

Towards an Age Friendly Carmarthenshire Baseline Report

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Introduction

This report provides findings from work undertaken by Practice Solutions on behalf of Carmarthenshire County Council to support its submission to the World Health Organisation (WHO) to become part of the global Age Friendly Network. Essentially, our report provides a baseline assessment against each of the domains of age friendly communities and identifies priority areas for improvement.

Our work was undertaken between June 2022 and March 2023.

We would like to thank all those from the Council and its partner agencies, as well as older people living in Carmarthenshire, who spared the time to meet with us. Your contributions have undoubtedly added to the richness of our analysis.

We wish the Council, its partners and older people across the County every success in building on existing foundations and making Carmarthenshire an age friendly environment for everyone.



Background

WHO Age Friendly Network

- In 2007 the WHO published its *Global Age-Friendly Cities – A Guide*
- UK and global networks of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities have since been established. More than 1300 cities across 44 countries have joined
- The World Website provides details of the network and [Age-friendly Environments](#) across the globe



The Concept

'Health and well-being are determined not only by our genes and personal characteristics but also by the physical and social environments in which we live our lives. Environments play an important role in determining our physical and mental capacity across a person's life course and into older age and also how well we adjust to loss of function and other forms of adversity that we may experience at different stages of life, and in particular in later years. Both older people and the environments in which they live are diverse, dynamic and changing. In interaction with each other they hold incredible potential for enabling or constraining *Healthy Ageing*.'



Age-friendly Environments



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Age Friendly Domains

The WHO identifies eight essential features of age-friendly communities. These are often referred to as the **8 domains of Age Friendly communities**. These are as follows:



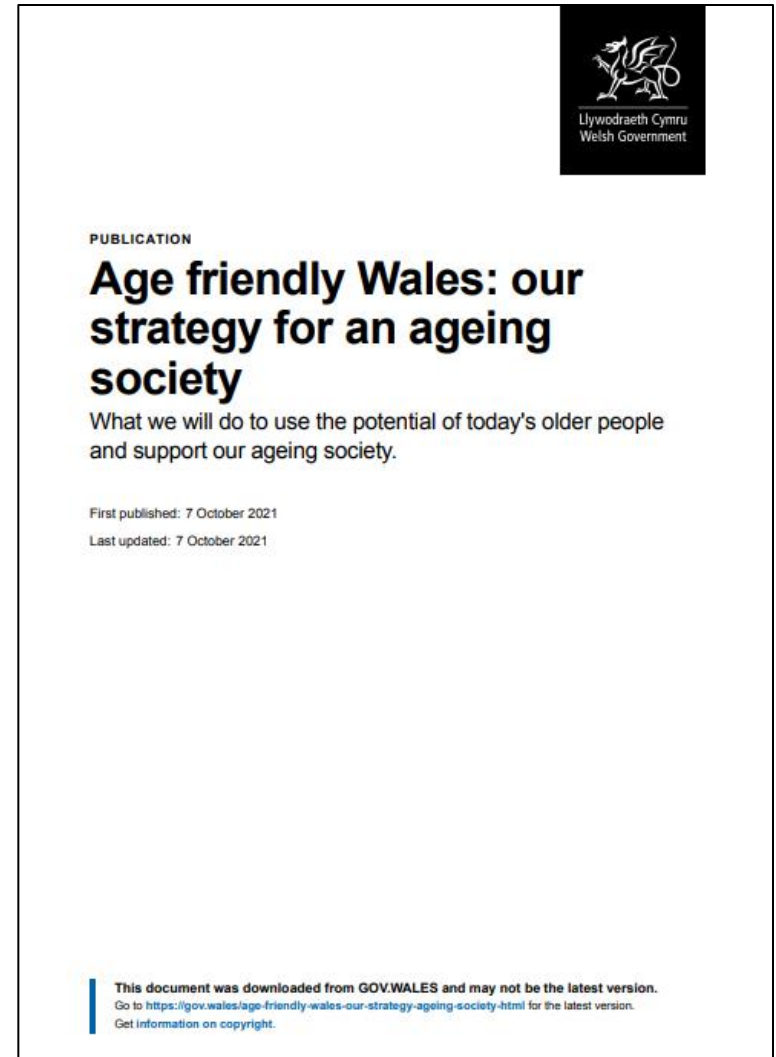
A Welsh approach

- The Older People's Commissioner for Wales offers support for local authorities in becoming age-friendly communities and joining the global network [Older People's Commissioner for Wales - Age-Friendly World \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/agefriendlyworld)
- A Community of Practice and Age Friendly Steering Group are in place.
- Partnership approach is key, recognising that local authorities need to work with others to develop age-friendly communities
- What this looks like will be distinct in each area, reflecting local circumstances and the Welsh policy context



A Welsh approach

- The Welsh Government launched its Strategy for an Ageing Society in October 2021
- Local authorities are encouraged to work towards membership of the WHO's global network
- Funding was allocated to every local authority in September 2022 to take this work forward



Age-friendly Carmarthenshire

- Carmarthenshire County Council is seeking to join the global network
- Carmarthenshire Public Services Board and the West Wales Regional Partnership Board are supportive of the initiative
- Practice Solutions were commissioned to support the first step in this process, involving:
 - Analysis of current position against the 8 domains in relation to strategy and practice.
 - Conversations with key stakeholders
 - Engagement with older people
 - Identification of gaps to inform future planning



What we did

- We reviewed a range of local and regional documentation pertinent to the Age Friendly domains
- We spoke with the following stakeholders:
- The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing
- The Council's Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care and Chair of the Ageing Well Network
- The Ageing Well Network Steering Group
- The Council's Head of Integrated Services, Highways and Transportation Services Manager and Community Resilience Coordinator
- The Carmarthenshire 50 + Forum
- Age Cymru Dyfed
- The Older People's Alliance
- Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services



What we did (ctd.)

- We facilitated an interactive workshop at the Carmarthenshire Ageing Well event on 2 March 2023 at the National Botanical Garden of Wales, which was attended by older people from across Carmarthenshire, the Deputy Minister for Social Services and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales
- Participants were provided with an overview of Age Friendly Communities and work underway in Carmarthenshire
- They were then invited to share their views on current strengths and areas for improvement in Carmarthenshire, in respect of the 8 domains.



This enabled us to:

- Critically assess the current position across the 8 domains.
- Suggest areas to focus on moving forward
- Suggest preliminary indicators to monitor progress



Context

Carmarthenshire context

- Carmarthenshire is the 4th most populous County in Wales with 187,900 residents (2021 census).
- It is largely rural with pockets of urban deprivation in the east of the County.
- Over 65s number 45,400 (24% of the total population).
- Over 85s number (3% of the total population).
- The number of people over 65 is predicted to rise by around 15% by 2028 and 32% by 2043 (Stats Wales).
- A significant increase in numbers of people with dementia is predicted over the next 18 years – from an estimated 2571 currently to 3828 in 2040 (from Dementia Strategy).



- There were 1,589 care home places available in the county, with between 70 to 100 vacancies at any time. Around 876 people have been placed by the Council to live in a care home, at a cost of £13.4 million in 2015 (It is estimated a third of older people living in care homes have decided to fund their own placement). - Taken from [Carmarthenshire's Vision for Older People for the Next Decade – 2015](#)
- In March 2023 there were 904 Local Authority Care Home Placements, of which 699 commissioned from external providers – Carmarthenshire County Council data



Headline findings

Headline findings

1. There are numerous existing examples of effective practice across the domains.
2. Whilst there are clear foundations on which to build, there are equally opportunities to improve practice further and these should be addressed in any future action plan for an Age Friendly Carmarthenshire.
3. We saw good levels of partnership working, providing opportunities for integrated approaches to creating an Age Friendly Carmarthenshire.
4. There is clear leadership for this agenda within the Council and across strategic partnerships including the PSB and RPB.
5. Mechanisms exist to engage with older people and communities in a co-productive approach moving forward; there are opportunities for rationalising existing forums thus ensuring greater cohesion in strategy and delivery.



Assessment against the Age Friendly domains

In this section we provide:

- A statement (provided by the WHO) of what 'good' looks like in each domain.
- An overview of what we found from our documentation review and discussions with stakeholders, in terms of the current position and areas to focus on.
- Details of what older people told us at the 2 March event, identifying perceived strengths and areas for improvement.



Outdoor spaces and public building

Accessible communities enable people to stay connected, participate in social activities and access local services and facilities.

Well-maintained and well-lit streets, clear sign-posting, green spaces and public toilets all support older people to stay active and lead independent lives.



What we found

Current position

- Numerous schemes are in place to increase physical resilience of older people e.g.,,,, National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS).
- There are large areas of natural green space in many areas.
- There is a stated intent to improve air quality, improve access to walking paths and signage.
- Town centre improvements are underway.
- A toilets strategy has been in place since 2018.
- There are several accessibility schemes including beach wheelchairs.



Areas for Improvement

Areas to focus on

- Maintain efforts for street and pavement repairs (1 in 5 older people who have experienced a fall mentioned uneven pavements as a contributory factor) - Carmarthenshire data
- Incorporate age and dementia friendly environments in new/ improved public buildings.
- Engage with older people over location and design of bus stops.
- Look for opportunities to develop parks and gardens in those areas not well served currently (12 wards in the County have no access to significant green spaces).



What citizens told us

Strengths

- Library provision
- Good location to get active
- Outdoor spaces and parks
- Good access for wheelchair users at outdoor spaces
- Footpaths
- Access to green spaces and parks
- Accessible country parks

Areas for improvement

- Toilet provision (Burry Port and generally)
- More zebra crossings
- Single ticket for all country parks
- Path and road maintenance
- Cheap access to leisure centres
- Community Halls (St Clears)
- Clean up Burry Port Harbour



Transport

Affordable, reliable transport options enable people to get out and about and continue to do the things that matter to them. Whether going shopping, visiting the cinema, meeting friends or attending a GP appointment, good transport is essential to everyone, particularly in rural areas and for people who do not drive.



What we found

Current position

- The Carmarthen Shopmobility is a scheme which lends scooters and manual wheelchairs to anyone with limited mobility so they can enjoy Carmarthen Town Centre.
- The Fflecsi Bwcabus scheme operates along routes in North Carmarthenshire.
- Free travel on buses for over 60s is provided as part of Wales-wide scheme.
- Older people feel the pressures of loss of public transport services particularly acutely.
- Lack of transport is the top wellbeing concern for people over 65 (Carmarthenshire Wellbeing Assessment, 2017).



Areas for improvement

Areas to focus on

- Explore mobile facilities for more Council services to serve those in rural areas not covered by public transport

- Improve and enhance Shopmobility provision



What citizens told us

Strengths

- X11 bus route Swansea to Carmarthen
- Bus passes and travel concessions
- Free parking in town centres on Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Long distance bus routes
- Buses and public transport generally

Areas for improvement

- Bus services in Carmarthen
- Improved public transport generally
- Frequency of bus services
- Reliability of trains
- Transport information
- Bus timetables
- Cycle ways (Towy and generally)
- Accessible public transport



What citizens told us (ctd.)

Areas for improvement

- Transport links to hospitals
- Potholes in roads where there are no pavements
- Road repairs
- Transport links to Burry Port and Maesybont
- Stopping pavement parking
- Footpaths in Maesybont
- Roads in Trimsaran



Housing

Everyone has a right to adequate housing, regardless of age or ability. For many, having a place to call home is at the heart of what it means to age well. Simple modifications and adaptations can enable people to continue to live independently in their own homes.

An age-friendly community supports people to make decisions about where they live, whether to stay in their existing homes, or find a new home suitable to their needs and near to the people and places that are important to them.



What we found

Current position

- 50% of sole occupant households are aged over 65 (Public Services Board)
- Fifth highest proportion in Wales of people over 50 live in communal establishments (Wellbeing Assessment 2017) – evidence shows this can enhance wellbeing
- Social housing provided for older people and innovative schemes for older people with aids and adaptations
- Regeneration of the Tyisha area of Llanelli will include new housing meeting the needs of the community, including older people
- Sheltered housing has been improved
- Extra care is provided in some parts of the County
- Care and Repair provides support to older people, including those with sensory loss and dementia



What we found

Areas to focus on

- Improve housing adaptations and look at issues such as support for energy efficiency of homes
- Support and advice for older people in accessing smaller accommodation – this will also free up stock for younger citizens
- Continue to develop a mix of housing models for older people, including general and special needs housing, care-based provision for people with conditions such as dementia and more Extra Care schemes (need identified in regional Population Assessment)
- Invest in care home improvements, whilst supporting those that want to remain in their own homes to do so for as long as possible



What citizens told us

Strengths

- None highlighted

Areas for improvement

- Affordable housing



Social participation

Being able to stay connected with friends and family is essential for ageing well.

Age-friendly communities enable older people to take part in a range of social activities, bringing people of all ages together around shared interests.



What we found

Current position

- There is positive feedback on the range of social activities available and upgrades to facilities such as theatres and leisure centres
- There are opportunities for older people to engage, feedback and help plan for the future.
- Annual 50 + event is seen as a major opportunity
- There is high satisfaction with measures to reduce loneliness and isolation such as Connected Communities programme, ACTIF and Stories by Phone
- Classes and third sector activities are valued
- There are positive developments in Information, Advice and Assistance and Delta Connect (see also under Community Support and Health Services)
- Challenge of digitalisation presents challenges, with some older people feeling left behind



Areas for improvement

Areas to focus on

- Continue the development of community connectivity, wellbeing and resilience programmes
- Need to 'take stock' after Covid and hear people's views on what's needed moving forward
- Learn from innovation
- Work to reinstate community facilities and programmes that were closed during the pandemic
- Develop transport links for rural communities to engage in range of activities
- Enhance information on activities that are available and upcoming events, including on Council website.



What citizens told us

Strengths

- Access to social networks e.g., men's sheds, walking groups
- Churches
- Volunteering activity groups
- Get Actif initiative
- Libraries, HUTS Centre
- Sense of community
- Opportunities for involvement
- Opportunities for volunteering in Carmarthen

Areas for improvement

- Entrance fees for local attractions such as Botanical Garden – potential for discounts?



Respect and social inclusion

Ageism underpins many of the issues currently faced by older people, resulting in older people being treated unfairly, feeling socially excluded and their rights not being respected. Age-friendly communities challenge ageism by bringing people of different ages together and fostering positive images of ageing.



What we found

Current position

- Digital inclusion programmes (e.g., Age Cymru) are helpful in supporting older people to develop IT skills and use equipment
- There is evidence of veterans being valued, for example through the 'Living Stories' archive
- There are also notable examples of intergenerational activities
- Nuisance call blockers have helped reduce risk of older people being exploited or conned
- 9 Dementia Friendly communities are in place across the County
- Kindness programme, and 'Faces and Places' project celebrating diversity, can help encourage people to treat others with respect – this has become an area of particular concern over recent years.



Areas for improvement

Areas to focus on

- Improve Broadband availability across areas where this is currently problematic
- Encourage and promote the Welsh language and reverse recent decline in use
- Improve understanding of, and response to, mobility issues faced by some older people
- Invest in alternative communication methods for those who don't wish to or are unable to engage digitally
- Build on pilot initiatives e.g.,,. intergenerational and kindness schemes to spread their benefits.



What citizens told us

Strengths

- Some social inclusion exists locally
- Good social interaction
- Good local community networks

Areas for improvement

- Too much reliance on social media – can exclude older people
- Better mobile banking services e.g., in Laugharne.
- Toilet provision especially for women in more remote areas
- Post offices and banks in rural communities
- Basic services in rural areas



Civic Participation and Employment

Older people have diverse interests, and many want to be involved with a broad range of activities such as working, volunteering, being politically active or taking part in local groups or clubs. The skills and experience of older people often go undervalued.

Supporting older people to remain in work or to volunteer can provide them with an increased sense of purpose and belonging, which benefits their well-being and the local economy.



What we found

Current position

- Higher percentage of older people volunteer in communities than among the general population (Wellbeing Assessment)
- Less over 50s are in paid employment than in some areas of Wales although there are initiatives in place to address this, including Into Work Carmarthenshire, Workways and Regional Learning and Skills Partnership.
- The Ageing Well Network Steering Group meets regularly, and wider engagement events are held.
- Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA) provides a vehicle for local views to be heard at a national level.
- The Council's Ageing Well Plan takes older people's views into account.



Areas for Improvement

Areas to focus on

- Have Your Say Engagement Platform should be progressed with a potential early focus on older people.
- Reinstate Citizens' Panel.



What citizens told us

Strengths

- None highlighted

Areas for improvement

- More events like today
- Opportunities to participate
- Sharing examples of good practice for older people
- Improved job opportunities for older people
- Improving awareness of available/affordable groups for older people



Communication and Information

In order to be involved with community life, you need to know what is happening in your community.

Information about events, services and facilities should be available in accessible formats, and in places where people know to look for them.

Special care should be taken in ensuring that information is accessible for people with sensory impairments and made available in their language of choice. It's also important to remember that not all older people are online and may not want to be.



What we found

Current position

- The Council contact desk provides a route for people to find out about council services
- Hwbs are available in town centres providing information and support with accessing Council and other services and support
- Newsletters and information updates are provided by the Ageing Well Network
- 50+ Forum annual events
- Targeted information and advice are available from the Council and partners such as Age Cymru Dyfed
- Dewis Cymru provides online information about services and facilities available to older people in Carmarthenshire.



Areas for improvement

Areas to focus on

- Mitigate risk of older people feeling left behind by increased digitalisation (this was highlighted in Wellbeing Assessment)
- Establish news feed for older people providing essential information
- Improve engagement activities to make them accessible to older people and the needs of different communities across the County
- Consider streamlining existing forums to provide a representative and cohesive voice for older people, and to underpin a co-productive approach to service development.



What citizens told us

Strengths

- Education courses
- Access to local politicians and council services
- Annual awareness and engagement events
- Well maintained services and utilities e.g., water
- Warm hubs (Llandybie and Ammanford mentioned).

Areas for improvement

- Lack of signposting to activities
- Fibre broadband services
- Single place listing services
- Dedicated area on CCC website for services for older people
- Improved communication and booking facilities for those without internet
- Better communicating events such as the annual Ageing Well event.



Community Support and Health Services

Accessible and affordable health and care services are vital for older people to stay healthy, independent and active.

These services need to be conveniently located, close to where people live and public transport routes.



What we found

Current position

- Ageing Well is a key wellbeing objective for the Council.
- Commitment by Hywel Dda University Health Board to support older people's wellbeing and independence.
- The Public Services Board committed to supporting healthy habits, early intervention, developing strong connections and maximising opportunities across rural and urban environments.
- The Regional Partnership Board and Healthier Carmarthenshire Board priorities include older people and Welsh Government funding such as the Regional Integration Fund supports a range of innovation.
- A range of community-based programmes for older people help reduce loneliness and isolation.
- The Connect to Kindness campaign is developing stronger community networks.



What we found (ctd.)

Current position

- Delta CONNECT, delivered by a Local Authority Company, provides a bespoke, proactive, technology-enabled care and support for older people to help them stay well and healthy in their homes, including regular phone calls, links to virtual communities of interest, participation in community-based pathways such as falls prevention, and community welfare response in the event of emergencies
- The Carmarthenshire United Support Project (CUSP) provides tailored support at home and home from hospital initiatives.
- A Regional Dementia Strategy is in place and Carmarthen and District Dementia Friendly Community Group provides a multi-agency approach to supporting people living with dementia in the County.



Areas for improvement

Areas to focus on

- Build on and upscale current innovation and improvement programmes.
- Continue to develop technology-based support for older people in their homes.
- Ensure older people are involved in the co-design of services
- Continue to focus on reablement to help people regain skills and independence.
- Take forward initiatives such as wellbeing hubs to provide integrated care for older people.
- Deliver the Pentre Awel project in Llanelli, which will provide a range of assisted living facilities for older people.



What citizens told us

Strengths

- Social care is beginning to work together with health.
- Doctors and pharmacy support.
- Access to GP without appointment.
- Active care and community support to help people stay independent.
- Creative groups in Ammanford.
- Location of hospital.

Areas for improvement

- More proactive approach from Health Board.
- Easier access to GPs to address long waiting lists/ reopen surgeries that have closed.
- More GPs
- Better engagement to prevent isolation
- Mobile health unit for blood pressure testing, diabetes and blood tests
- Access to hospitals.



Suggested Performance Indicators for establishing a baseline and monitoring progress

- Baselines, and measuring of progress towards improvement goals should be a key part of the Council's action plan
- Suggested performance indicators for each domain have been taken from the WHO 'Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities' framework
- Local data sources and performance indicators should also be considered. These could include service and business plans as well as national and local performance frameworks
- Some areas are likely to require new arrangements to establish local baselines and capture data to monitor progress
- This needs to be a focus as the improvement journey begins.



- Open space quantity and accessibility (as used in open space assessment in the Local Development Plan)
- Proportion of people responding “yes” to the question, “Does the neighbourhood where you live have accessible public buildings and facilities?”
(WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities)



- Proportion of older people who report that public transportation stops are accessible
- Proportion of housing within walking distance (500 m) to a public transportation stop *(WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities)*



- Proportion of older people who live in a household that spends less than 30 per cent of their equalised disposable income on housing (WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities)
- Proportion of older people who report that their house is adapted, or can be adapted, to their needs to facilitate ageing at home (*WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities*)
- People who are lonely (National Survey for Wales)
- Proportion of older people who report engaging in volunteer activity in the last month on at least one occasion (*WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities*).



- Do you believe that you live in an age/dementia-friendly friendly community (this was asked in the Wellbeing Assessment survey 2017)
- Questions about safety (in the Wellbeing Assessment survey 2017) to be repeated
- Crime statistics
- Wellbeing assessment question about respecting one another (Wellbeing Assessment survey 2017)
- Proportion of older people who report feeling respected and socially included in their community

(WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities).



- Proportion of older people who contribute to consultation exercises
- Proportion of older people who report to have opportunities for paid employment (WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities).



- Proportion of survey respondents who said they would ask the Council if they needed more information about services in their area (adapted from WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities).
- Rerun questions from the 2017 Wellbeing Assessment survey that relate to communication and information

- Number of older persons with personal care assistance needs receiving (public or private) homebased services (WHO Measuring the Age Friendliness of Cities).



What next?

Our Recommended Next Steps

We were not requested to make specific recommendations on how Carmarthenshire County Council and its partners should progress the areas we have suggested need to focus on. Our recommendations therefore relate to how the evidence we have gathered should be used to progress the Council's Age Friendly programme.



Our Recommended Next Steps

1. Use this report as the basis for your submission to WHO.
2. Develop action plan to build on identified strengths and drive improvements in the priority areas we have identified.
3. Prioritise ongoing engagement with older people and look to rationalise existing mechanisms to provide consistent and coherent messaging from the community.
4. Maintain buy-in from Public Services Board and agencies represented on it.
5. Work with partners to expand regional approaches and secure buy-in from Regional Partnership Board.



End of Report