

Creating an age friendly Wales





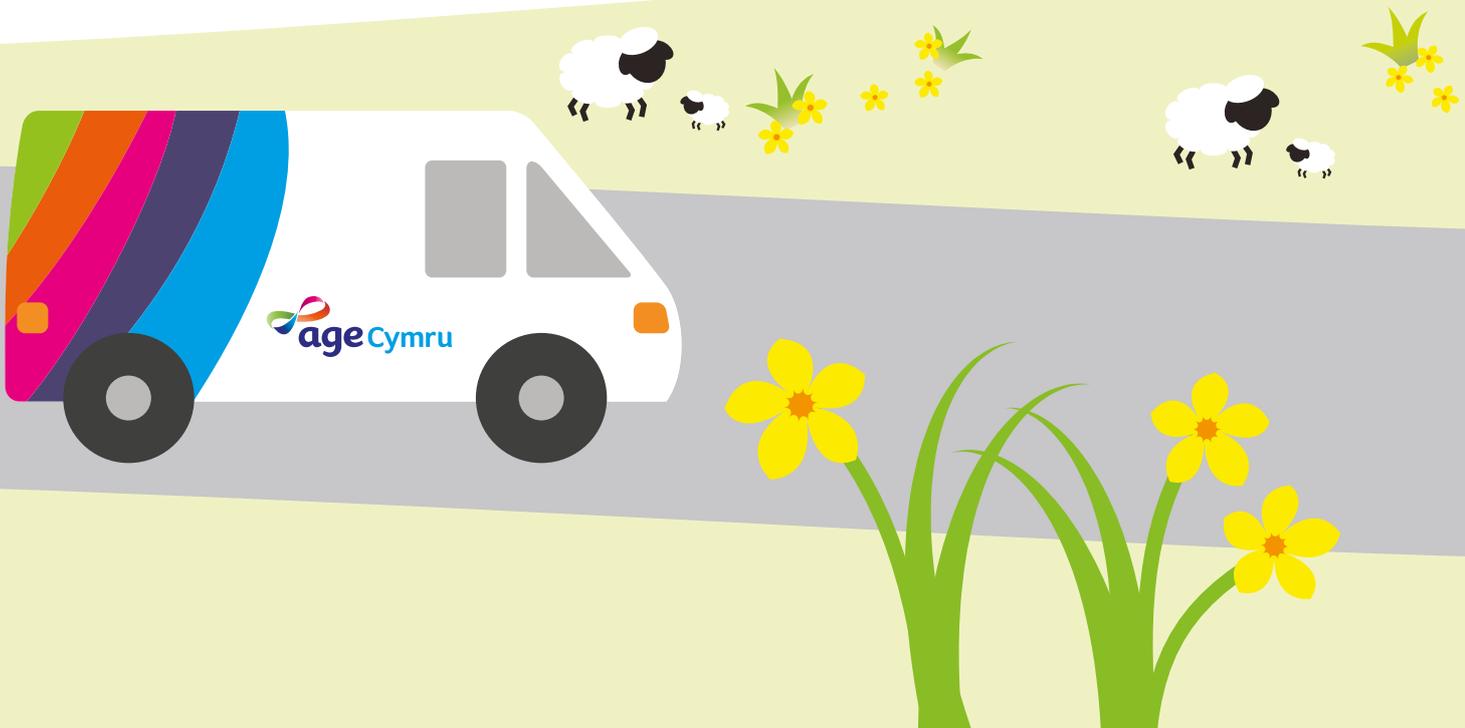
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Why we need Wales to be age friendly

The concept of age friendly is not a new one. There are many variations on a simple definition of age friendly, such as that developed in Canada which states:

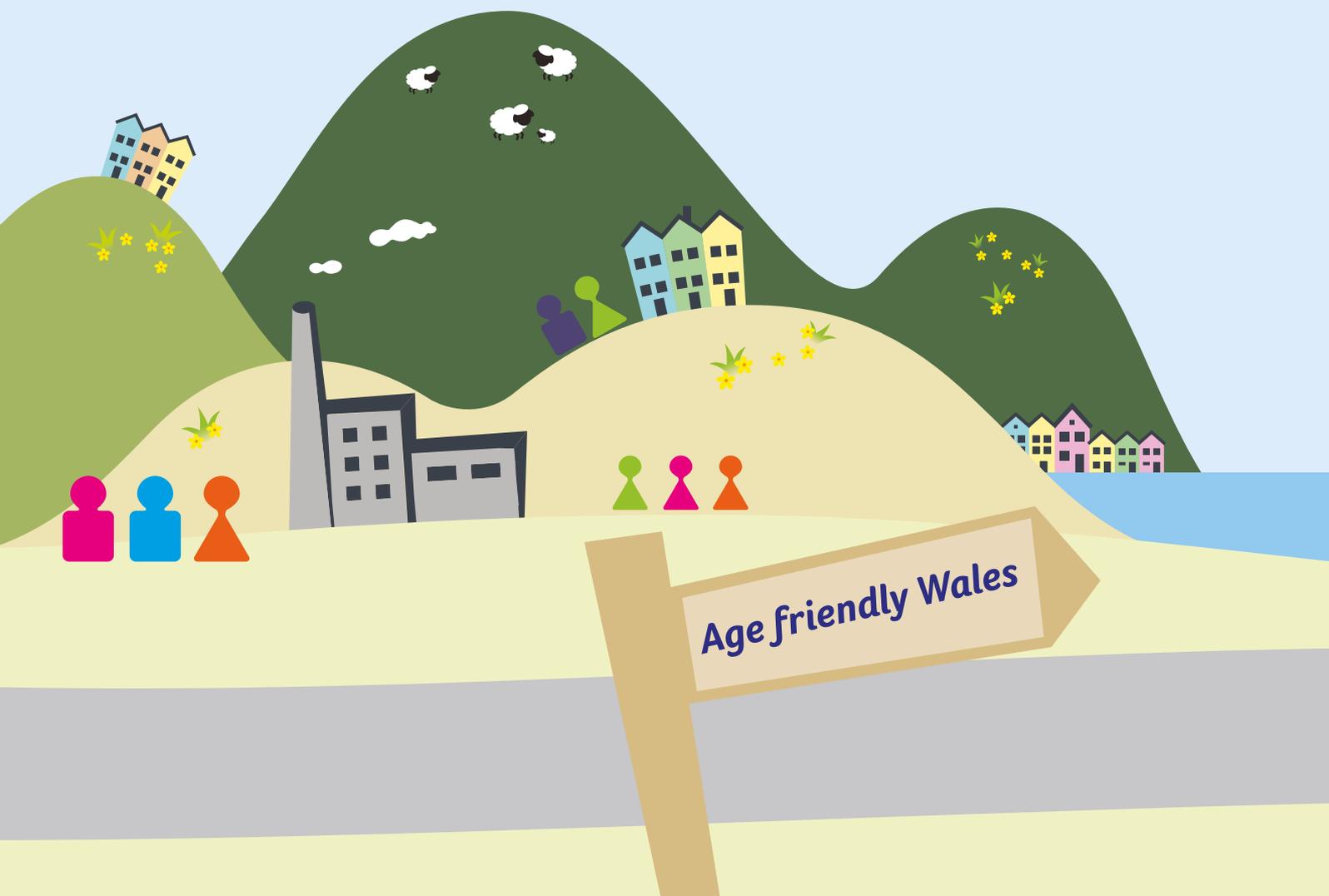
“In an age friendly community, the policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to help seniors ‘age actively’. In other words, the community is set up to help seniors live safely, enjoy good health and stay involved.”

Our purpose in embarking on such a programme is to ensure that older people are able to live the most fulfilled lives possible in communities across Wales. The changes we identify need to be sustainable, rooted in Welsh culture and supported by government at all levels.

This is vital at a time when the number of older people in Wales is growing and we are, on average, expected

to live longer. Currently many older people are marginalised by a number of factors including poverty, isolation, cultural stereotyping, physical barriers in communities and a lack of opportunity. This needs to change.

We believe that Wales should aspire to be an age friendly country. Devolved government, the traditional community values of Welsh society and the size of



the nation provide us with an opportunity to raise the aspirations of what being 'age friendly' means. We need changes in culture, attitudes, policy and service delivery. With demographic change it has never been more important to reposition older people as important players within our society. We need to celebrate ageing as a positive transition while keeping our older citizens involved in civic and community life.

An age friendly Wales is one in which older people can live socially, environmentally and culturally inclusive lives. Everyone would be able to contribute and participate in their communities in the way they chose to do so. All forms of discrimination against older people would be removed and older people would have equal respect, rights and the same access to services as the rest of the population.

“I am recognised as a person in my own right”.

The fact that older people make up an increasing section of the population makes it ever more vital that our culture, environment, services and civil society meet their needs. Importantly we need to ensure our older citizens have the same dignity and respect we should all receive – irrespective of our stage of life. The alternative is a society where increasing numbers of people feel isolated, lonely, marginalised and prevented from playing a full and active role in their communities.

Social change starts with the recognition that older people are at the centre of the process. The minimum expectation is contained in our starting statement – “I am recognised as a person in my own right”.

Comprehensive and enforceable civil and human rights are the essential foundation for the permanent elimination of discrimination and the removal of barriers.



We believe all politicians should consider the needs and challenges faced by an ageing population and articulate clear proposals for helping older people in need. We urge all political parties to embrace the concept of an age friendly Wales.

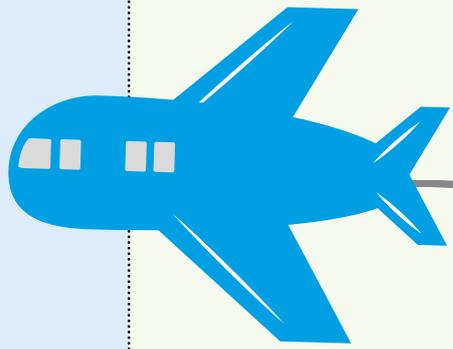
The following chapters set out eight different areas of life in which change needs to be brought about to deliver an age friendly Wales. They cover areas such as work, social inclusion, housing and transport – all of which currently present a range of barriers that can inhibit and challenge older people in their daily lives.

We outline the ways in which these barriers can be overcome. We cannot bring about an age friendly Wales on our own, but we believe that government, public and private organisations and individuals can work together to help Wales become a beacon within the UK and Europe: demonstrating best practice in how it responds to the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population and works to ensure its older citizens can live fulfilled lives.

Becoming age friendly is a social and cultural change programme that will need to permeate all aspects of our society. The principles need to be embedded widely in both the public and private domains including within government programmes, school curriculums, business practices and our social care and health systems. Being age friendly should be synonymous with good business and great public services.

The Welsh Government, together with citizens, services and businesses have a real opportunity to make Wales a country that will lead the world in how we engage with the challenges of ageing. Getting it right will make Wales a better country to grow older in now, and will make it even better and fitter for the future.





Age Cymru's key messages

- We are committed to achieving an age friendly Wales.
- An age friendly Wales is one in which older people have equal rights, respect, opportunities and the same access to services as the rest of the population.
- Older people are central to achieving this change.
- We will work with the relevant partners to ensure that the vision of an age friendly Wales is realised.
- We will design and deliver products and services to contribute to the achievement of this vision.
- We believe Wales could be the first truly age friendly country in Europe.



Goal 1: Equality, rights and participation

“I can expect employers, service providers and the public to include me”. “I am protected from discrimination and exclusion by comprehensive, enforceable civil and human rights”.

No older person in Wales experiences ageism or stereotyping, both inside and outside the workplace. There are opportunities for civic participation, support to enjoy retirement, and volunteering. All older people in Wales have the opportunity to be involved in decision making within their community.

Why this is important

Rights and participation are important for everyone. Older people deserve equal respect, rights and the same access to services as the rest of the population. Older people who want to work should have the opportunity to do so, while later life is also a time when many older people wish to volunteer and make an active contribution to community life. Volunteering can be particularly attractive to people making a transition from work into retirement, or those who are seeking to improve their skills.

However, a number of barriers need to be addressed to enable older people to make these contributions. Negative attitudes towards older people and ageing are pervasive in our society. In common with most other forms of discrimination,

ageism is based on stereotypes and inaccurate assumptions about a person’s ability, capacity and competence due to their age. Stereotyping also has the detrimental effect of homogenising older people and ignoring the diversity of the older population. Older people frequently experience discriminatory treatment due to ageism.

Context

Large numbers of older people in Wales believe they have been discriminated against because of their age, including 30% of people over 65 who reported discrimination by insurance companies and 21% of those between the ages of 50 and 64 who feel they have experienced discrimination in employment.¹ Research by Age UK² found that an increase in the number of older people has been



Equality



accompanied by an increase in age discrimination.

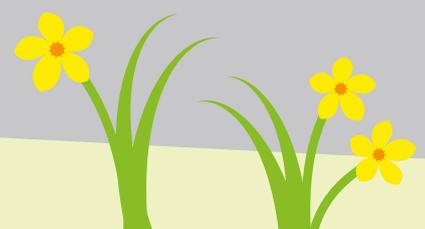
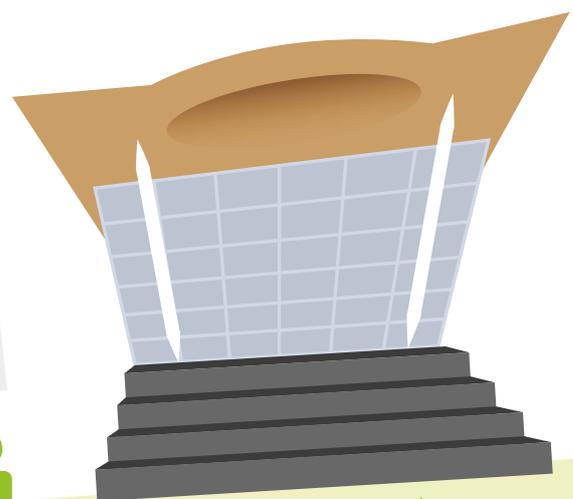
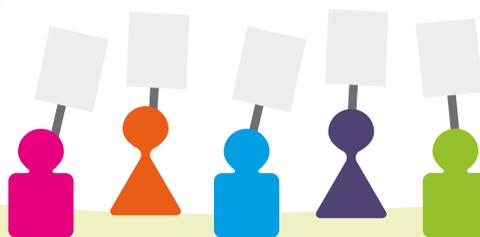
The Equality Act 2010 provides a set of legislative tools for tackling age discrimination, particularly within employment and in the provision of goods and services. Under the Act there is a ban on age discrimination in health and social care. The financial services sector, however, is largely exempt, which means older people continue to face difficulties in accessing financial products such as insurance and mortgages.

Government policies to increase the state pension age are based on an assumption that people will be able to work for longer due to increases in healthy life expectancy. Indeed, statistics show that many people are working to a later age than ever before.³ For some this is a positive choice based on a desire to stay in work, whilst for others their financial circumstances mean they feel unable to retire. However, older unemployed people are out of work for longer on average than other age groups⁴ and many experience difficulties accessing support to find new employment.

The Equality Act also contains the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to take positive steps to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination. It is vital that public and private organisations take steps to understand the needs of the ageing population and aim to ensure their decisions do not disproportionately impact on older people.



It is essential that older people know their rights. The Welsh Government's Declaration of Rights for Older People⁵ aims to clarify the rights of older people as already underpinned by existing equalities and human rights legislation. The Declaration seeks to be a symbolic step in highlighting the rights of older people in Wales, both to older people and to organisations and services.





Action required

To achieve an age friendly Wales, older people should have the opportunity to participate, work or volunteer; the same access to quality services as everyone else; and the right to be treated with respect by society.

All public authorities should treat older people as individuals and strive to overcome ageist stereotypes that might prevent older people from participating. The needs of older people in all their diversity must be accommodated in public policy and service delivery.

Everyone should be able to remain in work for as long as they desire and are capable of doing so, and no one should be disadvantaged because of their age. When out of work, support must be better tailored to the specific needs of older jobseekers.

What we're calling for

- For older people to enjoy equal respect, rights and the same access to services as the rest of the population.
- All public authorities and private bodies must strive to overcome ageist stereotypes that might prevent older people from participating, and recognise the diversity of the older population when designing and delivering services.
- Support services and information must be provided to empower older people to make employment decisions and choices that best suit their needs and wishes.



Goal 2: Informed and included

“I have access to the right level of information, advice and advocacy when I need it”.

All older people in Wales have access to appropriate information, advice and advocacy, and are digitally included irrespective of where they live.

Why this is important

Good quality and up to date information is essential to help people make choices about everything from everyday issues to difficult and potentially life changing decisions. Without access to accurate information and high quality independent advice and advocacy where required, older people can be at an increased risk of missing out on financial entitlements, being marginalised and isolated or experiencing discrimination.

It can be challenging to navigate complex systems such as health, social care or the benefits system. These challenges can be exacerbated by changes in personal circumstances as people age, such as illness, loss of independence or bereavement. Support which helps people to access information and understand the implications of decisions can be vital. Without this support, people can lose out on essential services or entitlements with a detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing.

In today’s increasingly digital world, a vast quantity of information is available at the touch of a button. However for those on the wrong side of the digital divide, including many older people, reductions in the amount of information available in traditional formats has exacerbated difficulties in keeping informed and being able to access key services. A lack of access to online services also frequently means paying higher prices.

Independent advocacy services can play an important role by helping people to have a voice and regain control in difficult situations. It can help secure their rights and represent their interests. Advocacy can help to prevent discrimination, neglect or abuse by enabling older people at risk to become more aware of their rights and able to express their wishes and concerns.

Context

In 2013 there were only 71 paid advocates to support older people across Wales in a variety of settings; including care homes, hospitals and the community. This equates to one paid advocate for every 11,000 older people. Despite this, more than 4,000 older



people in Wales received the support of an independent advocate, with an additional 1,500 people supported by statutory advocacy services.⁶

The Welsh Government has reaffirmed a commitment to advocacy through improved duties within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. We strongly welcome this. Nevertheless, there is a major concern that Wales is heading for a crisis in availability of older people's advocacy due to the impending potential loss of schemes currently funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Many of these may cease to exist beyond the end of the current funding arrangements. Abuse statistics provide a startling reality about the lives of thousands of older people in Wales. More than 40,000 older people are being abused in their own homes by people they trust to love and care for them.⁷ However even more startling is the fact that less than 5,000 referrals are made to social services across Wales each year about the abuse of vulnerable people.

The vast majority of people (95%) under 45 years of age use the internet, compared with only 22% of people aged 75 or older.⁸ Although the numbers of older people online have steadily increased over recent years, there will likely remain a group of people who do not or cannot access information and services

provided solely online. There is also a significant variation in the type of usage, with older people less likely than other groups to use the internet for banking, managing fuel bills or shopping.⁹

Action required

To achieve an age friendly Wales older people must have access to information in a range of formats. We live in an age where information can be available online in seconds for many people, but provision must remain for those who do not have access to online information or services.

Good quality information, advice and independent advocacy services, should be adequately funded to ensure they are accessible to older people across Wales.

Those who require it should have access to an advocate who can support them to access services, express their wishes and take important decisions over their health and welfare.

What we're calling for

- High quality information, advice and independent advocacy services must be designed to meet the needs of older people and be easily available.
- Appropriate support to assist older people to safely use digital technology, to enable access to information and services.



Goal 3: Social inclusion

“I have access to appropriate social activities, creative and learning opportunities when I want them”.

All older people in Wales are respected, socially included and safe within their lives and environments. All older people in Wales are given the appropriate opportunities for expression, social activities and to continue to learn.

Why this is important

A vital aspect of creating an age friendly Wales is to enable older people to play an active role in society and to remove some of the barriers which can lead to isolation.

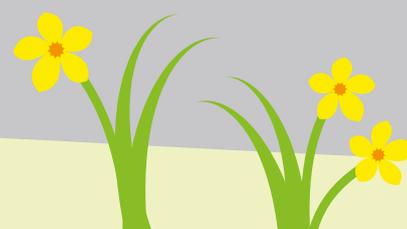
Being socially isolated has many detrimental effects on older people, including loneliness, a lack of the stimulation that social contact brings, and an inability to contribute to society or fulfil their own potential. Some older people go days or weeks without meeting or speaking to another human being. There is increasing evidence that this can have severe implications for physical and mental health.

It is vital to provide and protect opportunities for older people to interact with others and have access to social activities, volunteering and learning opportunities. This would benefit communities as well as increasing personal self esteem and wellbeing.

Through our Scams and Swindles campaign we have sought to illustrate how some lonely older people are at higher risk of exploitation by scammers because of the grooming tactics that many scammers employ and the ‘companionship’ they purport to offer.



Opportunities



Context

75,000 older people in Wales report “always or often” feeling lonely, while 14% feel “cut off from society”.¹⁰ 68% of women surveyed were concerned about loneliness in older age and a report by RVS (Royal Voluntary Service) found nearly three-quarters of over 75s surveyed who lived alone, felt lonely.¹¹

Evidence suggests if social activities are facilitated, uptake will be high among older people, providing they can reach the venue. For example, when the Nefyn Agewell Centre became the first such resource in Gwynedd in 2011, results were impressive. In the first two years, the Centre offered twenty two different activities. Over that period, more than 400 older people attended the Centre and 6,703 individual attendances were recorded. The Nefyn Agewell Centre was established by Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn and is run by volunteers and a management group.

In Monmouthshire, the Abergavenny Action 50+ Forum was set up in October 2013. A small core of volunteers promoted the group and membership reached 60 within six months. The organiser Delia Hudson identifies the biggest hurdles to be finding a suitable building, organising transport and raising money, with little assistance from the local authority.



The success of initiatives like these demonstrates the demand amongst older people for social activities – but they have to be organised and require an initial commitment of time – often from volunteers – and potentially financial support.



Action required

To achieve an age friendly Wales it is important that older people have opportunities to participate in their local community and wider society in a means of their choosing, for example through learning, social activities, paid work or volunteering. Communities flourish where everyone is able to make the most of their skills, knowledge or experience.

Fear of crime can keep older people imprisoned in their homes and local authorities and the police need to ensure that older people feel safe enough to venture out. They should also be able to live without the fear of falling victim to scammers, whether on their doorstep, through the post, telephone or online.

To tackle social isolation it is important that meeting places and activities, are available to older people. Better utilisation of public buildings and educational establishments, and partnerships with the private sector, may provide increased opportunities. The current trend to close down community facilities for financial reasons will need to be countered.

In some cases this will require sufficient finance to cover the costs, often relatively minor, of seeding groups and projects and ensuring appropriate facilities are available. The private sector can help enormously by making their facilities available to the public.

What we're calling for

- Social, learning and creative opportunities should be available within reach of older people to enable contribution and reduce isolation and loneliness.
- Partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors should be explored to increase the availability of facilities for groups and activities in communities.
- Efforts must be made to eliminate the barriers that prevent older people from being active participants in our communities, such as lack of transport and fear of anti-social behaviour.
- Older people should have protection from scammers and doorstep criminals, and not live in fear of crime.



Goal 4: Quality social care

“I can access excellent quality social care and support that is directed by me”.

Community and residential care services across Wales support older people to live well in their places and communities of choice.

Why this is important

A lack of quality social care can have a distressing impact on older people. It can significantly reduce older people’s quality of life in many ways, leading to a loss of independence and dignity as they become less able to do many of the daily tasks previously taken for granted. High quality, preventative social care has the potential to hold off the need for more intensive care and enable people to live independently for as long as possible.

Insufficient provision of social care and/or tight eligibility criteria can result in older people developing increasingly severe needs. Dealing with more severe needs requires more intensive and costly interventions, including hospital admissions.¹² Preventive measures to deal with current unmet need could benefit more people for a longer period of time and at a lower ultimate cost.

Older people with care needs often rely on family members and friends to act as informal carers to help fill in the gaps in

social care provision. Many of these carers are older people themselves. Being a carer can have a significant impact on the lives of the growing number of individuals taking on this role. For example, it can affect their health, quality of life and the opportunity to maintain or take on paid employment.

There are also many older people who do not have the option of relying on friends or family members to help manage their care needs. Without social care provided by the local authority, their lives become increasingly restricted. Many also worry about having to contribute to the costs of their own care.

Context

It is currently estimated that around 14% of those who are aged 65 and over receive social care services from their local authority. This rises to 48% for those aged over 85. Of these, approximately three-quarters use non-residential care services.¹³ These figures do not include those who pay entirely for their own care or those who receive help only from unpaid carers.¹⁴



Based upon current trends, the number of people aged 65 and over in Wales is projected to increase from approximately 600,000 in 2013 to almost 900,000 in 2037. In addition, the incidence of long-term critical illnesses and cases of dementia is also expected to rise.¹⁵ Together these factors are likely to lead to a substantial increase in demand for care services.

Growth in demand that we have already seen, combined with pressures on local authority budgets, have created a situation where only the most critical care needs are eligible for services in many parts of Wales. Individuals who are unable to access local authority care, and who cannot afford to pay privately, suffer as a consequence, often leading to a deterioration of their condition. In turn, this can lead to hospital admissions that could have been prevented and thus to increased expenditure by the NHS.

Action required

To achieve an age friendly Wales all older people must have access to quality social care that meets their needs effectively and protects their dignity. No one should suffer a reduction in their quality of life because they lack the ability to pay for their own care or friends and family members able to provide informal care.

Older people who need it should receive quality social care services that are centred on them. They need to be involved in decisions about the care they receive wherever possible, and prevention must be prioritised to prevent further serious needs developing that are more costly and difficult to treat. To truly provide effective

person and relationship centred social care, greater integration of health and social care delivery is essential.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is promoted as a step towards creating a person-centred care system with increased integration of health and social care delivery. The challenge now is to turn this rhetoric into reality in a time of continued budgetary pressures, ensuring that quality services and personal dignity are achieved.

What we're calling for

- Older people receive dignified quality social care that meets their needs, irrespective of the setting where care is being delivered.
- Older people benefit from an integration of health and social care delivery which supports and maintains their independence and prevents extended stays in hospital as far as possible.
- The Welsh Government, local authorities and the NHS prioritise preventative health and social care, including the delivery of high quality reablement services, to minimise unnecessary hospital admissions.
- Older people providing care for a family member or friend receive sufficient support to maintain their own wellbeing.



Goal 5: Quality health care

“I can understand and manage any health issue I have and receive the highest quality health care”.

Effective health care services support older people to treat and manage any health conditions and to maximise their quality of life.

Why this is important

People in Wales are living for longer, which should be a major cause for celebration for our society. However, some do so with chronic illnesses and many are living with multiple long term conditions. Older people are the main users of most health services, yet from education and training to the organisation of care, the NHS and health services often do not appear to be designed with older people’s needs in mind.

Health services should be designed to support people’s wellbeing and independence, but the NHS often appears to be set up purely to treat illness on a ‘condition specific’ basis with a goal of ‘curing disease’ rather than focusing on the complete needs of the person.

Too often we hear of cases where older people are not afforded the dignity and respect we all deserve, or are not able to access the treatments or preventative services needed. This places them at greater risk of a further deterioration of their condition or reaching a crisis point. It adds up to a situation where some older people are not able to achieve the quality

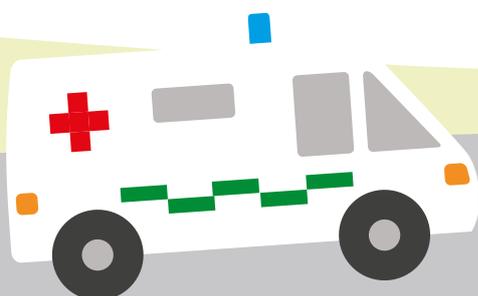
of life they otherwise could, and increases the likelihood of admission to hospital or a care home.

All older people should have access to health and care services that maintain and promote their physical and mental health, treat illness, and support those living with chronic conditions. This principle applies to all older people wherever they are – in their own homes, in care homes, or in hospitals.

Context

Health is the largest single area of spend for the Welsh Government. Some 72,000 staff and patients come into contact with the NHS in Wales, 20 million times each year.

An Age Cymru poll revealed that 85% of people surveyed have concerns about their health in relation to ageing, particularly dementia and mobility. 40% of people aged 65 and over in Wales say their health is fair or poor and health problems or a disability lasting (or expected to last) at least 12 months limits the day-to-day activities of 36% of people aged 65 and over in Wales.¹⁶





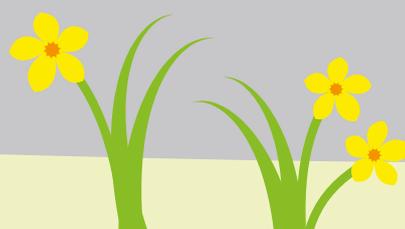
Current estimates are that approximately 43,000 people in Wales are experiencing dementia and this is projected to increase by an average of 30% and by as much as 44% in some rural areas by 2021.¹⁷

It is estimated that less than 40% of people with dementia in Wales have been diagnosed, lower than the UK average.¹⁸

Difficulties in accessing primary care services can be a barrier for older people. Of people who had made an appointment for themselves and seen their GP in the last

12 months, 33% said they found it difficult to make a convenient appointment. Yet the vast majority (90%) of patients are satisfied with the treatment received.¹⁹

A range of issues and pressures within the health service have increased in recent years as the NHS budget has faced the same funding challenges as other public services. Concerns about patient waiting times, delayed transfers of care and dignity frequently make headlines. A review by the Older People's Commissioner found the treatment of some older people in Welsh hospitals to be 'shamefully inadequate' and called for fundamental change.²⁰



Too many older people are stuck waiting in hospital beds for longer than necessary, often while agencies debate the funding of complex care packages. Conversely some older people are discharged without appropriate support measures to ensure they are safe and cared for while they recover at home.

‘Together for Health’, a five year Welsh Government strategy, lists the factors that are driving the need for reform as including an ageing population, health inequalities, and increasing numbers of patients with chronic conditions.

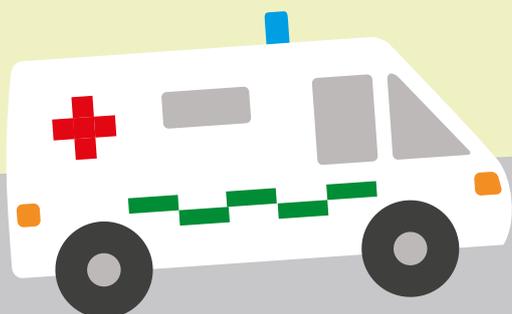
Action required

To achieve an age friendly Wales all older people must be satisfied with the health services they receive. Older people, wherever they live in Wales, should have access to health and care services that maintain and promote their physical and mental health, treat illness and support those living with chronic conditions. This principle applies to all older people wherever they are, in their own home, in care homes or in hospital. The right support will also help people to understand and manage the health issues they have.

Age Cymru is committed to supporting the founding principles of the NHS. We recognise the absolute value older people place on a universal comprehensive health service, free at the point of delivery. We also recognise that the issues facing health services in Wales are complex and will require action at a range of levels.

What we're calling for

- Older people must be at the centre of all decisions and developments which impact upon them and their ability to access NHS services.
- To improve the quality of care received, staff throughout the NHS must be trained in issues facing older people and the care of older people. This should include mandatory elements on dementia, human rights, dignity, equality and diversity.
- Access to primary care should be improved so that all patients have timely access to a GP.
- Older people have access to information, services and activities to enable them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Access to services such as optometry, audiology, dentistry, physiotherapy and podiatry are essential for people to manage their health and need to be available to all.



Goal 6: Financial inclusion

“I have enough money to meet my needs and to have a good quality of life”.

No older person in Wales has to live in poverty.

Why this is important

A sufficient income underpins many of the essential features of daily life.

The consequences of not having enough money can be severe for older people. Having an insufficient income can exacerbate problems of loneliness and isolation and place health and wellbeing at risk. It means making stark compromises and tough choices every day. Even basic essentials are beyond some older people, meaning that they are required to prioritise between things which others take for granted.

It may have begun to sound like a cliché, but some older people really do face a choice between heating and eating during the winter. Some choose to heat just one room during the day and either sleep in a chair at night or have to face a cold bed. Others do not eat a satisfying meal every day.

Other older people choose to miss out on socialising or activities because even small charges for these, or the costs of transport, are beyond them. This means some people barely leave their home, resulting in chronic loneliness and what we increasingly understand to be the severe health impacts associated with this.

Context

Today in Wales, an estimated 84,000 older people live in poverty, or 14% of everyone aged 65 or over. In practice, this means living on a weekly household income of £220 or less.

Even more concerning is the fact that 8% of older households in Wales live in severe poverty on £183.50 per week or less – just under 50,000 people.²¹

As with other age groups, even larger numbers of older people live with incomes just above the poverty line but are virtually no better-off in practice. Bereavement can frequently be a trigger for a dramatic worsening of financial circumstances.

Significant numbers of older people in Wales are dependent on the State Pension as their only source of income. Many others receive mean-tested benefits or small private or occupational pensions to top this up. Most older people have no way to increase their income in response to their needs after they have retired.

The additional financial support available to some is drastically under-claimed due to a combination of poor information, perceived stigma or a lack of support to apply.



This particularly applies to Carer's Allowance and Pension Credit, for which it is estimated that around one-third of eligible older people do not claim or receive it.²² Unclaimed Pension Credit alone is worth an estimated £168 million each year in Wales.²³

Strikingly, 70% of pensioner households in poverty and 80% of households in severe poverty are not currently in receipt of any major state benefits (Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance).²⁴

Action required

To create an age friendly Wales all older people must have a sufficient income to meet basic needs and participate fully in communities. No one should have to endure a calamitous reduction in their standard of living when they retire or be resigned to choosing between basic essentials on a daily basis in order to make ends meet.

Recent policy changes in relation to pensions are very welcome, particularly the UK Government's reformed state pension for new recipients and the 'triple lock' policy which should improve the level of the state pension over time. However these will not materially improve the circumstances of many current pensioners and the existing state pension should also be improved to reduce the reliance on ineffective means testing.

Older people on low incomes would also benefit from help to manage major household costs. Essentials such as food and energy costs tend to make up a

larger proportion of the budgets of older households and have risen at a quicker rate than real incomes. The energy market in particular does not work for many older consumers – especially those who are not online – who often face higher bills.

Given the increasing numbers of older people, we believe that private businesses would benefit from developing a greater focus on designing quality products, services and incentives targeted at older consumers.

What we're calling for

- National and local governments must provide better information, advice and support to improve the take-up of financial entitlements by older people.
- Support which reduces fuel poverty and helps older people with the affordability of energy, such as the Winter Fuel Payment, Warm Home Discount and home energy efficiency programmes should be protected and built upon.
- The private sector should recognise the opportunities presented by the growing number of older people and develop quality products and services which target and incentivise older consumers.
- Older people should have access to financial services based on individual circumstances and not arbitrary age limits.



Goal 7: Homes and communities

'I can live in my home and community without environmental or social barriers to prevent my participation'

All older people have appropriate and good quality accommodation. All outdoor environments and public spaces across Wales are accessible and usable for all older people. Business premises are accessible to meet the diverse needs of their workforce and customers.

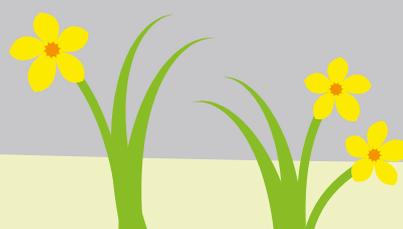
Why this is important

The features that make a place desirable to live in can change as people get older. It is essential that the built environment in our communities is age friendly so that it is suitable for people of all ages.

An age friendly community is one that has the capacity to support older people to retain their independence and to enjoy the best possible quality of life. It includes facilities, services and amenities that are accessible and that accommodate the needs of older people to enjoy health and wellbeing and fully participate in society. Helping people to live independently at home, and maintaining community facilities and services within an accessible built environment, can limit demand on health and social care services.



The housing needs of people may also change as they get older, so it is important older people have access to a range of good quality housing options. People need to be able to live safe, independent and active lives, and their home or location may need to adapt to their changing needs. Most people want to be supported to continue to live independently in their home for as long as possible.



Context

Being able to take part in community life, with good access to local services and facilities, is a lifeline for many older people. Being unable to get out and about locally can result in an increased risk of poor health, less social contact with others and a reduced quality of life. An inaccessible built environment that deters people from taking part in community life can contribute to this.

Evidence we gathered through the Towards Common Ground campaign and Community Calculator²⁵ identified that many older and disabled people face considerable barriers to independent living on a daily basis and specific problems with access to services and facilities.

It is vital that the built environment enables, rather than prevents, everyone to be active in their community. Potential barriers to older people include:

- physical access problems for people with mobility impairments
- poorly maintained pavements and street 'clutter', which can lead to falls
- inadequate street lighting
- a lack of seating in public spaces
- a lack of public toilets
- a lack of places to meet and reductions in the number of public facilities such as libraries.

With local authorities facing shrinking budgets, many of the essential services and facilities that older people rely on are under threat. The cumulative effect of these cutbacks will gradually erode the infrastructure and take the heart out of local communities.

One of the main tenets of the Welsh Government agenda in relation to housing and social care is that people should be supported to stay in their homes for as long as possible. To make this possible, much of Wales's current housing stock will need to be adapted. However, many people currently have to wait a long time for adaptations that will make their homes safe and support them to remain independent.

Specialist retirement housing can offer support to many older people, allowing independent living for longer within a safe and secure environment. It can also provide community living and associated benefits to quality of life. Locations for retirement housing should be carefully chosen to ensure that residents have full access to local services and facilities and are not isolated within a gated community.



Action required

To achieve an age friendly Wales, improvements to communities and local services are needed across Wales. Local authorities have a key role to play in making sure that the built environment is safe and inclusive for older people, with good access to essential services and facilities.

Improvements are also needed in the availability and delivery of home adaptations services to help older people to live independently at home for longer.

Older people need to have access to information about housing options, aids and adaptations to help make an informed decision about where to live in later life. Such advice should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice, and to facilitate independent living.

We want to see all new homes in Wales built to Lifetime Home Standards, making them suitable for people of all ages and easier to adapt when needs change.²⁶ The Welsh Quality Housing Standard (WHQS) has improved standards in social housing, and other housing providers should aspire to achieve it.

What we're calling for

- The built environment to be accessible and suitable for people of all ages, with adequate provision of public toilets, public seating and street lighting, and well maintained pavements.
- Publicly funded home adaptations must be provided within a reasonable time period so that older people are supported to live independently in their homes for as long as possible.
- Older people have timely access to information about housing options, aids and adaptations, to help plan where to live in later life.
- All new homes in Wales built to Lifetime Home Standards, making them suitable for people of all ages and easier to adapt if people's needs change.



Goal 8: Transport

'I can access the transport I need to help me get out and about'.

There is sufficient integrated public and community transport available throughout Wales to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services.

Why this is important

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping people to maintain independence and wellbeing as they age. Such transport networks can ensure that communities are well-connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without this, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's wellbeing.

Reliable and accessible local transport networks become increasingly significant as people get older. Two-thirds of single pensioners in Wales do not have a car,²⁷ and many older people rely on bus services to get out and about.²⁸

It is essential that older people in all areas, and of all ages, are able to buy food, get medical attention, manage their money and have social contact. These are basic features of a decent life and ought to be a high priority in transport policy. For most people the ability to get to places independently, and without extortionate cost, is extremely important.

It is important to provide appropriate infrastructure in communities to provide safe and accessible pedestrian and cycle routes. This would help to facilitate access to services and connections with other forms of transport.

Context

The free bus pass has been invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active. However, local bus services remain vulnerable to spending cuts or commercially-led decisions, threatening the long-term viability of some routes and risking some areas being left without vital public transport links. This could mean that access to a whole range of services and facilities will become impossible for some older people.





Community transport can play a crucial role by providing a service where public transport cannot or does not, and on a door-to-door basis for people with specific mobility needs. Community transport typically describes non-profit making services for people who are unable to use public transport due to their location or mobility. There is generally a charge for using community transport.

Rail services also have a key role in some areas, such as on the north west coast of Wales. However, despite investment, some stations or trains are inaccessible to people with limited mobility and there is frequently poor interchange between bus routes and rail services.

Other potential alternatives such as private transport sharing could also be explored to enable older people to access key services and community connections.



Action required

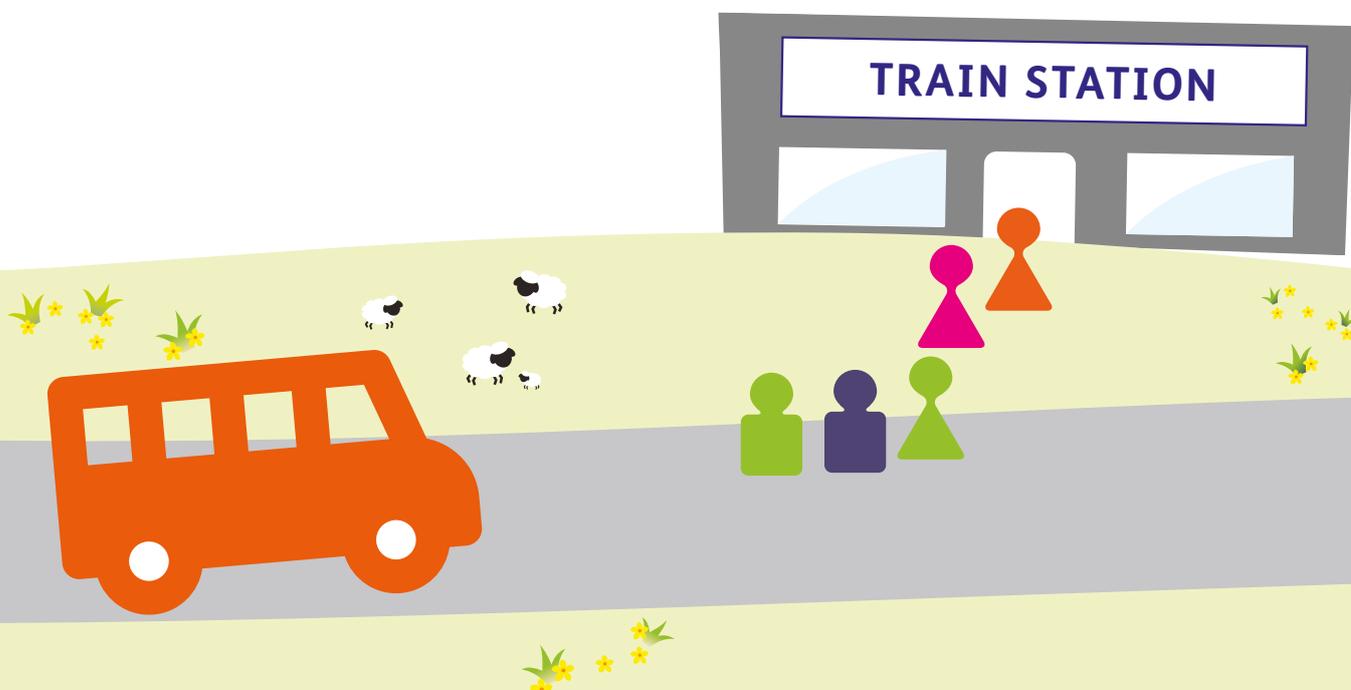
To achieve an age friendly Wales, it is essential that the free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people is protected. This must include consideration of the reimbursement rate for service operators or there is a danger that socially important routes that do not make a profit will be lost. Bus services must be maintained to provide access to key services and facilities, and contingency plans must be developed in case of threats to vital services.

Community transport schemes provide an essential lifeline for many older people, though there is a huge variation in service models, availability, charges and routes. We would like to see increased community transport provision across the whole of Wales as it plays a vital role in assisting people unable to use mainstream public transport. Successful good practice models of community transport should be replicated and supported by the public sector to ensure their sustainability.

An age friendly Wales would see the development of a fully integrated sustainable transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes, and better integration between transport and key services.

What we're calling for

- The free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people must be protected.
- Bus routes which provide access to key services and facilities must be maintained.
- Successful models of community transport should be replicated where possible and properly supported by the public sector.
- A fully integrated sustainable transport system, including rail, buses, community transport, and pedestrian and cycle routes, should be developed across Wales.



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age friendly Wales*



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