



Consultation response
Senedd Cymru: Local Government and Housing Committee
Priorities for the sixth Senedd

Age Cymru is pleased to respond to the Local Government and Housing Committee's consultation regarding key priority areas that should be considered during the next 12 months, including the impact of Covid and recovery from the pandemic.

We think a priority for the Committee should be to consider how the built environment post-Covid will facilitate the creation of an age friendly Wales in line with the proposed Strategy for an Ageing Society.

Built environment in communities

During March and April 2021, Age Cymru, Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA), Welsh Senate of Older People, Active Wales, National Pensioners Convention Wales, and Pensioners Forum Wales worked together to gather the experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the winter Covid-19 lockdown and to understand the perspectives of older people on recovery.¹ The findings of this survey provides an insight into what older people need to emerge from the pandemic.

With reference to the built environment in communities, the survey revealed older people's concerns regarding a lack of facilities in public places. Many respondents mentioned concerns about places they can rest and whether public toilets would be open:

When able to go out [I need] toilets around and seats to [be] able to rest.
(Female, 85-89, Torfaen)

[I need] More benches in the park. (Female, 70-74, Cardiff)

Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey² (pre-pandemic) which enabled older people in Wales to assess how age friendly is their community, revealed a number of issues regarding the built environment in communities:

Public toilets

Public toilets were found to be the worst scoring element in local communities, with over half of the respondents scoring their community three or less out of 10. The lack of public toilet facilities was the key factor. Issues were also

¹ Age Cymru (2021) Experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the winter Covid-19 lockdown, and the road to recovery [Lockdown survey provides an insight into what older people need to emerge from pandemic](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/lockdown-survey-provides-an-insight-into-what-older-people-need-to-emerge-from-pandemic/) | Age Cymru ([ageuk.org.uk](https://www.ageuk.org.uk))

² Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/community-calculator/) ([ageuk.org.uk](https://www.ageuk.org.uk))

raised over the cleanliness and accessibility of facilities and limited opening hours.

Pavements

More than a third of respondents rated the pavements in their community a score of three or less out of 10. Uneven pavements and brick pavements that are slippery when wet were seen as hazardous. Pavements obstructed with parked cars, bins and street furniture restricted access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Problems with dog fouling and litter were also highlighted.

A lack of safe pavements can place serious restrictions on the freedom of movement and mobility of older people. Pavements that are in a state of disrepair or are obstructed can compromise the safety and independence of older people and increase the risk of falls. Increased effort is needed to ensure that pavements are well-maintained and kept free of parked cars and obstacles.

Public seating

22.9% of respondents rated public seating and places to rest a score of three or less out of 10, with a general lack of public seating in communities being a key issue. Without adequate seating and places to rest, accessing community areas and facilities can present a substantial challenge for older people.

For some older people, public seating can be the difference between living a full life and feeling cut-off and isolated. Public seating is an essential feature for any area that seeks to be age friendly.

Public transport infrastructure

Issues raised relating to public transport infrastructure included problems with physical accessibility to public transport. Walking distances to bus stops was a barrier for people with limited mobility, and the absence of shelter and seating at some bus stops was also raised.

Neighbourhood safety

In terms of infrastructure in communities, a lack of safe facilities for pedestrians to cross roads along with poor street lighting are barriers that can prevent older people taking part in their communities.

An accessible and inclusive built environment in communities is essential to help to enable older people to re-engage with their communities in terms of recovery from the Covid pandemic.

Appropriate infrastructure is needed to facilitate older people to access community spaces safely. We believe that improvements are needed to community design and service provision to ensure that all our communities are suitable for people of all ages, and to enable everyone within them to enjoy health, wellbeing and a good quality of life.