

Age-friendly Communities

What are age-friendly communities and why are they important?

In an age-friendly community older people feel valued, included and respected. They can get out and about, do things that they want to do, lead healthy and active lives, stay informed and have their voices heard. Age-friendly communities enable people to age well and be a part of decisions which affect them – especially important to make sure older people aren't left behind as we recover from Covid-19.



The Age-friendly concept was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2007 through engagement with older people, carers and service providers across the world. It identified eight core areas of an age-friendly city or community:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

In 2010, the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities¹ was established – a network of communities from all over the world where age-friendly practices can be shared. It now has over 1,100 members.

What has happened so far, and what is planned?

Wales's journey in developing and delivering age-friendly practices began in 2003 with the original Strategy for Older People, and much has happened since to create more tolerant, compassionate and inclusive communities. Examples include the signing of the Dublin Declaration in 2013 through to the annual wellbeing assessments and ageing well plans undertaken by Public Service Boards.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Heléna Herklots CBE, wants to work with all local authorities to help them join the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, enabling them to share their journey so far and to learn from practices across the world, which will contribute to further development.

¹ https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age_friendly_cities_network/en/

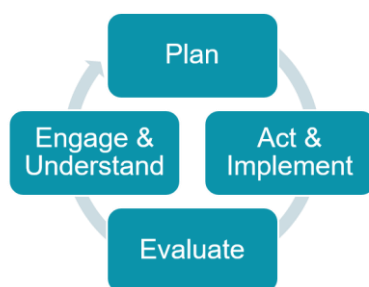
Joining the network involves evidencing the involvement of and support for older people through past examples, present working and future plans that build upon this. Whilst the eight 'areas' above provide a framework, there is no need to meet all eight to gain recognition – this is a way of working, not a checklist.

Establishing age-friendly communities also forms one of the three cross-cutting themes within Welsh Government's recent draft Strategy for an Ageing Society².

What is needed to join the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities?

- The completion of an application form, including evidence such as age-friendly activities, baseline assessments, strategies, engagement and collaboration.
- A letter from an elected representative such as a Council Leader, indicating a formal commitment to becoming more age-friendly.
- Confirmation of agreement with the WHO's values and approach to creating age-friendly communities and the existence of available resources to make it a reality.
- Designation of a contact person

Members of the WHO Global Network of Cities and Communities need to share and promote age-friendly values, principles and processes. They also need to commit to using the 4 steps below in their age-friendly work and to participate in the network through providing at least one example annually of an age friendly practice, tool or guideline.



Why the Council?

Whilst age-friendly activities and initiatives are delivered by all bodies and sectors, the WHO look for the commitment from an elected representative with the authority to implement and shape priorities as a signatory to any application.

Beyond the formal commitment, the participation and support from all sectors in both applying for and maintaining membership of the Global Network is vital – these may include Health Boards, Town and Community Councils, voluntary organisations, 50+ Forums and other older people's and intergenerational groups.

² <https://gov.wales/strategy-ageing-society-age-friendly-wales>