Summary

- These initial results suggest that many older people are healthy and active.
- The causes of decline in physical and mental health related to ageing are the subject of intensive research both nationally and internationally.
- In July 2013, the first results from the CFAS sites in England were published in the top medical journal, the Lancet, suggesting that impaired memory and thinking is less common in current generations of older people than had been predicted.
- CFAS Wales is the only study of health and ageing in Wales which can look at changes over generations.
- As the study continues, your involvement will be of critical importance to reveal these changes in health and well-being of the older population over time.
- We are immensely grateful to everybody who has participated in the study and would like to thank you for your continued support.
- Should you have any queries regarding the study please contact your local research team whose details are in the panel on the left.
- For the most up-to-date information please have a look at our website http://cfaswales.bangor.ac.uk

Contact Details:

North Wales:
Institute of Medical & Social Care Research,
Bangor University
45 College Road,
Bangor, Gwynedd,
LL57 2DG
Tel: 01248 383050

South Wales:
Centre for Innovative Ageing,
College of Human and Health Sciences,
Swansea University,
Room 313,
Vivian Building,
Singleton Park,
Swansea,
SA2 8PP
Tel: 01792 606386

Website:
http://cfaswales.bangor.ac.uk

Thank you!

We would like to thank you for taking part in the Maintaining function and well-being in later life: A longitudinal cohort study (CFAS Wales).

Now that the first stage of this study is well under way, we would like to let you know some of our initial findings which we hope you will find interesting.

We would also like to thank all the GP practices and their staff who have helped us with participant recruitment for this study. Your continuing support is greatly appreciated and without it this research could not take place.

The UK population is ageing.

The number of people aged over 65 is rapidly increasing. It is predicted that by 2050 the older population in Great Britain will have nearly tripled since the 1950s and this growth is even more pronounced in the population aged over 80 where there will be an eightfold increase. This is due to people living longer and remaining more active than at any other time in history.

As the population grows older it is important to work out what resources are required to provide care and support for those who need it, as well as to recognise the valuable contribution older people make to the community.

The impact on society means that healthcare, retirement and pensions will need to be extended for longer. These issues are the basis on which national and local policymakers plan and provide for the health and social care needs of the older population. By the end of this study, we will be able to provide profiles of the mental and physical health of people aged 65 or over and investigate what might cause or prevent changes that occur with age.

The study is being carried out across Wales (Gwynedd, Ynys Môn, Neath Port Talbot) and England (Cambridgeshire, Newcastle and Nottingham), and we will ask 12,500 people if they would like to take part. The project takes place in two phases: phase I in Wales has been running since 2011 and is due to finish in early 2014. Phase II will take place two years after phase I, with those who took part invited to conduct a second interview. This follow-up interview will allow us to look at changes in health over time.

Interviews have been conducted mainly in peoples’ homes; we included questions on family and friends, memory and concentration, social activities and general health. For some people we also asked permission to seek further valuable help from a relative or someone who knows them well. All the information you have provided is treated with the strictest confidence and held anonymously.

Although we have not finished all the interviews from phase I we want to share a few findings with you. The next section looks at some of the initial findings from those who have taken part so far. Because we have yet to complete the first phase of the project, these results are not the final ones.
Who has taken part so far in Wales?

By 29th July 2013 a total of 2,355 people in Wales have taken part.

Study Population:
Of those who have taken part 1,277 were women and 1,078 were men. The age of people who have taken part ranges from 65 to 102 years. The chart on the right shows the ages of those who have taken part. As expected more women are in the older groups than men.

Activity:
By activity we mean physical activities, social engagement and work. The majority of people are physically active, taking part in sports or activities that are at least mildly energetic. Almost 1 in 10 are still working and half report some social activity such as attending community meetings, and groups such as over 60’s clubs, or evening classes.

Health:
We asked about particular health conditions. High blood pressure and arthritis were quite common. Parkinson’s disease was much rarer accounting for 1 in 100.

Memory Problems
The majority of people don’t report any difficulty with their memory. Around 1 in 5 report mild difficulties and 1 in 10 feel they have problems with their memory.

Accommodation:
So far more than 95% of our participants live in their own homes.

Marital Status:
More women are widowed than men and more men are living with a partner than women. The percentage of people who are single and the percentage who are divorced or separated does not differ between men and women.