Agenda
Osteoporosis Cymru
Gwella bywyd pobol gyda osteoporosis a toriadau bregus

The Osteoporosis Agenda Wales
Improving the lives of people with osteoporosis and fragility fractures
Osteoporosis is the fragile bone disease that can cause painful and debilitating fractures (broken bones), sometimes resulting in premature death. Every year, people in the UK suffer more than 300,000 fragility fractures; often from just a minor bump or fall. Many of these could be prevented with earlier diagnosis and treatment.

1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men over the age of 50 will break a bone.²

3 million people in the UK are estimated to have osteoporosis.³
Janice’s Story

A busy teacher and active hill climber, Janice from Aberystwyth fractured her hip aged 56 after tripping on the school playground path. Her fracture resulted in 3 months on crutches and 6 months off work.

Soon after, Janice was contacted by the Fracture Liaison Service (FLS) at Aberystwyth and assessed for osteoporosis. A DXA scan confirmed that Janice had the condition and she was put on alendronic acid and calcium tablets. The medication has improved Janice’s bone health enormously along with the advice from the FLS on keeping fit, having a calcium rich diet and how to approach her rehabilitation.

Like many people with her fracture experience, Janice is keen to spread the word about preventing further fractures and urges people to think carefully about their fracture risk and seek advice if they are over 50, have fractured and not been assessed for osteoporosis.

Life with Osteoporosis

Our 2014 Life with Osteoporosis survey asked over 3000 people about day-to-day life with the condition.4

42% of people who had experienced fractures are in long-term pain which they don’t think will ever go away.4

1 in 3 people in long-term pain describe it as severe or unbearable.4

42% of people said their osteoporosis has made them feel socially isolated.4
Cost to the NHS

Older people with one or more long-term conditions such as osteoporosis account for a large portion of spending by NHS Wales.

**Every year hip fractures alone account for:**

- Nearly 6,000 unplanned hospital admissions in Wales.\(^5\)
- Approximately £108 million in Welsh hospital costs, excluding the high cost of social care.\(^6\)
- Over 146,000 bed days in Welsh hospitals.\(^7\)

The Solution

Key recommendations to improve the lives of thousands of people in Wales with osteoporosis and fragility fractures:

1. **Improve local services:** Lead and support local provision of services for people with osteoporosis and fragility fractures.

2. **Strengthen national policy:** Encourage development of national policy on osteoporosis and fragility fracture care.

3. **Conduct a national audit of all fragility fractures:** Support and funding for a comprehensive audit to help improve services.

4. **Raise awareness:** Improve understanding of osteoporosis with resulting fragility fractures as a distressing, prevalent and costly condition.
By identifying patients in a consistent, systematic way, it is estimated that up to 25% of hip fractures (about 20,000 a year) in the UK could be prevented through Fracture Liaison Services.  

Find them  
Assess them  
Treat if appropriate  
Follow-up

Fracture Liaison Service (FLS):  
The best practice model for preventing further fractures

An FLS, often run by a nurse specialist, is a proven model for fragility fracture prevention.

All patients over the age of 50 years who fracture are targeted

We are focused on the provision of high quality Fracture Liaison Services across the country. We are working with key national stakeholders to develop robust support for health services and healthcare professionals. Our guidance for FLS defines the core standards every service should meet. These standards need to be adopted to ensure that every patient receives evidence-based best practice care.

Patients need proper access to diagnosis and treatment, regardless of where they live and yet FLS and wider osteoporosis services across Wales are variable.

Service models, whether in primary care, secondary care or integrated, must both suit the locality and ensure the best possible patient care.

Given this, we welcome the publication of the Mid Wales Healthcare Study and the establishment of a Mid Wales Healthcare Collaborative to tackle the challenges of providing healthcare in a large, rural area.

Help us ensure that osteoporosis services are prioritised and provided locally.
2 Strengthen National Policy

NHS policy has already recognised hip fracture care as a priority area for improvement and the National Hip Fracture Database (NHFD) covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Combined with Best Practice Tariff for Hip Fracture, this has had a powerful effect on hip fracture care in England.

Despite some positive change, there is still vast improvement needed in Welsh hip fracture care. For example, the NHFD 2013 Report highlighted how the length of stay in rehabilitation beds in Wales was over twice as long as the figure for England.

The Welsh Government needs to consider its strategy for improving hip fracture care, including time to theatre and access to orthogeriatric care. In-patients with a fracture should be swiftly treated and then rehabilitated. To enable this we would urge the Welsh Government to invest properly in orthogeriatric services which would result in significant benefits and cost-savings.

In terms of prevention, all fragility fractures, not just hip, must be addressed. It is vital that people over the age of 50 who have broken other bones are assessed for osteoporosis via an FLS to prevent them from fracturing again. We already know that 50% of people who have suffered a hip fracture have previously broken a bone.10 11 12 13

Existing NICE clinical guidance for osteoporosis and related areas needs to be strengthened to include a full NICE clinical guideline on osteoporosis and a Quality Standard in this area.

Help us push for stronger national policy on osteoporosis and fragility fracture care.

3 A National Audit of Fragility Fractures

The NHS needs to collect the right data to understand the extent of fragility fractures in Wales, drive up standards of care and inform local provision of services.

The National Hip Fracture Database (NHFD) has had a significant effect on many aspects of hip fracture care across England, Northern Ireland and Wales; today 95% of all hip fracture cases are recorded in the database.14

Following on from this success, we need to secure an ongoing national audit of all fragility fractures, not just hip fractures. This will give us an up-to-date understanding of steps being taken to ensure prevention of further fractures. The results can then be used to measure and drive up standards for all fragility fractures, just as the NHFD is doing for hip fracture patients.

Help us push for support and funding for a comprehensive national audit of all fragility fractures.
Despite having a profound effect on people’s quality of life and placing a burden on both health and social care, there is not enough awareness or understanding of osteoporosis and resulting fractures amongst the public, policymakers and health professionals. The link is not being made between fractures in the over 50s and undetected osteoporosis.

The National Osteoporosis Society is the only charity dedicated to improving the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis and fragility fractures across the UK. We provide information and support both for the public via our Helpline and publications and for health professionals via our training courses, events and clinical guidance.

The next time you hear of an older friend, neighbour or family member falling and fracturing, think of osteoporosis: Signpost people to our website and services, raise any concerns with your GP, support the Charity’s work and spread awareness.

Help us raise awareness of the Charity and improve understanding of the condition.

Only 25% of adults are familiar with the term “osteoporosis.”

A fifth of women who have broken a bone break 3 or more before being diagnosed.
References