a new chapter in Welsh politics, I would like to reaffirm my commitment to work across sectors and with older people to create an age friendly Wales.