



NEWS RELEASE

£1 million investment from The Summerfield Charitable Trust to support Age-Friendly Cotswolds Initiative

A major initiative to support older people across The Cotswolds has been launched following a £1 million investment from The Summerfield Charitable Trust.

Age-Friendly Cotswolds is a three-year initiative designed to improve the quality of life for older people and create lasting, community-led change. It brings together local voluntary sector organisations to work alongside older people to strengthen their connection, wellbeing and influence across towns and rural communities.

The Cotswolds has one of the highest proportions of older residents in Gloucestershire, with numbers continuing to grow. Many older people want to remain active, connected and involved in community life. But rural isolation, limited transport, digital exclusion and fragmented services can make this increasingly difficult.

Age Friendly Cotswolds will focus on four priority themes: health and wellbeing, social and civic participation, empowerment and resilience, and impact and influence. Alongside the themes, a Community Chest will provide small grants to support locally led ideas, and a Volunteer Ambassador programme will help amplify older people's voices in decision making and strengthen peer connection.

Age-Friendly Cotswolds will be delivered by four organisations: The Churn Project, Cotswold Friends, Tetbury Area Youth & Community Trust and Age UK Gloucestershire.

In partnership, they bring experience of working alongside older people and creating inclusive, community-led approaches. Older people will be actively involved in shaping priorities and influencing the work that is carried out. Early work in 2026 will be focused on selected towns and surrounding rural communities before extending more widely across the Cotswold District.

Sarah Bourne, CEO for The Churn, said: “Age-Friendly Cotswolds is about connection, contribution and choice. The Initiative recognises older people as a strength within our communities and supports them to remain active, involved and influential in shaping local life. This investment allows us to work together in a different way - building on what already works locally and creating the time and space to listen, learn and act alongside older people.”

David Owen, Chair of Trustees at The Summerfield Trust said: “Creating age-friendly communities is about more than improving services; it’s about ensuring that older people feel valued, connected, and able to thrive. The Age Friendly Cotswolds initiative reflects a shared commitment to listening to local voices and shaping environments where everyone can live well as they age.

"This work also demonstrates the transformation of the Summerfield Charitable Trust’s approach—moving towards co-production and working hand-in-hand with communities to drive social change and improve lives. By investing in this way, we’re helping to build stronger, more inclusive communities that recognise the contribution of older residents and support their wellbeing for the long term. We’re really pleased to have worked with Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance to develop this initiative and with Age UK Gloucestershire, The Churn Project, Tetbury Area Youth & Community Trust and Cotswold Friends to deliver it.”

Matt Lennard, CEO at VCSE Alliance said: “This is another strong example of what the VCSE sector can achieve through effective partnership working. We are confident that these partners will make a genuine difference to people’s lives and showcase new ways for individuals to play active, meaningful roles in their communities as they grow older.

Our older population deserves to be celebrated, and this work reinforces the reality that older people are vital assets to our communities.

“Working with The Summerfield Charitable Trust is a real privilege. Once again, they are demonstrating how strategic, community-led investment can deliver lasting, positive impact across our county.”

ENDS

Pictures are available upon request.

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Notes to Editor:

If you would like to add in quotes from older people about what Age Friendly means to them here are some options:

“Being involved in the community through different groups and keeping active”

“Social contact is important to me”

“Friends, social contact, being healthy, being respected”

About The Summerfield Charitable Trust

Operating with a small board of trustees, the Trust focuses exclusively on grant-making rather than running its own programmes. Each year, The Summerfield Charitable Trust typically supports in the range of 70 to 90 local organisations, with individual grants ranging from around £500 to more than £20,000. These grants empower Gloucestershire-based charities to deliver vital services in areas such as grassroots community development, caring for natural habitats, fostering the arts, and supporting disadvantaged groups. Over the years, this local focus has enabled measurable impact across the county—enhancing cultural life, aiding environmental conservation, improving wellbeing, and strengthening community infrastructure.

The Trust's legacy is one of enduring and targeted generosity: decades of sustained investment into Gloucestershire's charitable sector have helped seed and scale numerous initiatives that might not otherwise have flourished. Its cumulative giving and consistent focus have built a reputation for reliability and reach. As a long-standing funder, the Summerfield Trust not only provides vital immediate support but also helps ensure these projects have a sustainable foundation and can continue to benefit future generations of the county.

Partner Organisations

About The Churn Project:

Founded in 2001, The Churn Project is a community charity based in Cirencester, dedicated to reducing isolation and enhancing the wellbeing of local residents. The charity operates right at the heart of the community and is often the only place people feel they can turn to for support.

The Churn Project provides comprehensive support, from pregnancy to old age, through three services: Family, Community Wellbeing, and Ageing Well. With a focus on building community connections, we ensure that everyone feels valued and supported, helping to connect individuals with other relevant organisations when needed.

About Tetbury Area Youth & Community Trust

Tetbury Area Youth & Community Trust is a grassroots charity based in Tetbury, working alongside local people to create spaces where individuals of all ages feel welcome, supported and able to connect. Best known locally for its youth work, TAYCT delivers weekly youth clubs, mentoring, wellbeing projects and school holiday activities, and is now expanding its work with older people, alongside community initiatives such as the Friendship Café, which supports older people to build social connections. Rooted in the local community and shaped by the voices of those it serves, TAYCT responds to identified needs in this rural area, where isolation, limited transport and access to services can present real challenges. Through partnership working and a strong focus on listening and participation, TAYCT aims to strengthen wellbeing, belonging and resilience across Tetbury and the surrounding area.

About Age UK Gloucestershire

Age UK Gloucestershire's vision is for everyone to age well, their way. As a local, independent charity based in Gloucestershire, our mission is to support, educate and influence – helping people to plan for later life, making all older voices are heard.

For more information, visit www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire

About Cotswold Friends

Cotswold Friends' vision is that no older or vulnerable person in the Cotswolds should be lonely or isolated. We deliver a range of vital volunteer-led services that support independent living, improve health and wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation. Cotswold Friends supports over 2,500 people across the Cotswolds, with the help of over 300 volunteers.

Cotswold Friends' services help older people to stay connected to their local communities and build connections with others, improving mental and physical health. Our key services areas are Community Transport - providing volunteer cars, wheelchair accessible vehicles and a Community Minibus, Community Activities - providing over 60 activity sessions a month, and Support Services - providing dedicated one to one support through Befriending, Carer Wellbeing and Independence services.