

# 3-Year Strategy

2026-29





**Graeme Miller**  
Chair of  
AUKS



**Tracy Collins**  
Chief Executive  
Officer of AUKS

## Introduction from the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of Age UK Sunderland (AUKS)

The older people of Sunderland are at the heart of all we do, and they are what make AUKS an incredibly special place. Every day, our dedicated staff and volunteers go above and beyond to provide vital support with the utmost care and compassion to people aged 50+ and their families.

AUKS is committed to recognising this dedication and supporting older people to flourish and thrive. Our Strategy to 2026/29 is ambitious, and we have identified key areas of focus for our Charity over the next three years.

**Our mission is clear** – To promote the well-being of all older people throughout the City of Sunderland, improve their quality of life and help them maintain independence.

We are profoundly grateful for the unwavering support of every single advocate of our Charity. Our commitment to resource optimisation ensures that we maximise our impact, driving our mission forward for the benefit of older people, our dedicated staff and volunteers, and the broader Sunderland community.

### Innovation and Sustainability

In response to the dynamic and uncertain commissioning environments, AUKS is committed to leveraging strategic agility and pragmatic approaches to sustain and implement our services effectively. Our organisation recognises the importance of adaptability and resilience in navigating the complexities of the current landscape. By harnessing innovative solutions and supporting collaborative partnerships, AUKS aims to ensure the continuity and enhancement of our service delivery, meeting the evolving needs of the community we serve.

# AUKS, organisational strategy 2026-29

AUKS proudly operates as an independent, community anchored Charity, focussed on empowering older people across the City of Sunderland. As a strategic partner within the Age UK Network, AUKS has fully endorsed and embedded the Age UK Shared Strategy, a bold and future facing blueprint that articulates our collective vision, mission and values.

This strategy is a transformational roadmap to reimagine ageing in the UK by 2029, championing collaborative innovation, inclusive service delivery and agile responsiveness to the evolving needs of our ageing population.

AUKS is committed to delivering impact driven programmes, nurturing cross sector partnerships and amplifying the voice and support of older people to ensure they thrive in a society that values their contributions.

## AUKS Charity Objects are:

To promote the following purposes for the benefit of older people primarily in and around Sunderland.



1	<b>Poverty Relief:</b> Preventing or alleviating poverty among older people
2	<b>Education:</b> Advancing education for older individuals.
3	<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b> Preventing or relieving sickness, disease, or suffering—whether emotional, mental, or physical.
4	<b>Equality and Diversity:</b> Promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of our work.
5	<b>Human Rights:</b> Upholding the human rights of older people in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6	<b>Support for Disadvantaged Groups:</b> Assisting older people facing ill-health, disability, financial hardship, social exclusion, or other disadvantages.
7	<b>General Wellbeing:</b> Pursuing other charitable purposes that promote the wellbeing of older people, as determined by the Charity Trustees

As a Brand Partner of Age UK we must also consider the national shared strategy that we are signed up to:

The Age UK Shared Strategy outlines certain principles outlined below and AUKS will reflect these in the work that we do and undertake.

AUKS is committed to the principle of balancing Age UK and local Age UK responsibilities as an independent organisation along with a commitment to collective effort.

<b>AUK - Who We Are:</b>	The Age UK Network includes over 120 local and national organisations across the UK. It is the largest charity network supporting older people, committed to shared learning, innovation, and advocacy.
<b>Vision:</b>	A world where every older person feels included and valued.
<b>Mission:</b>	To provide crucial support and drive change for older people locally, nationally, and internationally.
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising older people's rights and needs.</li> <li>• Upholding values, legal compliance, integrity, and EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion).</li> </ul>
<b>Core Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative: Working together with mutual respect.</li> <li>• Impactful: Making meaningful, measurable differences.</li> <li>• Ambitious: Striving for transformative change.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Priorities</b>	<p><b>Impact Areas</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amplifying Voices: Ensuring older people influence decisions.</li> <li>2. Tackling Inequality: Addressing disparities, especially in health and poverty.</li> <li>3. Promoting Independence: Supporting older people to live independently.</li> <li>4. Reducing Poverty: Increasing access to benefits and financial support.</li> <li>5. Providing Connection: Combating loneliness through befriending and social initiatives.</li> </ol> <p><b>Enablers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sustainability: Building resilient, well-funded organisations.</li> <li>2. Strategic Planning: Creating a forward-looking blueprint.</li> <li>3. Collaboration: Strengthening internal and external partnerships.</li> <li>4. Network Agreement: Leveraging shared systems and frameworks.</li> <li>5. Leadership: Developing leaders through forums and training.</li> </ol>



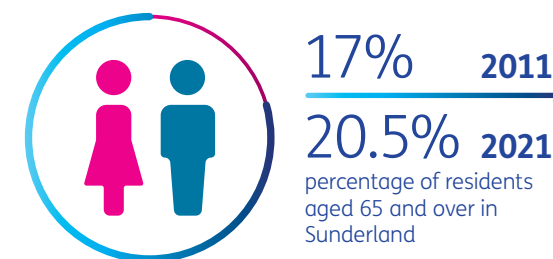
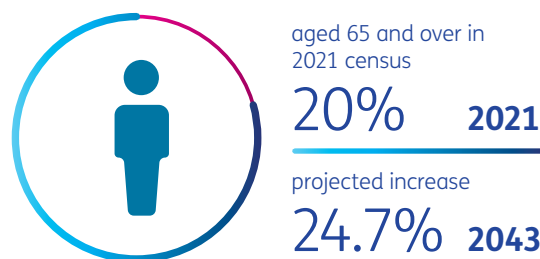
***A world where every  
older person feels  
included and valued***





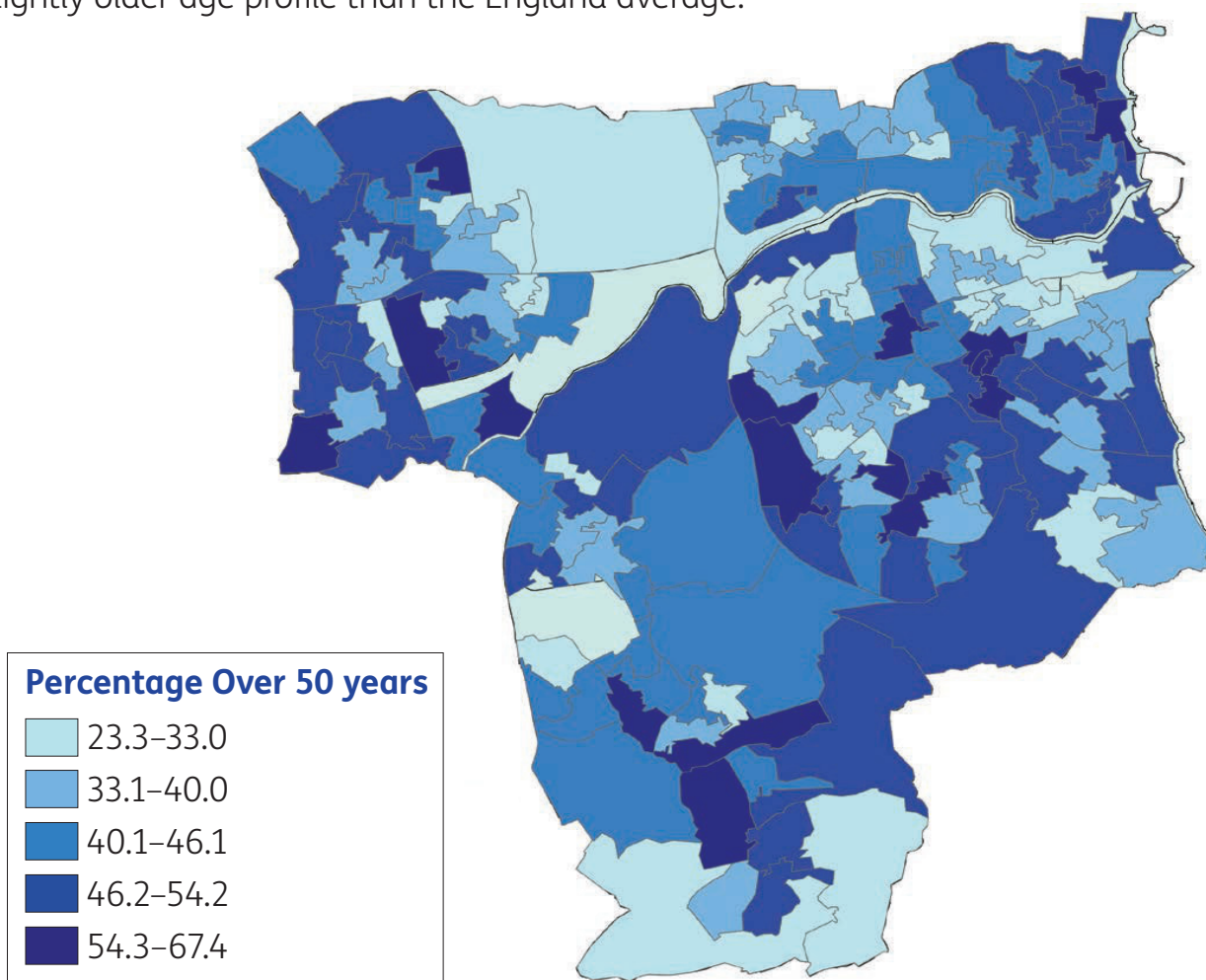
## Factors to be considered

<b>Demographics</b>	With the demographic shifts towards an aging population, Sunderland faces unique challenges and opportunities. According to the 2021 Census, just over 20% of Sunderland's population is aged 65 and above, this proportion is projected to increase to 24.7% by 2043. A further 22% are aged between 50 and 64.
<b>Increased Proportion of Older People</b>	The percentage of residents aged 65 and over in Sunderland has increased significantly over the last decade, from 17% in 2011 to 20.5% in 2021.
<b>Economic Inactivity</b>	Economic inactivity is higher for older workers in Sunderland, with 33.7% of those aged 50-64 being economically inactive, <b>(Sunderland City Council)</b> .
<b>Increased Life Expectancy</b>	While life expectancy in Sunderland is lower than the national average, it has been increasing. For example, life expectancy at birth for males in Sunderland was 76.6 for 2018-20, compared to 77.6 for the North East and 79.4 for England.
<b>Healthy Life Expectancy</b>	Healthy life expectancy in Sunderland is also lower than the national average, at 56.1 years for males and 56.9 years for females, compared to 63.1 and 63.9 respectively for England.
<b>Variations within Sunderland</b>	There are significant variations in life expectancy across different wards within Sunderland, with disparities linked to social and economic deprivation.
<b>Health Inequalities</b>	Health inequalities are a significant factor in Sunderland, with higher rates of mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and respiratory diseases contributing to the life expectancy gap.




# Projected Growth of the Older Population in Sunderland

Nationally the population is older than ever before. Almost 40% of people in England are currently over 50, and almost 20% are over 65. In Sunderland we have slightly higher proportion of older people, 41.9%, aged 50 and over, and 27.5% are aged 60 and over. This means around four in ten in Sunderland are aged 50 and over, and more than one in four are aged 60 and over. Sunderland has a slightly older age profile than the England average.



This map demonstrates clustering of the ageing population in Sunderland around the coastal area and Coalfields. Nationally, the number of people aged 65–79 is predicted to increase by around a third (30%) to over 10 million in the next 40 years, while the number of people aged 80 and over - the fastest growing segment of the population - is set to more than double to over 6 million. It is projected that the population aged 65 and over will grow to 24.7% of the Sunderland population by 2043. The city will need to think how it continues to respond to this demographic change, as there has been a 17% increase in the population aged over 80 from 2011 to 2021, rising from 12,000 to 14,400.



A woman with grey, wavy hair is sitting on a light-colored sofa. She is wearing a thick, textured grey knit sweater and dark blue trousers. She is barefoot and has her arms crossed over her knees, looking off to the side with a thoughtful or slightly sad expression. The background shows a window with several potted plants on a sill.

# ***You Are Not Alone in Feeling Lonely***



# Loneliness - Summary of Age UK Report (2024): You Are Not Alone in Feeling Lonely

<b>Overview</b>	The December 2024 report by Age UK explores the persistent and growing issue of loneliness among older adults in the UK, particularly those aged 65 and over. It presents new evidence, revisits effective interventions, and shares case studies to illustrate how loneliness can be addressed at individual, community, and systemic levels.
<b>Key Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Around 940,000 older people in the UK often feel lonely.</li> <li>- 270,000 go a week without speaking to a friend or family member.</li> <li>- Loneliness is distinct from social isolation and is a subjective emotional state.</li> <li>- Chronic loneliness can lead to a downward spiral affecting mental and physical health.</li> </ul>
<b>Causes and Risk Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life transitions such as bereavement, retirement, or illness.</li> <li>- Psychological factors including self-stigma and negative thought patterns.</li> <li>- Environmental and structural issues like poor transport, digital exclusion, and unsafe neighbourhoods.</li> <li>- Discrimination and marginalisation, especially among ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Health Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loneliness is linked to increased risks of dementia, depression, stroke, and coronary heart disease.</li> <li>- It can exacerbate mental health issues and is often underdiagnosed in older adults.</li> </ul>
<b>What Works</b>	<p>The report outlines a multi-layered framework for tackling loneliness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Foundation services:</b> Initial outreach and support.</li> <li>- <b>Direct services:</b> Befriending, social prescribing, and psychological support.</li> <li>- <b>Gateway services:</b> Improving access to transport, digital tools, and inclusive environments.</li> <li>- <b>Structural enablers:</b> Age-friendly communities and systemic policy changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<p>Real-life stories illustrate the impact of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Befriending services</li> <li>- Cultural and LGBTQ+ community groups</li> <li>- Support for carers and bereavement groups</li> <li>- Digital inclusion programs</li> <li>- Volunteering opportunities</li> <li>- Social activities</li> </ul>

# Active ageing

AUKS is dedicated in the promotion of active Ageing across the city. Active Ageing is a concept that emphasises optimising opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age. It's about creating environments and opportunities that enable older adults to be and do what they value throughout their lives. This involves promoting physical activity, social engagement, and participation in the community.

## Key Aspects of Active Ageing:

<b>Health</b>	Focusing on preventative measures and promoting overall well-being to maintain independence and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.
<b>Participation</b>	Encouraging engagement in social, civic, and economic life, including volunteering, employment, and community activities.
<b>Security</b>	Ensuring financial stability and access to support systems that promote independence and dignity.
<b>Quality of Life</b>	Enhancing the overall experience of ageing, including physical, mental, and social well-being.

## Examples of Active Ageing Initiatives:

<b>Support Clubs</b>	Offering social, recreational, and support services for older adults.
<b>Active Ageing Strategies</b>	Government initiatives that aim to transform attitudes and services for older people, promoting their rights, value, and contribution.
<b>Voluntary Work</b>	Encouraging older adults to participate in voluntary work, which can provide social engagement, purpose, and contribute to the community.
<b>Employment</b>	Supporting older adults to continue working or find new opportunities, adapting work practices to their needs.
<b>Social Activities</b>	Organising social events, groups, and activities that promote interaction and reduce isolation.

## Benefits of Active Ageing:

<b>Improved health and well-being</b>	Reduced risk of chronic diseases, falls, and mental illness.
<b>Enhanced social connections</b>	Increased opportunities for interaction and reduced isolation.
<b>Increased participation and engagement</b>	Greater sense of purpose and contribution to society.
<b>Improved quality of life</b>	Greater happiness, satisfaction, and overall well-being.



## Dementia in Sunderland – Key Insights

<b>Diagnosis Rate</b>	The estimated dementia diagnosis rate for Sunderland residents aged 65 and over was 63.1% in 2023. This is slightly higher than the England average (63%), but lower than the North East average (69.6%).
<b>Risk Factors &amp; Prevention</b>	Hearing loss is identified as the single largest modifiable risk factor for dementia, contributing to 31% of cases and being the primary risk factor in 8%. The optimal age window to reduce dementia risk by treating hearing loss with hearing aids is between 45–65 years.
<b>Associated Conditions</b>	Hearing loss also increases the risk of falls, which are a major cause of hospitalisation and injury-related death in older adults. People with sight loss are also at increased risk of falls and injury, which can compound dementia-related vulnerabilities.
<b>Social &amp; Environmental Context</b>	Sunderland’s ageing population is growing, with 20.8% aged 65+ and projected to reach 24.7% by 2043. The city faces challenges such as poverty, poor-quality housing, and social isolation, which can exacerbate dementia risk and outcomes.

Sunderland JSNA 24/25

## Older People in Poverty in Sunderland

<b>Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI)</b>	According to the 2019 Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 20 out of Sunderland’s 25 wards are significantly worse than the England average.</li> <li>- Only 3 wards are significantly better than the England average.</li> </ul>
<b>Demographic Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 41.9% of Sunderland’s population is aged 50 and over.</li> <li>- More than 1 in 4 residents are aged 60 and over.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Pressures</b>	<p>The cost-of-living crisis and rising energy prices are leading many older people to cut back on heating their homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This combination of poverty and poor-quality housing is contributing to worsening health and wellbeing among older residents.</li> </ul>

Sunderland JSNA 24/25



## Relationships/Partnerships

AUKS is committed to developing robust and dynamic partnerships with statutory, voluntary, and private sector organisations across Sunderland. Our strategic collaboration is pivotal in driving the objectives outlined in the AUKS Strategy 2026-29. Through collective efforts, we aim to leverage expertise, resources, and innovation to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life for older adults in our community. Together, we are dedicated to creating sustainable impact and advancing our mission to support and empower the older population in Sunderland.

## Strategic Frameworks

- AUKS operate within the strategic frameworks of our partners/ commissioners to ensure our initiatives align with the overarching goals of the city and the well-being of older people.
- AUKS is committed to establishing our strategic direction for the next three years, ensuring it complements and enhances existing city partner strategies,

## AUKS Competition and Financial Pressures

As a local charity, AUKS is encountering heightened competition for local contracts from both regional and national organisations. Our paid-for services are also facing competitive pressures from other providers within the city. The sustainment of the National Living Wage and the increasing National Insurance contributions present us with additional challenges that necessitate strategic mitigation.

To navigate this competitive landscape, AUKS is committed to leveraging our unique value proposition, encouraging innovative partnerships, and enhancing operational efficiencies. By aligning our strategic initiatives, we aim to secure our position as a leading provider of services for older people in Sunderland.

### Our proactive approach includes:

- Strengthening collaborative efforts with key stakeholders to amplify our impact.
- Continuously evaluating and adapting our service offerings to meet the needs of our community.
- Implementing cost-effective measures to ensure financial sustainability and resilience.
- Through these actions, AUKS will continue to thrive amidst competition and financial pressures, delivering exceptional value and support to the older population of Sunderland.

## Service Gaps

AUKS has consistently demonstrated a proactive approach in identifying and addressing service gaps through partnership working and innovative solutions. Notable initiatives such as the Essence Service and our Front Door Service exemplify our commitment to bridging these gaps effectively.

The current fiscal constraints faced by statutory organisations and commissioning landscape present both challenges and opportunities for AUKS. The increased demand for our services underscores the necessity for adaptive strategies, while the potential for offering fee-based services to address unmet needs represents a significant growth opportunity.

Our ongoing engagement with older people and collaborative partners is pivotal in continuously identifying and addressing service gaps. We are actively exploring avenues to expand our reach and enhance our service delivery to meet the evolving needs of our community.



## What Older People Tell Us

It is imperative for AUKS to ask, 'What are the Quality of Life issues as identified by older people themselves as key drivers of health and wellbeing?'

Ongoing consultation with older people in Sunderland illustrates that there are key issues for people. The issues and feedback raised included:

- AUKS is providing vital support and services.
- Volunteers and users could do more to encourage people to become engaged with the organisation, be it as a volunteer or as part of the campaigning element.
- Information, Advice, and Advocacy are services which must be maintained.
- Handyperson services are needed for small jobs.
- More social activities should be provided.
- Loneliness and social isolation are a 'feared' part of getting older.
- People aged 50+ are facing a 'caring' role from the perspective of having ageing parents and possibly also providing childcare for grandchildren.
- Older people want to be seen as contributing to society and not as a burden.
- Older people need to be more digitally included to ensure inclusion.
- Many older people fear poverty in older age.
- Active Ageing is vital for a better quality of life as people grow older.

We strive to ensure that our organisational strategy and activities delivered, meet the needs and wishes of the older population we serve. We are committed to continuously gathering feedback and creating opportunities for older people to have a voice in local and national agendas.



## Our Organisational Ambitions (2026-29)

In summary, we want to maintain our ability to campaign on behalf of older people and we want to sustain the services we currently provide and deliver new services where we identify a need.

It is difficult to be definitive about what exactly we will do in the next 3 years as things change so rapidly, and we must be ready to respond quickly and appropriately to opportunities and challenges.

During a recent consultation with the AUKS Board of Trustees and staff the following ambitions were identified:

### Financial Management

We are committed to maintaining sound financial management as a cornerstone of our organisational sustainability. This includes not only safeguarding the continuity of existing services but also enabling the strategic development of new initiatives that respond to the evolving needs of older people across Sunderland.

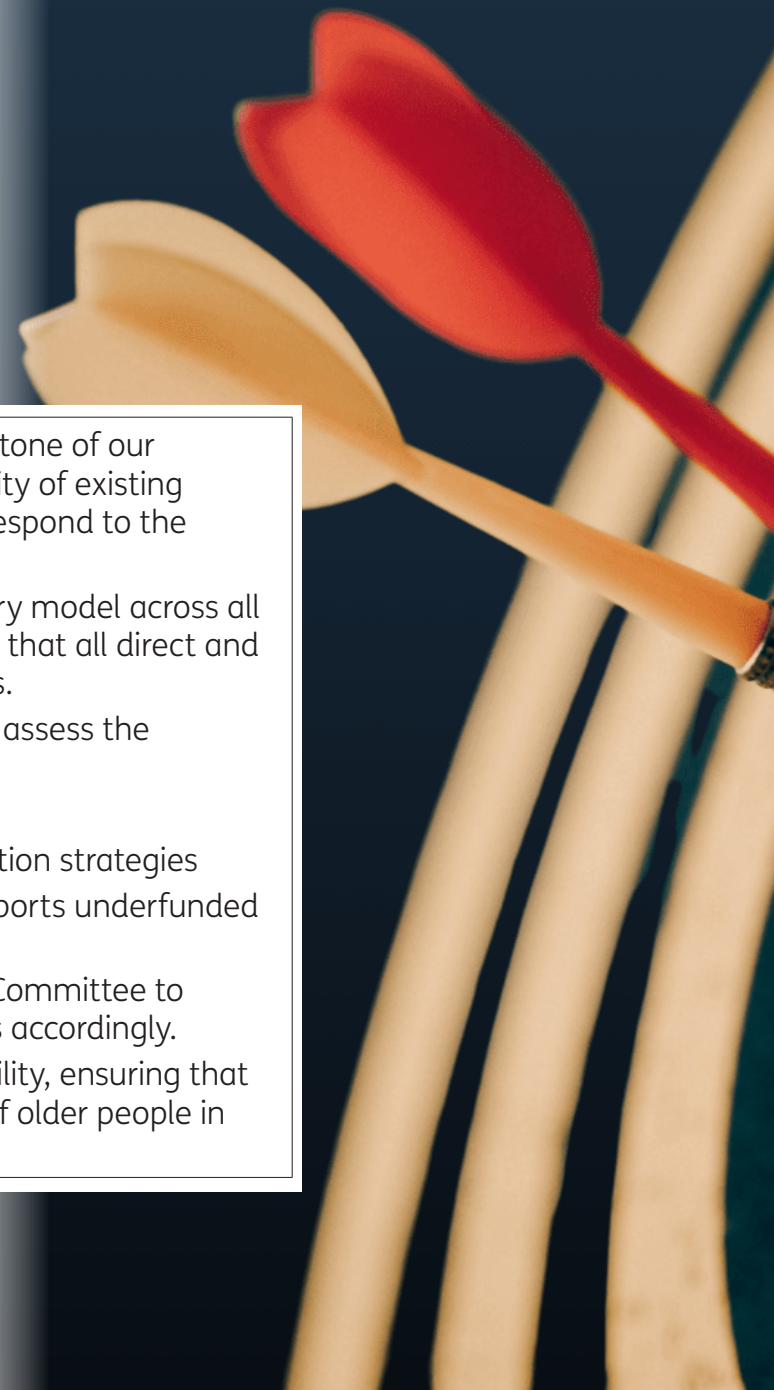
To ensure long-term viability, AUKS embeds a comprehensive full cost recovery model across all commissioned contracts and paid for service delivery. This approach ensures that all direct and indirect costs are fully accounted for in pricing and new funding opportunities.

In addition, AUKS is actively developing service-specific financial models that assess the sustainability of each programme.

Our financial strategy also includes:

- **Integrated budget forecasting** to identify funding gaps and plan mitigation strategies
- **Cross subsidisation planning** where surplus from paid – for services supports underfunded but essential community programmes.
- **Regular financial performance reviews** through the AUKS Finance Sub Committee to monitor cost recovery performance and adjust pricing or delivery models accordingly.

These practices are underpinned by a culture of transparency and accountability, ensuring that every pound spent contributes directly to our mission of improving the lives of older people in Sunderland.







<b>Developing &amp; sustaining vital services</b>	<p>We are committed to the continuous development and sustainability of vital services that meet the evolving needs of older people across Sunderland. Guided by stakeholder feedback and community insight, we actively explore opportunities to expand and enhance our service offer – ensuring that new initiatives are both responsive and strategically aligned with our mission.</p> <p>To maintain the integrity of our core services, we apply a dual approach: embedding robust evaluation mechanisms to assess impact and relevance, and ensuring that all service developments are underpinned by sustainable funding models and operational capacity. This includes using insights from our 2024-2025 Annual Review which highlights the importance of social prescribing, community-based support, dementia services and integrated partnerships. Our approach is rooted in co-production, evidenced by programmes such as the Dementia Pre/Post Diagnosis Services (Essence) and Social Prescribing programmes, both of which were shaped by direct engagement with clients and health professionals.</p> <p>To ensure long term financial sustainability, AUKS prioritises the diversification of its funding streams. This approach is designed to mitigate the risks associated with overreliance on a single funding source. Current and prospective funding avenues include commissioned contracts, trust and foundation grants, lottery funding and donations.</p> <p>The organisation has achieved some success through initiatives such as being selected as charity of the year by partner organisations and via fundraising efforts championed by individual supporters. Building on this momentum, AUKS will explore the expansion of these activities over the next 3 years, embedding them as core areas of our income generation strategy.</p>
<b>Technological advances and agility</b>	<p>We are committed to using technological innovation to enhance organisational efficiency, service delivery, and continuous learning. We regularly review our use of technology to ensure we remain responsive to developments and evolving client needs.</p> <p>Recent initiatives include the development of an internal AI policy to guide the ethical and effective use of generative AI tools such as Microsoft Co-pilot, ensuring transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Additionally, our developing digital inclusion programmes demonstrate our commitment to equipping older people with the skills and confidence to engage with technology, reducing exclusion and promoting lifelong learning.</p> <p>Internally, we continue to invest in staff development through e-learning platforms and targeted training, ensuring our workforce remains agile, informed, and equipped to adapt to technological change.</p>

<b>Partnerships</b>	<p>We are committed to strengthening collaborative partnerships that align with and advance the strategic ambitions of AUKS. By engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders—including statutory bodies, voluntary sector partners, and community organisations—we aim to co-design and deliver services that are responsive, inclusive, and impactful.</p> <p>Our organisational strategies place partnership working at the heart of our mission. These emphasise the importance of cross-sector collaboration in tackling inequalities, enhancing service reach, and ensuring sustainability</p> <p>Additionally, direct outreach and relationship-building with organisations like the African Caribbean Community Association North East (ACCANE) and many other voluntary and statutory organisations demonstrate our commitment to inclusive, community-led collaboration.</p> <p>AUKS is actively exploring opportunities related to sponsorships and local ambassador partnerships, which hold strong potential for delivering positive long term outcomes due to current and future funding efficiencies from statutory bodies.</p> <p>Through these efforts, AUKS continues to nurture a culture of shared ownership, mutual respect, and collective action—ensuring that all stakeholders are empowered to contribute meaningfully to our shared vision for ageing well in Sunderland.</p>
---------------------	---

<b>Supporting staff &amp; volunteers</b>	<p>Internally, consultative meetings and staff engagement sessions reinforce our commitment to open communication and shared ownership of organisational goals</p> <p>Recognition and reward are embedded in our culture. We celebrate success through communications and events, and we continue to develop inclusive practices that reflect the diversity of our workforce. Our Age Friendly Alliance programme further promote a sense of belonging and shared purpose</p> <p>By sustaining these efforts, we ensure that AUKS remains a supportive, inclusive, and forward-thinking organisation—one where people are proud to contribute and grow.</p> <p>We remain committed to a culture where staff and volunteers feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow. Our approach to development is rooted in continuous engagement, adaptability, and inclusivity—ensuring that our workforce is equipped to meet the evolving needs of older people across Sunderland.</p> <p>We actively invest in staff and volunteer development through structured training, flexible engagement and wellbeing initiatives.</p>
--	--







## Information & Advice

We are committed to the continued delivery of a high-quality Information & Advice (I&A) service, recognising its critical value to older people across Sunderland. This service remains a cornerstone of our support offer, consistently identified by clients as one of the most important and impactful resources available to them.

As a Brand Partner within the Age UK Network, AUKS has pledged annual funding to sustain this provision, aligning with the expectations of the Information & Advice Quality Programme (IAQP) and our broader brand partnership obligations. Our I&A service plays a vital role in income maximisation, rights awareness, and access to essential services – particularly for those facing financial hardship, health challenges, or social exclusion.

This commitment is embedded in our strategic planning, which affirms our alignment with the Age UK Shared Strategy and our responsibility to uphold nationally agreed standards and values.

By maintaining and investing in this service, we ensure that older people in Sunderland continue to receive trusted, accessible, and person-centred advice – empowering them to make informed decisions and live with greater independence and dignity.



**Actively  
target the  
frailest older  
community**

We remain firmly committed to prioritising support for the frailest and most vulnerable older people across the City of Sunderland. This principle underpins all aspects of our service planning and delivery, ensuring that those most at risk – due to ill health, disability, bereavement, financial hardship, or social isolation – receive timely, person-centred support.

Our approach is reflected in services such as the Advocacy Service, which provides free, non-statutory support to individuals aged 50+ navigating complex life transitions. This service empowers clients to make informed decisions and access the help they need, particularly during periods of crisis or vulnerability.

We also maintain a targeted transport policy, prioritising limited resources to ensure that the most isolated and mobility-restricted individuals can access day services and community support clubs. This ensures that our interventions are not only inclusive but also strategically focused on reducing loneliness and preventing deterioration in wellbeing.

Strategically, our charitable objectives – as outlined in the AUKS's Memorandum of Association which explicitly commit us to assisting older people in need by reason of ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or social exclusion .

These commitments are further reinforced by our participation in city-wide initiatives such as The State of Ageing in Sunderland 2024 Report, which identifies and responds to the systemic challenges facing the city's ageing population.

AUKS is unwavering in its commitment to safeguarding adults across all areas of service delivery. Our approach is rooted in promoting independence while ensuring that older people are protected from harm, abuse, and neglect. This dual focus is embedded in every aspect of our operations and is guided by the safeguarding policies and procedures of Sunderland Local Authority.

The AUKS Board of Trustees conducts a formal review of the safeguarding policy each September to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and best practice.

Our safeguarding ethos is further reflected in our service design, which is tailored to support vulnerable adults in maintaining autonomy while receiving appropriate protection and care.

Through strategic alignment with city-wide priorities and continuous evaluation of service gaps, AUKS ensures that safeguarding is not only a compliance requirement but a core organisational value.



## Loneliness & Isolation

We are committed to reducing loneliness and social isolation among older people in Sunderland, recognising the profound impact these issues have on physical and mental wellbeing. This commitment is embedded across our service delivery and strategic planning.

AUKS has secured funding through the AUK No Home for Loneliness Grant, reinforcing our long-term dedication to tackling isolation through targeted interventions.

Our Keeping in Touch (KIT) service currently supports over 370 older adults annually through telephone and face-to-face befriending, and demand continues to grow. To strengthen this provision, we are expanding the team with a full-time dedicated befriender—ensuring continuity, consistency, and deeper engagement with those most at risk.

We also deliver innovative community-based initiatives such as our community support clubs which offer older people a safe and welcoming environment to enjoy social connection.

These activities are designed to encourage inclusion and rebuild confidence among those who may otherwise remain isolated.

Through these efforts, AUKS continues to create meaningful opportunities for connection, companionship, and community—ensuring that no older person in Sunderland feels left behind.



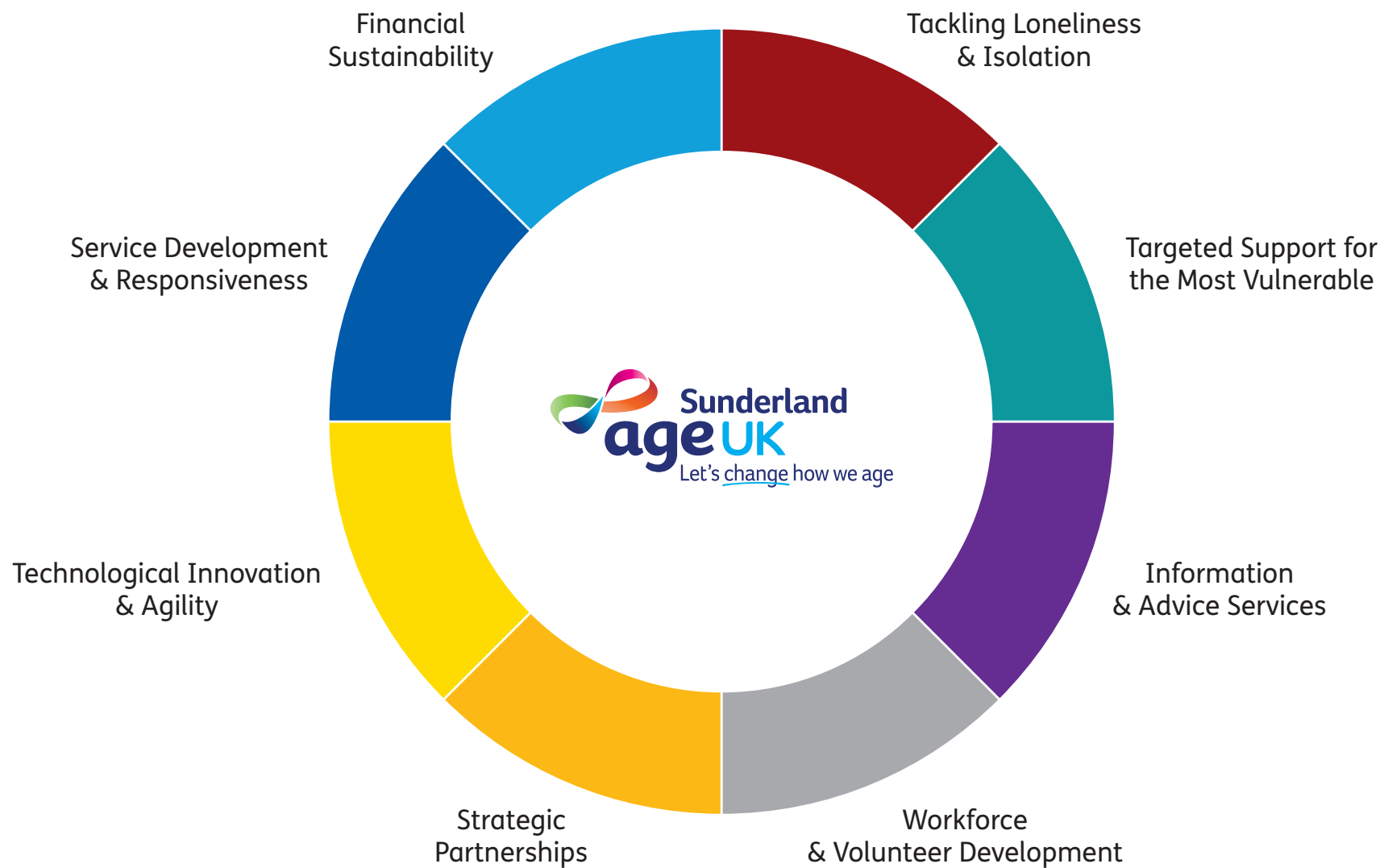
By delivering on these priorities, strengthening partnerships, embracing innovation, supporting our workforces and focussing on those most in need, AUKS will continue to go from strength to strength. Through this sustained commitment, we will ensure that older people across the City of Sunderland receive the support, respect and opportunities they deserve now and into the future.



## AUKS Strategy 2026–2029: Strategic Enablers

<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding a full cost recovery model across all commissioned and paid-for services.</li> <li>• Developing service-specific financial models to assess viability.</li> <li>• Implementing integrated budget forecasting and cross-subsidisation planning.</li> <li>• Conducting regular financial performance reviews to ensure accountability and transparency.</li> </ul>
<b>Service Development and Responsiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuously evaluating and adapting services based on stakeholder feedback and community needs.</li> <li>• Embedding co-production in service design (e.g. Dementia Pre/Post Diagnosis and Social Prescribing).</li> <li>• Ensuring all new services are underpinned by sustainable funding and operational capacity.</li> </ul>
<b>Technological Innovation and Agility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing and updating technology use to enhance efficiency and learning.</li> <li>• Developing internal policies for ethical AI use (e.g. Microsoft Copilot).</li> <li>• Promoting digital inclusion among older people and investing in staff digital skills.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening collaboration with statutory, voluntary, and community organisations.</li> <li>• Aligning with city-wide strategies and frameworks to amplify impact.</li> <li>• Engaging diverse partners to ensure inclusive, community-led service delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce and Volunteer Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investing in structured training, wellbeing initiatives, and flexible engagement models.</li> <li>• Promoting a culture of recognition, inclusivity, and shared ownership.</li> <li>• Supporting staff and volunteers to adapt and grow with the organisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Information &amp; Advice Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustaining high-quality, person-centred information and advice provision.</li> <li>• Aligning with Age UK's Information &amp; Advice Quality Programme (IAQP).</li> <li>• Ensuring access to trusted support for income maximisation, rights awareness, and service navigation.</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted Support for the Most Vulnerable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising services for the frailest and most isolated older people.</li> <li>• Maintaining targeted transport and advocacy services.</li> <li>• Aligning with city-wide reports and data (e.g. The State of Ageing in Sunderland 2024).</li> </ul>
<b>Tackling Loneliness and Isolation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering befriending and community-based initiatives (e.g. KIT service, community support clubs).</li> <li>• Expanding capacity through dedicated roles and targeted funding (e.g. No Home for Loneliness Grant).</li> <li>• Creating inclusive environments that support connection and confidence.</li> </ul>

## AUKS Strategy 2026–2029: Strategic Enablers





# AUKS Strategy 2026-2029 Framework

## AUKS Objectives

Poverty Relief

Education

Health & Wellbeing

## AUKS Ambitions

Financial Management

Technological Advances

Partnerships

## AUKS Enablers

Financial Sustainability

Service Development

Collaboration

Diagram showing the relationship between AUKS Charity Objectives, Organisational Ambitions, and Strategic Enablers

# Age UK Sunderland Organisational Strategy: 2026-2029

**OUR MISSION** - To promote the wellbeing of older people throughout the City of Sunderland, improve their quality of life and help them maintain independence.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

**Poverty Relief:** Preventing or alleviating poverty among older people

**Education:** Advancing education for older individuals

**Health and Wellbeing:** Preventing or relieving sickness, disease, or suffering – whether emotional, mental, or physical

**Equality and Diversity:** Promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work

**Human Rights:** Upholding the human rights of older people in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Support for Disadvantaged Groups:** Assisting older people facing ill-health, disability, financial hardship, social exclusion, or other disadvantages

**General Wellbeing:** Pursuing other charitable purposes that promote the wellbeing of older people, as determined by the Charity Trustees

**Financial Sustainability**

**ENABLER**

**Service Development, Agility, Responsiveness**

**ENABLER**

**Technological Innovation**

**ENABLER**

**Strategic Partnerships**

**ENABLER**

**Workforce and Volunteer Development**

**ENABLER**

**Information & Advice Services**

**ENABLER**

**Targeted Support for the Most Vulnerable**

**ENABLER**

**Tackling Loneliness and Isolation**

## OUR AMBITIONS

We are committed to maintaining sound financial management as a cornerstone of our organisational sustainability

We are committed to the continuous development and sustainability of vital services that meet the evolving needs of older people across Sunderland

We are committed to leveraging technological innovation to enhance organisational efficiency, service delivery, and continuous learning

We are committed to strengthening collaborative partnerships that align with and advance the strategic ambitions of AUKS

We remain committed to fostering a culture where staff and volunteers feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow

We are committed to the continued delivery of a high quality Information & Advice (I&A) service, recognising its critical value to older people across Sunderland

We remain firmly committed to prioritising support for the frailest and most vulnerable older people across the City of Sunderland

We are committed to reducing loneliness and social isolation among older people in Sunderland, recognising the profound impact these issues have on physical and mental wellbeing