

# Age-friendly Denbighshire Baseline Assessment

2024

**Commented [HE1]:** Should this be 2024- 2026??

**Commented [SH2R1]:** As a baseline, I would say this represents a static point in time, hence I think we can call it 2024, as that's when data compiled. Where as the Action Plan is a live document which has a 'life span'

**Commented [HE3R1]:** Good point, I agree :)



## Age-friendly Denbighshire Baseline Assessment

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### 1. Introduction

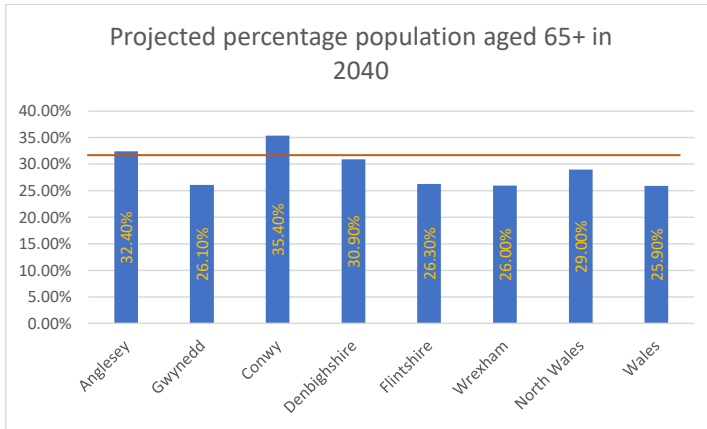
We in Denbighshire want to encourage our older population to live full and healthy lives and be able to participate and contribute to their communities. Age-friendly communities create the conditions within which people can age well, adding life to years – not just years to life. Our long-standing Ageing well in Denbighshire Group consists of representatives from organisations across the region and individuals who have been involved in promoting age-friendly communities since 2014. This multi-agency group steers the work we do to promote the health, well-being and rights of older people, and in fact people of all ages.

We are all living longer and with ever decreasing budgets, we need to plan how we will support our older population in a sustainable way into the future. To achieve our aim of improving the well-being of older people in Denbighshire, it is important that we understand the baseline levels of age-friendliness in our communities and to recognise where there's room for improvement and what can be done to improve people's lives and experiences. This is our baseline assessment, which will serve the purpose of informing our Age-friendly Denbighshire Action Plan.

Denbighshire is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with our population ageing faster than the national average. According to the [2021 Census](#), Wales saw a 17.7% increase in people aged 65 years and over since 2011, while Denbighshire experienced an even higher increase of 20.9%.

As of 2022, our population in Denbighshire is estimated at 96,558, with 24,089 people aged 65 and over ([Stats Wales, 2022](#)). Projections from the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board's [Well-being Assessment \(2021\)](#) suggest that by 2040, nearly one-third of Denbighshire's/our residents (30.9%, or 30,400 people) will be aged 65 and over (see below graph), up from 24.3% (23,500 people) in 2020.

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These figures highlight the importance of proactive planning to ensure we become an age-friendly community. By addressing the challenges and opportunities that come with an ageing population, we can work together to create a more inclusive, supportive Denbighshire for everyone.

### 1.1 Denbighshire Older People's Involvement

For over a decade, Ageing Well in Denbighshire network organisations have actively engaged with our older population to understand their needs and experiences. Through events such as those hosted by Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have gathered valuable insights. The voices of older residents, gathered from our engagement forums, have been central in shaping this baseline assessment of age-friendliness in Denbighshire.

In 2024, during regional events in Trefnant, Prestatyn, and Corwen, approximately 200 individuals contributed their thoughts to create an "age-friendly recipe book". Their input has been instrumental in identifying current subjects/matters of relevance to Denbighshire residents in later life, adding to the bank of information gathered through our recent historical engagement fora. The resulting 'Recipe Book' created during 2024 both adds to, and with regard to many subjects, consolidates the views of Denbighshire residents regarding what matters to them (in later life) and practices that could be deemed 'age-friendly'. These views have been reviewed to inform our Age-friendly Action Plan.

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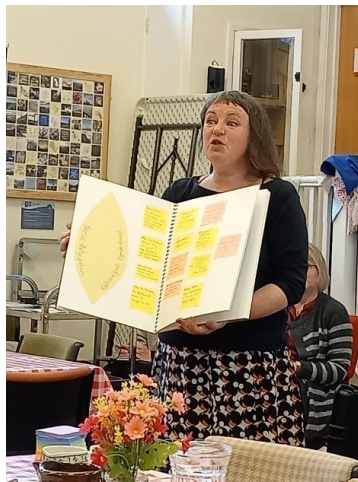
While the concept of Age-friendly domains – promoted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in their guidance ([Global age-friendly Cities: a guide – 2007a](#)) – was introduced to Denbighshire residents relatively recently, we have drawn on years of community feedback to categorise and frame these views within the relevant domains. The domains will help us focus our efforts and align our actions.

The following sections will detail the eight age-friendly domains, presenting the views and feedback gathered from (older) residents across Denbighshire. These views reflect and range of aspirations and suggestions that, though not ranked in order of priority, represent our community's wish list for improvements that would make Denbighshire more age-friendly.

To compliment the accumulated views, we have also listed separately the aspects identified from our 2024 engagement events (February/June/September 2024) when the WHO Age-friendly domains were introduced and minds could be focussed on each subject area, hence these identify some current or emerging aspects, which have been helpful to capture and consider in constructing our Action Plan.



Prestatyn Event June 2024



Corwen Event September 2024

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Trefnant Event February 2024



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### 2. Outdoor spaces and buildings

Denbighshire has a wealth of diverse natural landscapes including the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and we know from the local [Well-being Assessment](#) that access to the natural environment is important for many people, including green and blue spaces which are safe and clean. It is perhaps worthy of note that the Intergenerational ConneXions group, based in Trefnant, featured many references to outdoor spaces in their collection of writings and Artwork “*Weaving the Threads*”. There is already a wealth of poems, many written by residents of the extra care housing schemes, demonstrating the importance of the countryside, which we hope will be featured in the future.

Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the outdoor spaces and buildings domain. They stressed the importance of:

#### a. Age-friendly Public Amenities and Facilities

- Accessible toilets: More public toilets with easy access, clearly signposted, and free of charge, including private areas for incontinence needs.
- Green spaces: Accessible parks and green spaces, accessorised with seating and litter bins and with facilities for people with sensory impairments (sight, hearing, etc.).
- Gardening: Availability of local allotments or raised beds to provide opportunities for growing plants and gardening
- Exercise equipment: Accessible outdoor fitness equipment for adults, situated in convenient locations.

#### b. Accessibility and Safety

- Well-maintained footpaths: Clear of obstructions (e.g., tree roots, bins, cars), with drop curbs clearly marked in reflective white for better visibility, especially at dusk.
- Mobility-friendly infrastructure: Footpaths free of posts and hazards, ensuring easy access for mobility scooters and walking aids. Accessible and disabled parking should be available near amenities.

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- Public seating: Regularly maintained seating in public spaces to allow older residents to rest on short walks.

### c. Community Engagement

- Involve older people in design: Older residents should be consulted in the decision-making process for the creation or redesign of public spaces, ensuring spaces meet their needs.
- Local events: Small-scale gatherings within neighbourhoods (indoor or out) to foster social connection and community spirit, ideally at easily accessible locations.

### d. Staff Training and Awareness

- Awareness training for staff and volunteers on public transport and at public spaces (e.g., buses, trains, community centres, shops) to ensure they are respectful and understanding of older people's needs.

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the outdoor spaces and buildings domain:-

- The need for **well-maintained, well lit**, footpaths and pavements furnished with **intermittent seating** facilities
- The need for **accessible** and disabled **parking** close to amenities
- The need for accessible and disabled **public toilets at visitor locations** (town or country) the locations of which are publicised and with clear signage and maps
- A desire to have access to **accessible parks and green spaces** that accommodate people of all abilities
- Facilities (indoor or out) which are **sympathetic and supportive** to those with sensory loss (sight/hearing/other)
- **Use of Technology** to identify **location and route finding** is a potential benefit which should be promoted/expanded providing **confidence and safety** to users



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### 3. Transport and mobility

Access to efficient, affordable transport options is a key issue underpinning well-being and improves social inclusion and connectivity. From the local [Well-being Assessment](#) we know that regular and reliable public transport services are not always available in every community in Denbighshire, and sometimes do not take people where they need to go, at the time they need to go. This issue is closely associated with the rural nature of Denbighshire, where the distance between communities and limited public transport options create significant barriers for residents. We also know that car sharing is not commonplace in the area. The impact of a lack of integrated public transport provision is greater for rural communities. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the transport domain:

#### a. Accessible and Reliable Public Transport

- Increased frequency and better connections for buses, particularly from rural areas to coastal towns and other key destinations.
- Easy to board buses operated to allow for limitations of older and less able people
- Clear signage at bus stops and stations to aid easy navigation, including visible maps of routes, accessible areas, and facilities like toilets.
- Public transport staff should receive training to be more sympathetic and helpful to older passengers, with a focus on understanding their needs.
- Booking systems should be accessible to those without internet access.
- Public transport linked up to take patients to health centre or hospital appointments, especially in rural areas.
- For those unable to use public transport, there should be accessible hospital shuttles that do not require eligibility criteria, and include space for carers or partners.

#### b. Parking and Accessibility

- More accessible parking for disabled drivers, with clear, easy-to-use parking meters that don't rely on mobile apps.

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- Designated disabled parking spaces, clearly marked and easily accessible, without the need to search for yellow lines.
- Accessible parking facilities for mobility scooters, preferably sheltered, close to amenities,
- Clear signage and availability of maps indicating age-friendly and accessible features of destinations (e.g. seating, toilets, car parking, motor scooter parking etc.)

### c. Community and Volunteer Transport

- Community transport services should be available for supermarket runs, medical appointments, and trips to larger towns and facilities.
- Volunteer driver hubs could offer affordable door-to-door transport, helping older people access essential services, with a nominal fee for the service (e.g., £5 for local trips, £10 for longer journeys).
- Bus stops with sheltered seating should be prioritized near residential areas frequently used by older people.

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the transport domain:-

- Availability of **accessible and affordable public transport** options, sympathetic to older and less able people
- Availability of **accessible and affordable local taxi services**, sympathetic to older and less able people
- **Seating and shelter at bus stops** should be prioritized, especially in areas close to residential housing where older people live.
- **Public transport timetables** developed to **support the requirements of local users** (i.e. at times appropriate to allow access to regional services)
- Availability of **understandable timetable information** publicised in various formats (digital and paper/printed)
- **Transport services and stops** should be located near essential services and amenities, such as health centres, supermarkets, and community hubs.
- **Community or volunteer transport services** are needed to provide door-to-door transport for those unable to use regular public transport.
- Availability of **accessible car parking** close to amenities with a range of payment options (cash and digital)

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### 4. Housing

Good housing is a keystone of individual and community well-being. We know from the local [Well-being Assessment](#) that Denbighshire contains around 43,550 dwellings to support a population of around 95,700. A lack of affordable homes is noted in Denbighshire and housing shortages are reported across the UK. Data from our most recent [Local Housing Market Assessment](#) shows the social housing stock in the county is around 5,821 homes, of which, just over a quarter is sheltered accommodation and a small amount of extra care and other supported stock. The amount of supported stock in Denbighshire is more than double the Wales average which may reflect the traditionally older age profile in the county. Denbighshire has a significant proportion of older people, with a higher proportion of people in the 65 and over bracket than in England and in Wales. The condition of the existing housing stock is also an issue that has risen in prominence in recent years. There are a range of issues around energy efficiency and physical accessibility and the general condition of pre-1914 houses that are common to the area. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the housing domain:

#### a. Housing Planning and Management

- **Better planning** for future needs: Housing developments should consider potential challenges like **increased traffic**, the need for **more parking**, and pressure on local services before development begins, rather than as an afterthought.
- **Flood risk management**: Better year-round planning and support for those living in flood-risk areas, ensuring residents are prepared and informed, which can greatly contribute to peace of mind and well-being.

#### b. Housing Adaptions and Support

- **Adaptable housing**: Housing providers, particularly housing associations, should be willing to negotiate changes or updates to properties after they've been lived in, especially as tenants' needs change over time.
- **Support for independent living**: More services should be available to help older people live independently in their own homes, such as advice centres, companionship, and shopping helpers.

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- **Property maintenance and adaptations:** There is a need for **support to maintain and adapt properties** to ensure they remain safe and accessible for aging residents. Trusted local tradespeople should be easier to identify and engage.
- c. Tenant Support and Advocacy**
- **Impartial advocacy:** Tenants should have access to **impartial advocates** with knowledge of housing law to help address issues with landlords, negotiate building modifications, or resolve disputes about conditions and services.
  - **Support for tenants facing housing issues:** More support is needed for older residents who face housing challenges, such as those who may need to move due to changes in tenancy law or property conditions.
- d. Community Awareness, Local Services and Amenities**
- **Improved local services:** There should be better access to essential services in residential areas, either fixed or mobile. This includes access **to libraries, post offices, banks, and grocery services.**
  - **Deterrents for unsolicited callers:** More deterrents and measures to prevent doorstep callers or unscrupulous tradespeople targeting older residents should be implemented across all communities, not just housing estates.
  - **Safety and Well-Being:** Encouragement of neighbourhood lookout schemes to support the needs of elderly or less able neighbours.

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the housing domain:-

- **Housing proximity to amenities:** Housing developments should be located near essential services and facilities to ensure that older residents have easy access to what they need.
- **Support to live independently:** Contributors identified the need for more support for home adaptations and maintenance, so people can continue living in their own homes for as long as possible.
- **Access to advice on housing options:** With **changing needs and circumstances** as people age, access to impartial advice regarding housing options and housing standards, would improve outcomes.
- **Affordable housing:** There is a critical need for more affordable housing, especially social housing, to meet the growing demand.
- **Trusted local tradespeople:** Older residents need help identifying and engaging trusted local tradespeople for maintenance and adaptations to their homes.

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### 5. Social participation

Reducing social isolation is one of the main challenges identified in consultation and engagement work undertaken for the [North Wales Population Assessment](#) and is a priority for Welsh Government's [Strategy for an Ageing Society: Age-friendly Wales](#). Having strong social networks of family and friends and having a sense of belonging to the local community is important in order to reduce loneliness and to enable older people to remain as independent as possible. People have told us as part of our local [Well-being Assessment](#) that they are concerned that some older people may be at risk of loneliness and would like to see more done to increase social participation. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the social participation domain:

#### a. Community Involvement and Social Events

- **Frequent local community events:** Encourage regular activities like **street parties, BBQs, games in local parks, book clubs, gardening groups**, and other community-based events that are accessible and welcoming to older residents.
- **Affordable and accessible events:** Provide a variety of events such as **cinema, theatre, music festivals**, and **history or drama groups**, with a focus on affordability and inclusivity for older people.
- **Celebrating ageing:** Use public events to **celebrate ageing** and highlight the positive contributions of older people to the community.

#### b. Community Hubs and Volunteer Opportunities

- **Physical meeting hubs:** Establish local meeting spaces or community hubs in neighbourhoods where residents can access information, support services, and social activities. These hubs can serve as spaces for community-driven initiatives.
- **Volunteer Hubs:** Create **neighbourhood volunteer hubs** or use **community notice boards** that are regularly updated with information on local activities, support services, to offer **ad-hoc and regular volunteer services** within their communities, such as helping with grocery shopping, providing lifts to appointments, and offering skills like sewing, bicycle maintenance, or prescription delivery.

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### c. Intergenerational and Family Friendly Activities

- **Intergenerational events:** Increase the number of activities that involve **both adults and children**, promoting interaction across generations. This can include family events, shared community projects, or collaborative arts and crafts activities.
- **Inclusive activities for all generations:** Support activities that enable families to participate together, fostering a sense of connection between younger and older generations.

### d. Raising Awareness and Promoting Participation

- **Publicise social events:** Raise awareness of local events and participation opportunities through a variety of media channels (not just digital) to ensure they reach older people who may not be as digitally connected.
- **Use the arts and skills trading:** Promote **arts events** and **skills trading** activities as a way to bring people together and encourage social participation. These activities allow older people to engage, learn new skills, and contribute to their community.

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the social participation domain:-

- **Community hubs and local clubs** offering opportunities for becoming involved in activities indoors or out
- Intergenerational activities are highly valued, as they allow different age groups to interact and build stronger community ties.
- **More opportunities for sport and exercise** should be provided, particularly for older people looking to stay active and connected.
- Opportunities for contributing through **volunteering**, where older residents can contribute to their communities.
- Publicity of social events needs to be **diverse and accessible**, reaching older people through a variety of media formats, not just digital.
- Using the **arts and skills trading** events to encourage social interaction and participation.



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### 6. Social inclusion and non-discrimination

Social inclusion, respect and non-discrimination are central aspects of a thriving community. Denbighshire has a growing diversity in its population, and we know from the local [Well-being Assessment](#) that when surveyed, around 75% of people agreed that *'people in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration'* compared to an all-Wales figure of 79%. People also told us they wanted to see more intergenerational activities, providing opportunities for building positive social attitudes towards people of different ages. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the respect and social inclusion domain:

#### a. Understanding and Empathy in Service Planning

- **Experience older people's lives:** Service providers and decision-makers should spend time with older people to understand their needs and experiences firsthand. Rather than relying solely on surveys or consultations, decision-makers should live in older people's shoes to gain a deeper understanding.
- **Valuing older people:** Older people should be seen as valuable members of the community, not as burdens or inconveniences. They contribute significantly to the local economy, provide caregiving services, and offer valuable lived experience.
- **Design inclusive public spaces:** Ensure public spaces, such as parks, libraries, and town centers, are **inclusive** and cater to the needs of all people, particularly older people. This can include benches, clear signage, and amenities that support both physical and sensory accessibility.
- **Design inclusive Built Environments:** Ensure that buildings cater for the needs of all people, public, commercial and private. This can include minimal use of steps, inclusion of resting positions, avoidance of goods on high shelves, accessible bathroom facilities in hotel rooms etc.

#### b. Training and Awareness

- **Inclusive training for services and businesses:** There should be training for service providers and businesses to increase awareness of older people's needs and ensure they are not discriminated against. Similar to anti-discrimination

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practices for **immigrants or LGBT individuals**, older people should also be included in training initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity.

- **Older People's Champion Programme:** Develop an Older People's Champion programme, similar to initiatives like **\*\*Pride of older people**. This would help shift public attitudes from patronizing older individuals to respecting them.
- **School-based education:** Train young people in schools to understand and respect older generations, helping to break down stereotypes and instil empathy for aging.

### c. Public Awareness and Attitudes

- **Challenging stereotypes:** Promote respect for older people by challenging negative stereotypes and prejudices. Public campaigns and community programs should help combat misconceptions about aging and encourage **respect and understanding**.
- **Public services and inclusion:** Public services should **see older people as part of the community**, rather than attempting to make older people fit into systems that are not designed for their needs. Services should be more **inclusive and adaptable** to the specific needs of older people.
- **Understanding ageing:** It's important to help people understand what life is like as they grow older, emphasizing the importance of respect and understanding rather than reactionary or prejudiced attitudes.
- **Adopt inclusive language and imagery:** Use **appropriate terminology** and inclusive pictures feel welcome and valued in all aspects of community life.
- **Establish an Older People's Champion programme:** Develop an award or charter that services can work towards, so people start to understand older people, and institute age-friendly practices.

### d. Accessibility and Inclusivity

- **Improved accessibility for wheelchair users:** Even places that claim to be **wheelchair accessible** often fall short. For example, while ramps may be in place, **doorways** can be too narrow, and bathrooms may not be fully accessible due to small door sizes or poorly designed layouts. It's essential to ensure that all

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accessible claims are thoroughly vetted and genuinely cater to the needs of wheelchair users.

### e. Community Support and Inclusion

- **Promote community support:** Increase **community-based support** networks that help to reduce isolation and foster inclusivity. This can include support groups, social clubs, and community outreach initiatives that provide a sense of belonging and participation.
- **Targeted publicity:** When publicizing events and opportunities, special attention should be paid to **older people** to ensure they are not excluded and to avoid potential social isolation. Publicity should be clear and accessible, reaching older people through various media channels (including print and non-digital formats).

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the respect and social inclusion domain:-

- **Promoting respect:** A need to promote respect for all people and challenge societal stereotypes, particularly those related to aging.
- **Inclusive Public places:** Older people expressed a preference for public spaces that are truly inclusive and accessible, supporting their physical, emotional, and social needs.
- **Increased social support:** More community-based social support initiatives are needed to help prevent isolation and ensure older people feel connected to their community.
- **Targeted communication:** When publicizing social events and opportunities, there needs to be a targeted effort to reach older people through various communication channels to ensure they are not excluded.
- **Facilities and amenities:** There is a demand for facilities and amenities that cater to older people's needs, boosting their confidence and encouraging greater participation in community activities.
- **Inclusive terminology:** The use of inclusive language and imagery in public communications can encourage older people to engage more fully and feel respected.

### 7. Civic engagement and employment

Options for civic participation can include paid employment or voluntary work and being engaged in the political process. From the local [Well-being Assessment](#), we know that a rise in the population of older people will place ever-greater pressure on the public finances. If older people are active in society and remain longer in the labour market, the impact of an ageing population on public services sustainability could be improved. We also know that good-quality volunteering has a measurable positive impact on well-being and mental health and contributes to community resilience. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the civic participation and employment domain:

#### a. Accessibility and Barriers to Participation

- **Transport and venue access:** Lack of transportation is a major barrier to volunteering and attending community events. Additionally, **parking** and accessibility at venues can limit participation.
- **Timing of events:** The **timing** of events and activities should be considered to ensure they are convenient for older people, allowing for greater participation in civic activities i.e. timed during daylight hours and to suit transport needs.

#### b. Valuing Contributions

- **Respect for contributions:** Older people often feel that their experience, skills, and knowledge are not fully valued in the community. There is a need to recognize their **lifetime expertise** and encourage their participation in roles that benefit others, including younger generations.
- **Reframing perceptions:** The common perception that older people **are vulnerable and unable to participate** should be challenged. While older people may face vulnerabilities, they also have significant **skills and experience** to offer.

#### c. Volunteering and Mentorship

- **Mentoring and peer support:** There should be more **opportunities for older people** to provide people but also to younger generations. For example, older LGBT individuals could run LGBT support groups for people of all ages.

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- **Volunteering opportunities:** Ensure there are more **volunteering opportunities** that are well-publicized and age-friendly, recognizing the contributions older people can make. Information about **volunteering** benefits (e.g., personal growth, social connection) should also be clearly communicated.

### d. Employment Opportunities

- **Work after retirement:** As the cost of living rises, more older people are seeking to **supplement their income** by working part-time or full-time after retirement. There is a need for **employment support services** to assist those nearing or just after retirement, helping them transition into new roles or work opportunities.
- **Workplace flexibility:** Employers should provide **flexible employment** options that are more accommodating to older workers, leveraging their experience while adapting to their evolving needs.
- **Information on pensions and income:** More **information** should be made available to older people about working while in receipt of a pension, particularly regarding how this affects **household income and taxation**.

### e. Community Support and Networking

- **Older people's fora:** Council-run **Older People's Forums** held three times a year provide informal settings where older people can share their perspectives with service managers and decision-makers. These fora encourage two-way dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding between older people and those who shape services.
- **Information hubs:** Regular information events and a **one-stop-shop** for services and opportunities in the county would help older people stay informed about the various resources available to them. This should be branded with a recognisable name for easy access.

### f. Family Caregiver Support

- **Support for family caregivers:** Many older people care for family members, and there is a need for more support for older family caregivers to help them balance their caregiving responsibilities with other aspects of their lives

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the civic participation domain:-

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- **Better supported volunteering:** A need for **better-supported volunteering opportunities**, with clear communication about the benefits and flexibility of volunteering roles.
- **Utilising skills and experience:** Older people want more opportunities to **utilize their skills and experience** in ways that benefit the wider community, such as through mentoring or community leadership roles.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Opportunities that are flexible **and designed to be age-friendly**, particularly in terms of recruitment practices and workplace accommodations.
- **Age-friendly publicity:** Publicizing **employment, volunteering, or placement opportunities** should be done in a way that is age-friendly, ensuring that older people are specifically targeted and encouraged to engage in these opportunities.



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### 8. Communication and information

Firstly, all services in Denbighshire are careful to comply with the terms the Welsh language legislation, Mwy na Geiriau (more than just words) and meet quarterly to discuss challenges and triumphs in this area. Older residents have told us and shown us that it is particularly important that they can receive support in their mother tongue and officers from Denbighshire Adult Social Care and Homelessness service work with all the residential care and support providers to ensure that they offer a bilingual service.

The local [Well-being Assessment](#) shows that while the growth of new technology continues in Denbighshire, it is still crucial to ensure people have access to information and services via non-digital means. This is because we know that certain groups of people are more likely to be digitally excluded, and this includes older people. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the communication and information domain:

#### a. Access to Information

- **Non-digital access:** Ensure that information is available through **multiple channels**, including printed materials and phone services, for those who are not online or who struggle with digital platforms.
- **Target Client Groups:** Information on matters which affect older people should be directed to that age group for which barriers may exist, not least due to digital limitations and exclusion. Development of **regular newsletters** which can be printed, and which are targeted to older communities will help information dissemination.
- **Phone access:** Provide phone numbers for inquiries, not just email or websites, and ensure that calls are answered by **real people** rather than answer machines.
- **Promote local communication channels:** Encourage the use of **town council noticeboards** (electronic or otherwise) and local radio to provide timely and relevant community updates.

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- **Welsh Language:** Ensure provision of Welsh Language based information is generated and promoted to reach and inform Denbighshire residents whose primary or preferred language is Welsh.

### b. Digital Inclusion

- **Access to digital services:** For older people who are digitally excluded, provide drop-in services (e.g., **mobile services** or **roadshows**) to help with online tasks such as Blue Badge applications, bus passes, or accessing energy providers.
- **Digital learning support:** Offer **structured digital learning** courses in local hubs, teaching older people how to use basic **digital tools** like WhatsApp, texting, and email. This should be ongoing and available in easily accessible local neighbourhoods.
- **Support for visual and hearing impairments:** Ensure that **digital content is accessible**, with options for people with visual or hearing impairments, such as screen readers or sign language support.

### c. Financial Information and the Cost of Living

- **Understanding finances:** Older people express concern over confusing energy bills, the need to pay by card or direct debit, and the increasing reliance on online payment methods, which may be difficult for some to navigate.
- **Cost of living concerns:** Many older people are also worried about how financial pressures and changes to financial systems affect their families, especially in terms of energy prices, housing costs and household bills. Provision of timely and accessible information regarding such changes will help to allay concerns.

### d. Reduce Barriers to Information Access

- **Online barriers:** Address the fact that many essential services, such as **Blue Badge applications**, can only be completed online, which poses challenges for digitally excluded groups. Libraries and community centres could offer support for accessing these services.
- **Access to financial services:** With the **shift towards cashless transactions**, there is concern that **bank/post office closures** and fewer places accepting cash are leaving older people vulnerable. The introduction of digital-only payment

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systems can also be confusing and alienating for those not comfortable with technology.

- **Advocacy Services:** Provide advocacy services to support older people **navigating complex tasks** including medical, financial, welfare, commercial. Such services should have a mechanism for support and be backed up by independent advocacy.
- **Vulnerable locations for ATM access:** Some ATMs in certain areas are poorly designed for older people, particularly those with mobility aids or in less safe locations, making it hard for older people to withdraw money.

### e. Effective Two-Way Communication

- **Improved communication with public services:** Establish **more effective two-way communication** between older people and public services to ensure that services understand and meet their needs. This includes ensuring public servants are aware of the physical, mental, and sensory limitations many people face, and adapting communication to be clear and inclusive.

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the communication and information domain:-

- **Multiple Information Formats:** Broaden methods of communication including print and digital
- **Support for Digital:** More support for digital inclusion
- **Expand AWiD Bulletin Circulation:** Given the value of information targeted towards older people, the AWiD bulletin should be **targeted to a wider audience** to extend its reach
- **Access to Service Providers:** Promotion of **improved mechanisms** for genuine 2-way communication with public and other services.
- **Support Mechanisms:** Availability and awareness of **support mechanisms** to access information on services via various means (drop in sessions, community notice boards, printed leaflets)
- **Promotion of awareness:** Ensure **public servants are educated** and aware of **service limitations** affecting many within communities (sensory, physical, mental) when communicating, and need to make information & communication effective.

### 9. Community and health services

According to the local [Well-being Assessment](#), health and well-being in North Wales are not showing a wholly positive trajectory. The main factors that contribute to poor health and well-being are deteriorating rather than improving, and social and health care use is increasing not decreasing. A move towards health prevention is required to ease the burden on the NHS and associated services whilst increasing the resilience of human health. We have seen and expect to continue to see rising demand for health and social care services at the same time as experiencing recruitment problems in both of these key sectors. Our trend analysis shows that digital technologies are likely to reshape the UK healthcare workforce soon. Through our engagement with the Age Connects North Wales Central fora, we have listed the things that people felt were important to create more age-friendly communities in the community support and health services domain:

#### a. Dignity, Respect, and Individualised Care

- **Respect and dignity:** Older individuals emphasized the importance of being treated with **dignity and respect** by healthcare professionals. They want to be seen as **individuals**, not just statistics or cases.
- **Personalized care:** Ensuring that healthcare services treat older individuals based on their **unique health needs** and not as part of a generalized approach.
- **Making Appointments:** Participants had concerns regarding having to explain a personal medical condition to receptionists or people with no medical qualifications.

#### b. Access to Healthcare

- **Simplified appointment system:** The process of making appointments with GPs needs to be streamlined, with **easier access to book appointments**, without the lottery of a morning phone call, particularly for those requiring care within a short time frame (e.g., next day or next week).
- **Visual and hearing impairments:** Challenges for older individuals who are **visually or hearing impaired** in attending appointments, including issues with staff not calling out names clearly or the use of **electronic boards**.

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- **Primary care access:** Improve access to **primary care** without having to face the daily bottleneck of early-morning calls. Older people may need to arrange transport or care for same-day appointments.
- **Simplified repeat prescriptions:** Many older people **need long-term repeat prescriptions** and want a more straightforward system that does not require a GP appointment every time a medication runs out. For those on multiple medications, this can mean unnecessary visits to the surgery multiple times a week.
- **Better coordination between pharmacies and GP surgeries:** The coordination of medications, so that prescriptions are aligned to renew around the same time, is vital for simplifying the process and ensuring the **accuracy of prescriptions**.
- **Supervision of medications:** Medications should be monitored by one medical professional to ensure that **new prescriptions** are compatible with existing medications and do not cause **interactions**.

### c. Hospital and Healthcare Settings

- **Stressful hospital appointments:** Older people report feeling **stressed** when attending hospital appointments, particularly when they are not accompanied. Issues like not hearing their name being called, waiting for long periods, or being unsure of facilities like restrooms can cause anxiety and frustration.
- **Parking and transport:** Parking at hospitals and healthcare venues is often difficult to find, and the distance to walk from parking areas can be too far for individuals with mobility issues. **Transport** to healthcare appointments should also be considered and offered as part of the service.
- **Hospital discharge and home return:** Discharge procedures need to be more thoughtful and supportive, with a focus on ensuring patients can return home safely. This includes planning for **post-operative care** and avoiding situations where individuals are sent home to **empty homes** without proper support or preparation.
- **Super surgeries:** The idea of **super surgeries** that combine multiple healthcare services (e.g., GP consultations, physiotherapy, blood tests) in one location is preferred. This reduces the need to travel to hospitals, which can be challenging for older people dependent on others for transport.

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### d. Flexibility and Support in Care

- **Consultant appointment options:** Older individuals want to have options for hospital or consultant appointments, allowing them to better plan for transport or ensure that a carer or family member can accompany them.
- **Flexible hospital discharge:** Discharge and transportation processes should be **flexible** to accommodate the needs of the individual. This includes taking personal belongings.

### e. Health and Well-Being Education and Prevention

- **Preventative measures:** Older people expressed a strong desire for more preventative health measures. This includes education about maintaining health, early intervention for conditions, and community-level health services that help prevent illness and **promote long-term well-being**.
- **Health communication:** Health information should be communicated in clear, accessible ways using both printed and digital media. Information should avoid complicated jargon, making it easier for older people to understand and take appropriate action regarding their health.
- **Access to healthcare professionals:** Some participants mentioned the difficulty in speaking to health professionals directly for advice or clarification on health concerns. Having more available points of contact could help address this.

The themes which arose from our 2024 engagement events echoed the above, reinforcing the following key items as being relevant and important to older people within the community support and health services domain:-

- **More community level health services:** There is a strong demand for local health services that are easily accessible and do not require long travels to large hospital sites.
- **A need for more health professionals:** Participants suggested the need **for more healthcare staff**, particularly in **primary care settings**, to address the growing demand for services.
- **Better communication:** Health-related information must be communicated in clear, simple terms using both **printed and digital materials** to reach all age groups, especially those who are **digitally excluded**.
- **Preventative health measures:** People expressed a desire for more **health promotion programs** and **access to activities** that could **prevent health issues** before they arise, reducing the burden on emergency and hospital services.



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- **Reducing Barriers:** Improved access to speak to health professionals and gain medical advice, whether face to face or remotely
- **Flexibility in Discharge and Transport:** Many older people face challenges when returning home from hospitals, especially if they require **special transport** or have **post-operative care needs**.
- **Access to NHS Dentistry:** Limited access to local NHS dental services a barrier to maintaining oral/dental health amongst older people.

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### 10. Vision and Priorities

#### 10.1 Vision

In Denbighshire we have been working to develop and enhance the concept of Ageing Well over many years, building a network of organisations and communities to influence and encourage age-friendly practices across the county.

Our population of people aged 65 and over already represents 24.95% of the total and this is expected to increase to 30.9% by 2040. This provides the incentive required to continue our journey to build a truly age-friendly community within Denbighshire.

Our vision to establish Denbighshire as an age-friendly community and to encourage the introduction and development of age-friendly practices wherever feasible and economically practicable to do so, utilising the resources of AWID and the evidence provided by this baseline assessment and the focus provided by the eight domains.

#### 10.2 Priorities

Our priorities, informed by our baseline assessment are therefore to:-

- Use the baseline information summarised in this report to inform our action plan to establish Denbighshire as an age-friendly community within the global network of age-friendly communities
- Develop the ageing well in Denbighshire organisation to represent and advocate for the older people of Denbighshire and to encourage age-friendly initiatives and practices informed by the 8 domains.
- To implement the Ageing Well Plan in Denbighshire and to effectively influence and promote the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing of Older People (50+).
- To engage with older people to inform the strategic planning and development of services in Denbighshire, ensuring that the needs of older people are being met.
- To develop and promote Age-friendly Communities through inter-generational activities within Denbighshire.
- To ensure that information, innovation and best practice is shared with all stakeholders.
- To continually develop age-friendly practices within Denbighshire striving to become ever more age-friendly.

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### 11. Concluding Remarks

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to this Baseline Assessment and to the Age-friendly Denbighshire Action Plan. Although every effort has been made to obtain a current and accurate picture of Denbighshire's baseline assessment of age-friendliness, we recognise that there are inevitable data lags and data gaps, and these are documented in the local [Well-being Assessment](#). We will continue engaging with older people throughout Denbighshire to continually reflect and review our progress in the domains mentioned above and will continue to work to our strengths in Denbighshire with the support of our dedicated community members and friends of the Ageing Well in Denbighshire Group.