

Age-Friendly Caerphilly Baseline Assessment

2026



Contents

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Older People's Involvement in Caerphilly
 - 1.2 Population and Demographics
2. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
3. Transport and Mobility
4. Housing
5. Social Participation
6. Social Inclusion and Non-Discrimination
7. Civic Engagement and Employment
8. Communication and Information
9. Concluding Remarks
10. References

1. Introduction

Executive summary

This baseline assessment is a snapshot of how Caerphilly CBC is working toward becoming an age-friendly county borough. Using the World Health Organization (WHO) age-friendly domains as a structured framework. It draws together key demographic context, themes from engagement with older residents, and some recommended actions across outdoor spaces, transport, housing, participation, inclusion, communication and community support/health services. The document is intended to support shared initiatives and planning with partners and provide a clear starting point for the journey ahead.

The WHO framework consists of:

- **Outdoor spaces and public buildings**
- **Transport**
- **Housing**
- **Community support and healthcare services**
- **Civic participation and employment**
- **Social participation**
- **Respect and social inclusion**
- **Communication and information**

This document aims to provide an overview of the age-friendly communities concept, its aims, and objectives, whilst also illustrating the extensive existing engagement processes, services, activities, and best practices that are already in place within the county borough.

Working together and Regional Collaboration

Caerphilly CBC sits within the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Every Regional Partnership Board, (there is one for each Health Board area in Wales), needs to make and share a plan for their area, called an Area Plan. This plan uses the Population Needs Assessment (PNA) to evidence what services they will provide based on the care and support needs of the local area. The Plan is structured around the statutory core themes identified in the PNA which are older adults, children and young people, carers, autism and neurodivergence, mental health and learning disabilities, housing, workforce, and commissioning. It is ambitious, and it sets a clear road map for the delivery of an integrated model of health care and wellbeing across Gwent.

The Regional Partnership Board, the PNA and the Area Plan, align with the Gwent Public Services Board, the Well-being Assessment and the Well-being Plan, providing a holistic approach to community well-being across the region. At a local level this work is progressed by the Local Delivery Group. |

Community based organisations, third party sector and public bodies also play an integral part in delivering services in the region.

Community Development

We use the five ways of working, collaboration, integration, involvement, long-term, and prevention, to guide our work. A network of Age Friendly Hubs has been set up throughout the county as information points and places that can feedback the needs of the residents to the right authorities. This means that while considering how to improve well-being in our

communities now, we've also looked at how well-being could be affected in the future and how we can prevent issues becoming worse. We will need to work together to see what we're each doing in a community and how this affects what we do, individually and in partnership. Finally, but most importantly, we want our communities, third parties and ourselves to continue to use these principles to guide our work.

Membership Aspirations

This document serves as the baseline measurement for the development of age-friendly communities in Caerphilly. It is designed to capture and present an overview of where we are today so that we can effectively map our journey and the progress we aim to make in the future.

Caerphilly County Borough Council, our communities, and our partners fully aspire to membership of the WHO network of Age Friendly Communities for the following reason:

Aspirations: We have a commitment to joining the WHO Age Friendly Communities network. We look forward to being able to learn from others, to see how other communities approach issues that we all encounter, regardless of where we are. We hope that we will be able to share some of our stories and how we got to where we are. As previously mentioned, Age Friendly Communities are a commitment that will need to be carried forward in everything that we do and will need to be constantly updated and adjusted and we have made this commitment happily.

By establishing this baseline, we have our starting point. We are committed to building communities that care and support each other and that are inclusive and places that the people of Caerphilly are happy to grow and prosper in.

1.1 Older people's involvement in Caerphilly

Two years ago, Caerphilly was far from where we are today regarding the age friendly community's ethos. A commitment had been made but networks hadn't been built up sufficiently to start making a difference to the residents and communities of the county. In the two years since we have come along leaps and bounds, an Age Friendly Officer Communities was appointed in October 2023 and started the process of scoping what could be achieved. It became clear that the commitment to age friendly communities between the then partners was real and that the scope of what could be achieved kept increasing. What started as a monthly meeting between some interested partners without a clear path, started to change into something with momentum that has become a network of likeminded individuals groups communities and businesses.

Having a Voice

Having a voice and being listened too is one of the major issues for the older generation in Caerphilly. The existing Caerphilly 50+ group in 2023 was poorly attended and not representative of the residents of the borough. In the last two years the Age Friendly Communities Officer has worked closely with the group to help them recruit and to highlight the need for them to be involved in the discussions that effect older people. Together we have started to build attendance, help co-ordinate events and advertise who they are and what they do.

Networks are now being established with other groups and organisations both local and nationwide. A representative from the group now sits on several forums to ensure older people's concerns are listened too. The group meets monthly and has started to have guest speakers attend to talk about issues such as 'Later Living Accommodation' surveys as well as being a great source of feedback for consultations within the borough. This involvement is crucial for communities to be part of the process.

Partnership working

We are keen that this is not a 'Council' initiative but a collaboration of groups and individuals with the same goal in mind. Over the last two years a network of Age Friendly Hubs have been established throughout the borough. These hubs are community led groups that have always been there. We are not trying to reinvent the wheel and community venues have a wonderful record of age friendly activities from Elderberry Clubs and Men's Sheds to warm spaces for meals and kids' clubs. There is a tremendous amount of good work was being carried out already but in silos with nobody really talking to each other. So, we have put together a network of hubs that act as information points, connecting people across the borough for events and news.

Alongside the community groups, a wide range of public services and third sector partners work closely to help and support an age friendly vision. Some examples are: GAVO, ABUHB, Age Cymru, COPA, Gwent Police, Caerphilly Homes, Dementia Gwent, Public Services Board and the Local Delivery Group.

Co-production in practice

Age Friendly is now a phrase that is regularly used within the council. Departments such as Housing do a wonderful job in including the residents in work that is being carried out. One such major project involved demolishing a residential home and rebuilding modern, well

thought out accommodation to meet the needs for its residents now but also with the future in mind. The Age Friendly Communities Officer was integrated into the planning/building process to ensure all aspects were being considered. From start to finish existing residents as well as residents surrounding the area were involved. The question was asked, what do residents want? The answers were included in the planning. Things like a summerhouse in the grounds, large open meeting spaces, even what residents would like to see in the apartments was considered.

From this a county wide survey was commissioned on how later living housing should look in the future. An organisation called Housing Lyn were commissioned to carry out the research with the AFCO sitting on the committee. The links being built up ensured that the Caerphilly 50+ group as well as other community groups had an input into this work and were able to directly influence the survey.

Age Friendly representation is now part of several groups such as the 'Local Delivery Group', 'the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee' and many others such as Dementia Gwent. The involvement of an Age Friendly Communities Officer ensures that there is a voice for age friendly concerns in all that we do both locally and nationally. It also allows the inclusion of third-party groups to the table through introductions from the AFCO and in turn networks begin to form.

As an example, the AFCO came across an article recently from Norway about children running repair shops with adult supervision. The idea was pitched to the Age Friendly Hubs as well as the Council Decarbonisation Team and the response was overwhelming. The hubs want to work together to look at this possibility as well as the Decarbonisation and Waste Team. It's having this network that allows people to float ideas and to really make some changes within the communities that they serve.

Involving the younger generation is a must, if we fail to do this, we will fail to change anything. We approached a school where we asked if we could run a competition to design the Age Friendly logo for Caerphilly. We wanted something that could be proudly displayed across the borough and something that children would be able to look at and recognise as done by someone in a school that they may go to. The competition was taken up with gusto by the pupils and it was a very hard choice to pick the winner. By doing this we start the process of children asking, 'what is age friendly?' The aim is to make all schools within the borough 'Age Friendly' in the same way that schools are Dementia Friendly.

1.2 Population and demographics

According to the 2021 Census (ONS) Caerphilly had a population of 175,900, making it the 5th largest of Wales's 22 unitary authorities (UA) and home to approximately 5.66% of the total Welsh population. The area has seven main population centres: Caerphilly, Bargoed, Blackwood, Rhymney, Newbridge, Ystrad Mynach and Risca.

The borough runs from Rhymney in the north of the county with direct access to the 'Heads of The Valleys' dual carriageway that runs from Abergavenny to Swansea and the M4 motorway, to the south of the borough and Risca which neighbours Newport City and easy access to the M4 corridor. To the west we border Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent and to the east we border Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil.

Population growth and age distribution

Based on Welsh Government 2018 population projections between 2021 and 2041 the 65+ population will increase by 24.7% and the 85+ population by 68.8%.

There was a 1.6% decrease in the population total from 178,800 in 2011. Despite this slight decline, it remains the fifth most populated local authority in Wales. Recent estimates for 2024 show a slight stabilization, with a total population of 176,865.

- **Population Trend:** Between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, the area saw a reduction in residents, contrasting with some neighbouring Welsh areas.
- **Density:** Caerphilly is the fourth most densely populated authority in Wales.
- **Context:** While often seen as an urban authority, 80% of the borough is rural, with the population concentrated in valley settlements.

2. Outdoor spaces and buildings

Caerphilly County Borough is a diverse region in southeast Wales, known for its industrial heritage, scenic valleys, and the historic Caerphilly Castle. Located bordering Cardiff to the south and the Brecon Beacons to the north, it is a key commuter area that combines urban amenities with rural landscapes.

Caerphilly has a 'Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029' that sets out how the council will implement the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The strategy is bold in its aims, it looks forward and tries to ensure that the decisions being made are fit for future generations. The strategy responds to not only the needs of our young people but also the needs of a growing older population.

'Caerphilly Town 2035' is an ambitious plan to transform the area, making it a better place to live, work and visit. The plan includes major redevelopment of Caerphilly Castle, Caerphilly transport interchange and the market.

There is also currently an asset transfer project underway that encourages community groups or businesses to take over and run some disused council buildings. One public toilet in the town of Risca has successfully been transferred to a local community hub that intends

to reopen part of the toilet block for bicycle hire and repair services as well as reinstating some part as public toilets once more.

Community infrastructure

Caerphilly CBC currently operates 18 libraries within the county and 10 leisure centres. Alongside these services there are many venues such as the Caerphilly Miners Centre in Caerphilly, the Memo Theatre in Newbridge, the Winding House Museum in New Tredegar as well as many parks and walks throughout the Rhymney Valley. All these locations play a crucial role in supporting the well-being of residents and allow for social participation from old and young in an environment that nurtures arts and culture inclusion. This strengthens communities in their shared heritage and aligns with both the Well Being Plan and Age Friendly Communities ideals.

Concerns raised by residents on Community Infrastructure through interaction with groups

- **Lack of public toilets**, some concerns raised about availability of toilets and the impact this has on older people being able to spend time enjoying outdoor spaces.
- **Blocked and poorly maintained footpaths**, posing safety risks and inhibiting mobility—especially for those using mobility aids or living with long-term conditions.
- **Safety after dark**, concerns about anti-social behaviour in the evenings making older residents feel unsafe when going out.

The above concerns have been identified, and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties. These concerns are not limited to older people so action on these will benefit the whole community.

3. Transport and mobility

Being able to travel throughout the county, and beyond, in a safe and reliable manner is a core tenet of social interaction both for the well-being of its residents as well as the Age Friendly domain. There are currently various options for transport throughout the borough, including public transport, (bus as well as train) community transport schemes, concessionary travel for 60+ and volunteer led transport from community run organisations.

Current transport provision

Caerphilly CBC provides comprehensive transport, including school travel passes for eligible learners. Free school transport is currently available for primary pupils living over 1.5 miles away and secondary pupils over 2 miles. The council also provides adult social services assisted transport and concessionary bus passes for the over-60s.

Key Transport Services:

- **Home to school transport:** Provided based on walking distance, with plans to align with statutory 2-mile (primary) and 3-mile (secondary) criteria by September 2026, though recent proposals suggest maintaining more generous, existing limits.
- **Post 16:** Travel passes are available for 16–18-year-olds attending the nearest college/catchment school, provided they reside within the borough.
- **Additional Learning Needs:** Special transport is arranged for children with identified needs, often including passenger assistants.
- **Concessionary Travel:** Residents aged 60+ or with disabilities can apply for a free bus pass, enabling travel on most local services.
- **Adult Social Services Transport:** Assisted transport is available for adults with disabilities or health issues attending approved community activities.

Concerns raised by residents on transport and mobility through interaction groups

- **Irregular or insufficient bus routes in the north of the county,** particularly affecting valleys communities, reducing access to shops, services, social activities, and health appointments.
- **Transport to and from community hubs, GP and hospital appointments,** unable to attend community venues affecting wellbeing and social interactions. Difficulties in getting to appointments on time.

The above concerns have been identified and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties. Again improvements will benefit the wider community, not just older people.

4. Housing

Caerphilly Homes is managed by Caerphilly CBC and is only one of eleven councils in Wales that retains control of its housing stock. Caerphilly Homes manages over 10,500 rented homes. In addition to these properties, they also provide services to approximately 405 leasehold flats. The council has set an ambitious plan to provide 1,000 new low carbon affordable homes by 2033.

The Ty Darren later living development in Risca, is an excellent example of cross partnership working. The later living scheme contains 45 one-bedroom apartments for residents aged 60 and over. The design combines the highest level of energy efficiencies that reduce carbon emissions and help to keep residents fuel bills to a minimum. Caerphilly Housing, the council and developers did a wonderful job in including the residents in work that is being carried out. The Age Friendly ethos was integrated into the planning/building process to ensure all aspects were being thought of. From start to finish existing residents as well as residents surrounding the area were involved. The question was asked, what do residents want? The answers were included in the planning. Things like a summerhouse in the grounds, large open meeting spaces, even what residents would like to see in the apartments was considered.

In a tenant satisfaction survey of 2023, the following results were returned:

- **Overall Service:** 76% satisfied (3,036 respondents).
- **Safety & Security:** 81% satisfied.
- **Neighbourhood:** 77% satisfied.
- **Value for Money:** 76% believe rent offers value for money.
- **Trust:** 73% trust [Caerphilly Homes](#).
- **Repairs:** 79% satisfied with their last repair, though delays cause dissatisfaction.

Concerns raised by residents through interactions with council housing departments

- **Timely and affordable home adaptations**, including grab rails, bathroom modifications, stairlifts, and ramps.
- **Accessible housing options located near family, amenities, and key services**, reducing reliance on transport and enabling community connection.
- **Energy-efficient, warm homes**, which support health and reduce the financial burden of heating.
- **Clear information and advice about available support**, grants, and housing pathways—connecting to the *Communication & Information* domain.
- **Support with property maintenance**, particularly for owner-occupiers who may struggle to identify trustworthy tradespeople or manage building work.
- **Housing adaptability**, ensuring that properties can be modified as residents' needs change over time.

The above concerns have been identified, and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties.

5. Social participation

There is a wealth of activities available for the older residents of Caerphilly. Some run by the council, such as Caerphilly Arts who last summer ran a series of silent discos both in care homes and local community venues. Caerphilly Leisure who provide libraries and spaces for local activity groups, such as the Hard of Hearing group in Caerphilly Library. Activity centres provide the ability for active leisure such as swimming, Yoga and Ti Chi. A dementia hub has been set up in Caerphilly Library through Dementia Gwent and the Caerphilly council Age Friendly Champion also acts as the Dementia Champion.

Community groups and third sector initiatives form a large part in supporting wellbeing and combatting loneliness in the communities. Activities such as 'indoor bowling' and 'chair Ty Chi' are excellent ways for older persons to keep physically active. Groups such as the 'Elderberries' and

'Men's Shed' provide creative outlets while Warm Hubs provide a hot meal and place for older people to sit and chat.

Men's mental health groups are taking root in community centres and walking groups such as 'Men, Talk, Walk' offer a no pressure environment where men are encouraged to take part in activities and have access to emotional support when needed.

All of this contributes to the wellbeing of Caerphilly's residents but supporting participation needs good communication. Caerphilly Cares play a vital role in connecting older residents to community groups and activities. Age Friendly Community Hubs also play a role in signposting to social activities, volunteering opportunities and wellbeing programmes.

Social media plays its part in communications with community groups, third-sector organisations and the council all having Facebook, X and Instagram pages to advertise activities. Caerphilly Age Friendly Facebook page also signposts to activities, community groups and local items such as traffic issues and consultations throughout the county.

Concerns raised by residents on social participation through interaction groups

- **Transport limitations** preventing access to social activities, particularly in the north of the valley.
- **Lack of awareness** about available activities and opportunities for social participation.
- **Timing of activities** that may not suit older people's preferences or transport availability.
- **Cost of participation** for some activities, creating barriers for those on limited incomes.
- **Limited intergenerational activities** to connect different age groups within communities.
- **Concerns about safety** or accessibility of venues, particularly in the evening or winter months.
- **Digital exclusion** limiting awareness of and access to online social opportunities.

The above concerns have been identified and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties. These issues are not limited to older people and addressing them will improve well-being for the whole community.

6. Social inclusion and non-discrimination

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 has been developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities and A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Concerns raised by residents on Social inclusion and non-discrimination through interaction groups

- **Physical or logistical barriers** that may restrict access to inclusive community events and training (e.g., venue inaccessibility, limited transport, insufficient volunteer capacity).
- **Digital exclusion** reducing reach of inclusion-oriented information for those without internet access.
- **Recognising diversity within the older population**, including people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, and Welsh speakers.
- **Using inclusive language and imagery** in communications and public materials.
- **Persistent stereotypes** about older people being vulnerable or unable to contribute, rather than being valued for their experience and skills.

The above concerns have been identified and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties.

7. Civic engagement and employment

Older residents of Caerphilly are the backbone of community volunteering and make significant contributions through part-time working, childcare and civic involvement. Community hubs throughout the county benefit from the experience of older people via groups such as the Repair Shop in the Caerphilly Miners Institute and guided tours of the theatre in the Newbridge Memo. These roles foster a sense of being part of the community and offer a meaningful purpose in later years.

The Caerphilly Over 50 group regularly contribute to consultations and are involved in shaping results in surveys carried out for both local government as well as Welsh Government. Participation in such things as the Later Living project carried out by Housing Lin for Welsh Government really highlights the cooperation that can be had between older people's forums and decision makers, ensuring that their voice is part of shaping local and national decisions.

Employment support

Tailored employment support is offered through Caerphilly Employment for residents that are 16 and over. It also offers help for residents that are 50+ to return to work via mentoring, CV building and paid work placements.

Employment stalls pop ups provided by Caerphilly employment are located on set days throughout the week in community centres, age friendly hubs and libraries.

The DWP 50+ support initiative provides specialised employment assistance for jobseekers aged 50 and over in Great Britain, including dedicated 50 Plus Champions in Jobcentre Plus districts, tailored support, and the Mid Life MOT service. It aims to help older workers overcome barriers like health issues, low confidence, or skills gaps to re-enter the workforce, retrain, and plan for retirement.

Concerns raised by residents on civic engagement and employment through interaction groups

- **Limited awareness** among older adults of available employability and volunteering opportunities.
- **Lack of Confidence**, especially for those who have been out of the workforce for long periods or who worry about age discrimination.
- **Digital exclusion**, making job-search, online training and virtual recruitment processes difficult for some older residents.
- **Lack of flexible or age-friendly job roles**, including phased hours, shorter shifts, or light-duty options.

The above concerns have been identified and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties.

8. Communication and information

Digital technologies are an increasingly important mode of communication within the public sector, businesses and partner organisations. Many community venues use social media to advertise the different wellbeing and craft groups that use their spaces and by doing this they are able to keep running costs lower. There has been a drive over recent years to make places of work 'paper free' and many organisations that once printed information that could be taken home and read at a pace that suited residents, no longer have budgets to allow this.

While digital technology offers many benefits, it is not suitable for all and will exclude some residents from being able to access information about services and activities. A research study was carried out by Caerphilly council in 2021 to look at the scale of the problem and what barriers people faced. The survey was conducted over four weeks with 2,617 residents replying.

- 8% of those surveyed said they don't use the internet at all and of that group:
 - 33% said it was because it was too complicated, and they lacked confidence
 - 23% stated that they had no interest
 - 22% stated cost as a barrier
 - 12% felt they needed support
 - 9% had privacy and security concerns
- 14% of respondents only have access to a smartphone
- 6% reported that they didn't have access to a device at all
- 8% do not have Wi-Fi at home
- 7% reported they don't have the necessary digital skills to use the internet.

There is free use of computers at any of the 18 libraries across the county provided that you are a library member. These locations offer internet access, Microsoft software, printing and Wi-Fi for personal devices. Caerphilly libraries also offer a selection of large print books and audiobooks. Home delivery is available via LibraryLink service for those unable to attend.

Welsh language provision

All services in Caerphilly comply with Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The Council and partners ensure that core documents, community programmes, and engagement materials are bilingual, and continually seek feedback from Welsh speakers to refine their approach.

Concerns raised by residents on communication and information through interaction groups

- **No access to internet**, this was for a variety of reasons including cost, no interest and too complicated.
- **Only access to a smartphone**, no access to computers or laptops.
- **No access to a device**, not owning any devices able to access the internet.
- **No access to Wi-Fi**, unable to access Wi-Fi at home.
- **Lack of digital skills**, training needed to be confident using the internet.

The above concerns have been identified and age friendly recommendations will form part of an action plan for the next financial year to be discussed with relevant parties.

9. Concluding remarks

Our commitment

We have a dedication to join the WHO Age Friendly Communities network. We look forward to being able to learn from others, to see how other communities approach issues that we all encounter, regardless of where we are and to positively contribute through the WHO Age Friendly Network in discussions and research. We hope that we will be able to share some of our stories and how we got to where we are. Age Friendly Communities are a commitment that will need to be carried forward in everything that we do and will need to be constantly updated and adjusted and we have made this commitment happily.

Looking forward

The gathering of the above information has given us a good starting point. We must be proud of the age friendly work that has been carried out so far in the county by the public sector, community hubs and all partners on this journey but it is a journey and will take constant attention and focus to achieve what we believe we are capable of.

We now know the issues that face us and the action plan for 2026-2027 will be based around these concerns. The plan will be a collaboration between partners and one that we all agree upon.

10. References

Key local documents

- Caerphilly Economic and Regeneration Strategy
- Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029

- Caerphilly Town 2035
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023
- Strategic Equalities Plan 2024-2028

WHO framework documents

- World Health Organisation (2007). *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*. WHO, Geneva.
- World Health Organisation (2015). *World Report on Ageing and Health*. WHO, Geneva.
- World Health Organisation. *Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities*: www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world

National policy framework

- Welsh Government. *A Strategy for an Ageing Society: Age-friendly Wales*
- Welsh Government. *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*
- Welsh Government. *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*
- Welsh Government. *More Than Just Words: Welsh Language Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care*

Population and demographic data

- Office for National Statistics (2021). *Census 2021*
 - Stats Wales (2022). *Population Estimates*
-