

Appendix A



Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Working Towards an Age Friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf

2024



This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Foreword

As the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care, I fully acknowledge, and appreciate the responsibilities of statutory services to support older people to stay well and at home in their communities.

I also recognise the whole range of other factors, including community support, that are required to maintain the health and wellbeing of our older residents, as identified by the World Health Organization in the eight age friendly domains.

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf we are proud to work with our older people in communities across the county borough, to support older residents to establish and sustain age friendly activity which enhances wellbeing and enables residents to age well. Information gathered from the most recent UK [census](#) data in 2021 indicates that there are 237, 658 people living in Rhondda Cynon Taf of which **46,625** are aged 65+, with 1,796 of these aged over 90 years.

The population as a whole, in Rhondda Cynon Taf, is predicted to increase by around 4.5% over the next 20 years according to the most recent UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) predictions made in 2018.

Notably, we are expecting a continuous increase in the number of people aged 65 years and over, with a predicted 21% increase, with the most significant rise in those aged 90 years and over predicted at more than 80%

The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) predictions suggest that by 2040 there is likely to be over 57,500 people aged 65 and over, 3,300 of which could be 90 plus living in Rhondda, Cynon, Taf.

Such an increase will unavoidably see a growth in demand for support services, communities and inevitably on individual residents, so we are taking positive steps to ensure we have resourceful and resilient communities that are able to respond.

This is in line with the predictions for the whole of Wales where we continue to see an increase in the numbers of people living longer. 2021 National Census data confirms over one-fifth (21.3%) of the Welsh population in 2021 (662,000) were aged 65 years and over, up from 18.4% (562,544) in 2011. The size of the population aged 90 years and over (29,700, 1.0%) has increased since 2011, when 25,200, 0.8%, were aged 90 years and over.

In response and launched in 2021, the Welsh Government Strategy for an Ageing Society sets out a vision for an Age Friendly Wales, with four identified aims:

- ❖ enhancing well-being;
- ❖ improving local services and environments;
- ❖ building and retaining people's own capability;
- ❖ tackling age-related poverty.

This was further supported by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales's [priorities](#) which include ageing well and the development of age friendly communities across Wales.

An ageing, healthy population that have a sense of belonging and which are supported by their community is something to be celebrated, and I am delighted to present the application for an Age-Friendly Rhondda, Cynon Taf on behalf of those communities.

The application, and supporting documents, showcase the outstanding work that has already taken place, and which will continue in our communities, confirming our commitment to working with partners in order to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a better place for us all as we grow older.



Councillor Caple, Cabinet Member and Age Friendly Champion, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Purpose of the Document

This document has been prepared in support of Rhondda, Cynon Taf's application to join the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. It provides background information on local age friendly developments in Rhondda, Cynon Taf together with an overview of existing age friendly initiatives, services and activities under each of the WHO domains. It further shares information on the engagement methods, demonstrating how older people have been involved and identifies key areas for action to improve age friendly provision across the local authority geographic footprint taking stock of feedback from local residents.

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Section 1: Age Friendly Vision

Rhondda, Cynon Taf is a great place to grow older and a place where older people feel valued, heard, included and respected, and can get out and about; stay informed; afford to do things they want to do; and lead healthy and active lives.

The World Health Organisation Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities was established in 2010 to connect cities, communities, and organisations across the world with the common vision of making their community a great place to grow older.

Rhondda Cynon Taf hopes that by joining the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities this will bring opportunities to:

- ❖ Share good practice and inspire other communities
- ❖ Connect with other Age Friendly Cities and Communities across the globe to share information, knowledge, and experience
- ❖ Learn from others and discover innovative evidence-based solutions to challenges faced by older people

All with the aim of improving the lives of older people across Rhondda Cynon Taf

Section 2: Background and Context

In Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) the Local Authority is proud to support and value Older People, working in close partnership with other agencies and organisations since 2004.

Since that time, and following the development of [The Strategy for Older People in Wales](#), the appointment of an elected member as Older Persons Champion, a dedicated Older Persons Coordinator was appointed to develop this area of work, funded by the Local Authority continuously reaffirming the commitment for improvement.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's signed the [Dublin Declaration](#) in 2015, which was the first and significant formal step to committing to developing Age Friendly communities.

A [Local Ageing Well Plan](#) has been produced and was revised in 2019. The Plan covers the Cwm Taf region, which includes Rhondda, Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil local authority areas.

The Ageing Well plan identifies key actions for delivery across five priority areas (defined by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales) that are essential for supporting older people to age well. The plan puts in place positive actions which support the development of age-friendly activities across RCT. This was further complemented with the support of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) which overarches five local 50+ Forums which were developed from 2004 and continue to thrive today acting as a key voice of older people in our local communities.

This work continues to be a priority for the Council and its partners, supporting Welsh Government's vision to create an age friendly Wales.

In 2021, the role of the Older Persons Coordinator was refocussed onto ensuring integration was assured for older people in terms of the RCTCBC Community Resilience Hub, Neighbourhood Network and Community Grant model.

At the current time there are seven Community Resilience Hubs across the County Borough that each reflect a recognisable community in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Each Community Resilience Hub has at least one Neighbourhood Network which is a collection of stakeholders, organisations large and small, active in each area. Neighbourhood Networks encourage sharing of good practice and resources, identifying local need and creating local action plans.

The integration of Age Friendly Communities has seen increased membership of Older People's groups, such as 50+ forums, within Neighbourhood Networks. Neighbourhood Networks have a fair, proportionate representation of Older People's groups within these forums which ensures Older People's voices are heard, considered, and acted upon.

Members of the Neighbourhood Networks have access to a suite of grant funding that is set aside for not-for-profit community groups. These grants support local activity and encourage participation and innovation. Community Grants, both large and small, are available throughout the year. Older People's groups are supported to apply, manage, and report on community grants in a way that is bespoke to individual circumstances. This is especially important where group leaders are digitally excluded. In total during 2022-23, **66 Council managed grants** totalling **£147,976.00** were awarded to groups and organisations supporting **3274** older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Similar levels of funding continue to be available to groups in 2023/24.

Older People in RCT now have increased access to:

- ❖ A single point of contact within communities to access good quality information, advice, and assistance.
- ❖ Encouragement to stay active and connected.
- ❖ Opportunities to improve their mental health, well-being, and confidence.
- ❖ Opportunities to improve or maintain their physical health.
- ❖ Opportunities to seek support and be signposted to other services as appropriate.
- ❖ Community spaces to meet, share interests and socialise, thereby tackling loneliness and social isolation.

In 2023, partners including older people and the Local Authority felt RCT were in a strong enough position to apply to the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

Section 3: Who is involved?

The development of Age Friendly Communities in RCT has involvement and support from a plethora of stakeholders, including local communities and older individual residents.

There are five **50+ Forums** across RCT, made up of representatives of smaller community based Older People's groups within each geographical area, which together form a representative and trusted voice of older people.

Members from each of the 50+ forums are nominated to sit on the **Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG)** for collective representation of older people across the county.

Membership of OPAG also includes RCT's Age-Friendly Older Persons Champion, Cllr Gareth Capel, the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care.

OPAG has a Service Level Agreement with the Councils Consultation Team and are the go-to voice for key consultations that impact older people. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board regularly consult OPAG on service changes. OPAG also has representation on the Adult Social Services Scrutiny Committee within the Council.

OPAG represents RCT on a Wales-wide level, for example, on the Cymru Older People's Alliance.

The established **Neighbourhood Networks** membership includes community stakeholders, community groups and service providers. Neighbourhood Networks meet monthly to have conversations, share good practice and resources and identify and plan actions against locally identified need. Current membership of Neighbourhood Networks in RCT is **134 organisations**.

OPAG and the 50+ Forums have been encouraged and supported to join Neighbourhood Networks, which has ensured Older People's voices are being championed and heard when local plans are being made. This ensures older people

are integral to the development and coproduction of an age friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members of Neighbourhood Networks have access to a suite of available grant funding opportunities including Neighbourhood Network Fund, Winter Hardship Fund and the UKG Shared Prosperity Fund RCTCBC Community Grant. Many of these groups have successfully bid and were awarded funding enabling them to run projects for the benefit of older people in their local community.

Neighbourhood Networks report to the RCT Community Support Steering Group a partnership of over 20 organisations, public, voluntary and third sector who meet routinely to work together to support community endeavour and consider issues.

The **Community Support Steering Group (CSSG)** was initially established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when they coordinated a response to support vulnerable residents including older people who were shielding providing assistance with shopping, essential medicines etc. The current purpose of the group across RCT is to:

- Monitor demand for resident support and respond to any pressures/changes in national guidance which affects residents across RCT.
- Foster collaboration to address issues of concern.
- Identify opportunities to work in partnership on funding bids and applications that will support community resilience across RCT.

The CSSG meets bi-monthly where Age Friendly Communities is a standing agenda item. The following organisations are represented on the CSSG:

- ❖ Age Connect Morgannwg
- ❖ Care and Repair
- ❖ Citizens' Advice
- ❖ Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board
- ❖ Department for Work and Pensions
- ❖ Foodbanks/Trussell Trust
- ❖ Home start
- ❖ Interlink
- ❖ Probation Service
- ❖ Public Health Wales
- ❖ Regional Commissioning Unit
- ❖ Registered Social Landlords
- ❖ Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
- ❖ South Wales Police

❖ OPAG

The CSSG reports out the Public Service Board (PSB) ensuring that key messages from all those involved in Neighbourhood Networks are heard.

Utilising engagement information from a range of existing sources including the RCT Together Residents Survey, consultation activity undertaken in respect of both the Wellbeing Assessment and Population Needs Assessment a broad picture of existing age friendly activity, initiatives and services has been identified. This information has been further enhanced by specific engagement activity undertaken across the Rhondda Cynon Taf area in support of our age friendly communities developments. To capture information from key stakeholders, our Community Support Steering Group was approached to complete age friendly proformas detailing specific initiatives and services they are involved in which support older people in line with the principles of age friendly communities. In addition, the further partners including PSB partners and those linked with transport have also been directly engaged in this process.

A key focus of our engagement activity has of course been with older people themselves, as mentioned the approach has included our day to day engagement with Neighbourhood Networks, the Older Persons Advisory Group – which includes our Age-Friendly Older Persons Champion, Cllr Gareth Capel, the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care, 50+ Forums and Community Groups for older people.

Recent **Local Engagement** events have taken place across RCT during 2023 including International Day for Older Persons, Dementia Action Week, Dementia Listening Campaign. Other events linked to the Dementia Care Pathway of Standards included the 'Hackathon' and a "Hear our Voices" performance where participant stories were shared via a range of creative means including drama, song, art and poetry.

We have also been keen to ensure the sometimes lesser-heard voices of older people, for example those who don't engage with formal groups and activities, are represented. In pursuit of this we continue to work closely with partners within the housing sector, including Care and Repair who support older people in their own homes, Extra Care Housing providers and Registered Social Landlords with Sheltered and Independent Living Schemes with a view to utilise their existing engagement tools continuing to feed this into our work.

The partnerships in RCT are keen to ensure consultation at events is followed by feedback and action. For example, the Dementia Listening Campaign identified a lack of local activities and support for people living with Dementia and their carers. Using this evidence, a pilot project has been developed and funded by the Regional Integration Fund, the Community Dementia Prevention Programme, this programme is led by the Older Persons Coordinator for RCTCBC, as a result of our active role in Cwm Taf Morgannwg's Dementia Standards workstream. This has led to 20 community organisations receiving funding to put on opportunities for social interaction and physical activity which align with the six simple steps outlined in the

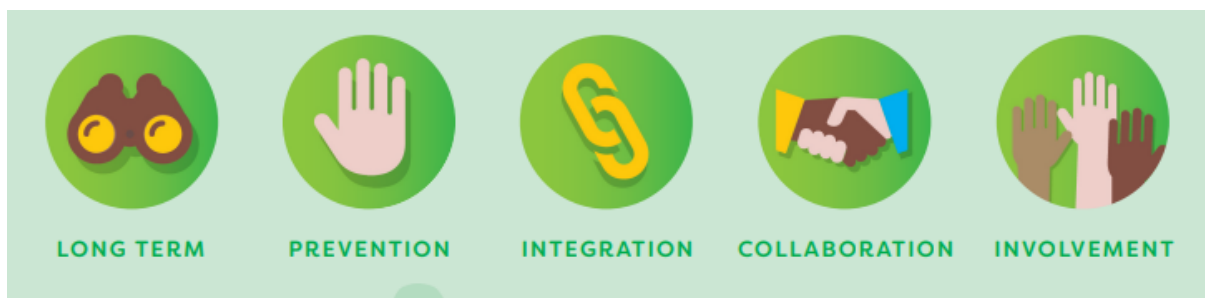
Dementia Action Plan for Wales. This funding also includes Dementia Friends information sessions which has raised awareness of dementia across RCT.

Section 4: Wellbeing

[The Wellbeing of Future Generations 2015 Wales Act](#) places a duty on public bodies to work collaboratively to improve the environmental, economic, cultural and social wellbeing of their region by setting objectives that will achieve the Wellbeing goals outlined in the Act.



This is achieved using the sustainable development principle, ensuring that the future impacts of decisions made are fully considered. In the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, which covers Rhondda Cynon Taf alongside Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend the following five ways of working have been adopted.



The new [Wellbeing Plan](#) for the area has the overarching theme of a More Equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg. The Wellbeing Assessment provides the evidence base for the new plan highlighting that not all communities within the CTM area have fair access to opportunities and face different challenges that impact wellbeing.

The plan identifies two objectives which partners will achieve together to bring about A More Equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Healthy Local Neighbourhoods – where our communities are inclusive, feel cohesive and people feel safe, supported, and valued.

- ❖ Supporting communities to be inclusive

- ❖ Promoting healthier lifestyles in communities
- ❖ Building a sense of belonging in communities
- ❖ Providing help so people can access support, services, and opportunities

Sustainable and Resilient Local Neighbourhoods - A Cwm Taf Morgannwg where we understand and respond to the risk of climate change to our communities. To do this we must value, manage and enjoy our green and blue spaces responsibly.

- ❖ Protecting and enjoying our natural green and blue spaces responsibly
- ❖ Increasing opportunities for active travel and using public transport
- ❖ Reducing carbon use and waste
- ❖ Tackling Climate Change and its impact

In pursuit of these objectives, as was the case with original 2017 Wellbeing Plan for the region, which identified a cross cutting theme of Tackling Loneliness and Isolation to support Thriving Communities, Healthy People and a Strong Economy, a number of improvements will be made which will positively contribute to Age Friendly developments in the area, aligning with the World Health Organisation's domains.

RCT Council also has it's own priorities, developed and presented in the [Making a Difference' Corporate Plan 2020-24](#) and the new draft summary '[Working with our Communities' Corporate Plan 2024-2030](#) which is currently being consulted upon.

The 2024-2030 plan sets out four Well-being Objectives:

1. PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES - Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. This includes:

- Children and young people have the best start in life and can learn and grow safely,
- Residents can take care of their health & well-being so they can live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives,
- Residents having access to affordable, good quality and energy efficient homes,
- Safeguarding our most vulnerable residents of all ages, providing protection, care and support when they need it most so that they can maximise their potential.

2. WORK AND BUSINESS - Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy. This includes:

- Supporting people into rewarding and secure work,
- Supporting businesses to prosper and be sustainable,
- Thriving town centres, and
- A well-connected County Borough.

3. NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT - A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature. This includes:

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment,
- Clean, Safe and Sustainable RCT,
- Using Natures Assets to benefit people and communities.

4. CULTURE AND HERITAGE - *Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future where:*

- Culture and heritage is vibrant, and difference is celebrated in strong communities that enhance well-being.
- We celebrate and preserve the cultural, industrial and sporting heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Section 5: Age Friendly Domains

The World Health Organisation has identified eight domains that encompass all aspects of community life:

- ❖ outdoor spaces and buildings
- ❖ transport
- ❖ housing
- ❖ social participation
- ❖ respect and social inclusion
- ❖ civic participation and employment
- ❖ communication and information
- ❖ community support and health services



A brief description of each domain is provided below:

Civic Participation and Employment Volunteering	Training, Employment, volunteering and valuing older people's contributions
Communication and Information	Access to good information, jargon free, access to assistive technology and opportunities for digital inclusion or information in a range of formats where digital is not accessible to individuals.
Community Support and Health Services	Accessible and affordable health and social care which supports older people to remain healthy, independent and active.
Housing	Safe, affordable, and appropriately designed, with low maintenance, and access to the wider community
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Safe, appropriate access. Clean and green, adequate provision to rest, safe pavements, roads, footpaths, cycleways and buildings, which are free from trip hazards. The provision of accessible toilets, including beyond retail hours.

Respect and Social Inclusion	Ageism should not be present, intergenerational opportunities are available, older people are economically included
Social Participation	A good range of appropriate activities which integrate with the wider community, and which cater for a wide range of interests
Transport	Available, accessible, affordable, reliable, integrated, safe and comfortable. Parking, Blue badges, Public and Community provision, Taxis.

Many of these domains will interact and complement one another, often with no clear-cut distinctions. For example, improvements within the domain of outdoor spaces and buildings, such as improvements to roads and pavements to make communities more walking or cycling-friendly will also positively impact the transportation domain. Other examples include volunteering, which has obvious links to Civic Participation and Employment but can equally contribute to other domains including Social Participation and Community Support and Health. Identifying age-friendly domains encourages people to consider an age-friendly community in the broadest sense.

The following sections will explore each of the age-friendly domains further highlighting existing examples of good practice in our communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf, providing a baseline assessment whilst also identifying areas where improvements can be made.

A range of examples are included, some are community led and delivered with local organisations often working in partnership, others are initiated by public or third sector agencies. Good practice community based examples are included, these have been grouped by age friendly domain although often activities will cut across domains and bring benefits in multiple domains. Please note that this assessment aims to give an overview and as such will not detail all age-friendly activity currently available in the area, the [Connect RCT](#) website which is managed by our Community Voluntary Council Interlink RCT, who the council work closely with, details additional examples, including community activities and volunteering opportunities. Alongside the [Dewis Cymru](#) website also acting as a useful resource for the range of local services available. In addition, as this work continues to progress our web presence and an Age Friendly RCT Newsletter will be developed to reflect existing and newly developed examples to showcase the good practice across the age friendly domains which is available in our communities whilst ensuring this information is accessible to older people in a range of formats.

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Older people have economic security, ensuring their independence is maintained.
- ❖ Older people have opportunities where they can continue to utilise their skills and experience, or to build and develop new skills.
- ❖ Older people have opportunities to play an active role in their communities where desired, including socially or via volunteering for example.

Overview

Older people do not simply stop contributing to their communities when they retire, or reach 60 years of age. In Rhondda Cynon Taf many older people continue to provide unpaid and voluntary work for their families and the wider community. Data from the ONS reveals that there are also increasing numbers of older people who remain in paid employment beyond State Pension Age. Given the current economic situation and the increased burden on residents due to the cost of living crisis older people may find themselves delaying retirement and having to remain in work for longer. Welsh Government data on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation confirms that Rhondda Cynon Taf is an area with higher levels of deprivation, with more of our population (27%) living in these areas compared to the Welsh average (19.5%). We have 6785 local residents in receipt of pension credit (UK Government Department for Work and Pensions data), and more than 15% of our residents live in fuel poverty (Welsh Government data). [Welsh Government](#) advise that poverty in later life is often linked to high levels of social isolation and ill health.

For other older people they may continue working because they feel a sense of fulfilment and purpose benefitting from the social connections provided by work, as mentioned others may continue for financial reasons. In an age-friendly community there are opportunities for older people to continue to be part of their community, through paid or voluntary work if they wish. Another feature of this domain is continued learning and training opportunities. Adult Community Learning can be a great means for older people to improve their skills to re-enter the job market, to learn something new or of interest, to provide an opportunity to connect with new people, or simply a means of staying busy during retirement. In Rhondda Cynon Taf more than 820 over 50s enrolled in Adult Community Learning Courses during 2022-23.

Older people bring with them a life's worth of experience and knowledge, something which is often overlooked and underappreciated. Recognising older people's experiences, knowledge and value goes hand in hand with tackling age discrimination which is a priority for the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and underpins the Welsh Government Strategy for an Ageing Society.

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

In Rhondda Cynon Taf there are many opportunities for older people to participate in volunteering or adult learning activities. Older people's groups are supported to take up such opportunities for their members in their own communities as well as at central venues like RCT's LifeLong Learning Centre in Garth Olwg and at sessions facilitated by the [RCT Work and Skills Team](#) who can support older people to access employment opportunities and who also host regular Digital Fridays sessions in venues across the county. Between April 2023 and December 2023 more than 500 individuals over the age of 50 were supported by their programmes. There are also civic participation opportunities for older people via our established 50+ Forums and Older Persons Advisory Group.



U3a opportunities are available in communities across RCT, including Tonyrefail, Aberdare, Church Village and Pontyclun where there are various interest groups available for older people to enjoy, providing opportunities to learn for fun, to explore new ideas, skills and interests alongside like-minded people. Local opportunities include art, history, poetry, languages, book club and craft as well as organised trips and social opportunities for members to enjoy. Recent feedback from U3a members includes: **“You’re never too old to learn, it’s all about mindset – I’m not going to give up just because I’ve reached a certain age!”**

OPAG / 50+ Forums – the Forums meet across RCT in five local communities to ensure older people have the information they need to enable them to live healthy and active lives – providing guest speakers for a range of partnership organisations from public and third sector. These speakers provide advice, support and can signpost to a range of services. The five forums work under the umbrella of the Older Persons Advisory Group which has links with the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, Cymru Older People’s Alliance and the Senedd. OPAG work closely with the consultation team in both the local authority and the UHB ensuring older people’s voices are represented in relevant consultations which affect the lives of older people.

Bryncynon Strategy – in one year 34 volunteers, around 40% of who are over the age of 50, signed up to take on a range of roles and responsibilities, the volunteers are key to the success of this organisation – they are valued, respected and looked after by the organisation, receiving meals whilst on duty, having access to volunteer events, they also receive uniform, so they have a sense of belonging as part of the

team. Volunteers include people of all ages, supporting the generations to work together and bridging the gaps often experienced.

“Volunteering has led to social connections, allowing me to make friends and find out what else is happening in my community. It is also so rewarding!”

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Older people are not always sure how and where they can access volunteering opportunities, especially when they first retire and suddenly have lots more free time and capacity.
- ❖ Older people would like to see more opportunities for digital inclusion training, but often feel excluded as they cannot afford broadband, especially at the moment, when costs are high and broadband is not seen as an essential utility.
- ❖ Carers feel isolated and unable to access opportunities for the things they would like to do.

Section 7: Domain 2: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Continue to provide information in a range of formats to ensure older people are aware of available advice, support, services, events and activities whilst being mindful of those who may be digitally excluded.
- ❖ Continue to facilitate, promote and signpost opportunities for digital inclusion to encourage and support those who do wish to access information in this way.

Overview

Knowing what is happening locally and having access to timely practical information to manage one's needs is crucial for ageing well. The World Health Organisation state that in an age-friendly community it is important to have accessible relevant information for older people who may have a range of capacities and resources. This is so important nowadays when many sources of information have moved to a default digital position. Some older people may be excluded by this approach if they do not have access to the internet, and it is important that information is available in a range of formats to ensure that digital exclusion is avoided. A high proportion of older people in Wales do not use the internet, with only 49% of those aged over 75 included according to data from the National Survey for Wales in 2018-19. This will not only bring challenges in terms of accessing information but can also make it difficult for them to keep in touch with friends and family, making them feel lonelier and more isolated ([Digital Communities Wales](#)).

Age can also be accompanied by a number of challenges including sensory impairment, reduced mobility, frailty or cognitive decline these factors can also bring communication challenges which can impact a persons ability to access information further highlighting the importance of the availability of information in a range of formats ensuring inclusivity to take account of the varying needs of older people.

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

In Rhondda Cynon Taf a significant body of work has been undertaken to promote information about local opportunities for older people, including local groups and activities, as well as raising awareness of relevant services and sources of advice to support older people. The Connect RCT [website](#) is one such example. There are also a range of digital inclusion opportunities available to older people which continue to be promoted for older people to access, these opportunities allow older people to access digital information, services and sources of advice and support. Notwithstanding this, information and access to services is often provided via a range of means and formats, including written resources, telephone-based services and via face-to-face for example local Community and Wellbeing Coordinators based in GP surgeries and other community venues, this ensures older people are in receipt of the advice and support they need. With OPAG being well represented on our Community Support Steering Group and Neighbourhood Networks, older people have direct access to the range of information, services and advice available via the partners present.

Winter Welcome Centres and other community venues are used to provide informal information and advice including on matters such as pension credit, benefit maximisation and managing the rising costs of utilities. These information pop up sessions are a popular way for older people to have face to face conversations with a range of partners who are on hand to provide expert advice and information supporting older people with any issues they may have. These sessions are particularly helpful to those who are unable to access information via digital means.

Local NHS Health Services Directory produced by [Cwm Taf Morgannwg](#) is posted in hard copy to all households in the region detailing how to access the full range of local health services available to residents. This important reference guide supports individuals who may be unable to access this information online.

Local NHS Health Services



How to access local health services

Carers News is a regular publication produced by the RCT Carer's Support Project. This details a full range of opportunities available to carers including sources of advice, information and support as well as social activities, peer support groups and counselling services, many of which are hosted by the **Carers Support Project** based at the Carers Support Project Hub in central Pontypridd. The Project has successfully linked with more than 40 third sector organisations to support their delivery, and are now able to offer a leisure discount scheme, respite offer and emergency card scheme. Many of these initiatives have been developed in consultation with carers to ensure the support offered is of most benefit to individuals in unpaid caring roles taking time to check what is working well, what can be improved and what barriers are faced.

In 2022/23, Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority achieved **Carer Confident Employment** status and is now a Carer Confident Council, introducing a new Carer's Leave Policy and setting up a Working Carers Support Group. The Support Group offers employees information, advice and support through regular events. The policies in place support the needs of unpaid carers working for the Council, enabling them to balance caring responsibilities with their employment ensuring managers apply a consistent and equitable approach to supporting staff with caring responsibilities including access to additional leave, the Carer's Support Project and Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Many older people talk about the challenges of knowing what support and services are available to them, especially regarding support around the cost of living.

- ❖ Older people often talk about the challenges of everything being online, stating that this has become worse since the pandemic.
- ❖ A high proportion of older people (based on the Council's Adult Services annual service user survey) state that they had the right information or advice when they needed it, but our engagement with older people in communities informs us that more can be done to improve this.
- ❖ There is a lack of information available to support those living with dementia.
- ❖ Information needs to be provided via a range of means – online, written resources, word of mouth, signposting – so that everyone has access to information when they need it.

Section 8: Domain 3: COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Continue to provide local health and social care services including non-statutory support in communities which helps to maintain older people's health and independence as they age. Aligning with the Council's Corporate Plan where there is a commitment for people to be able to live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives.
- ❖ Continue to develop services and activities which support those affected by dementia in our communities, together with activities and services focused on prevention and early intervention where simple lifestyle changes as highlighted in the Dementia Action Plan for Wales can reduce the risk of dementia onset.
- ❖ Continue to manage contracts held with community service providers to ensure they remain responsive to the needs and wants of older people.

Overview

The health of a person can impact their ability to work, participate in society and affect their quality of life. Age and health are intrinsically linked, with many illnesses being more common as you age and many conditions increasing in severity as age increases. Older people are therefore at increased risk of poor health, and this can have a greater impact on them. Having access to services is important to maintain health and independence for older people, so they can remain living independently in the communities. Older people can have varied health care needs and preferences. A range of services are required to support the diverse needs of people as they age, such as screening services, clinics, hospitals, respite care, residential and nursing care, home care and palliative care. In order to best support people, the services should be convenient and accessible. For example, locating care homes within residential areas allows for older people living there to remain connected to their community, family and friends. Public services are having to manage increasingly difficult budgets, so there needs to be continued effort to consider alternative approaches to meeting the health and care needs of an ageing society to include increased focus on prevention and support to maintain independence.

2021 National Census data informs us that in RCT we have 32,883 residents providing unpaid care, this is higher percentage than in other areas across Wales (12.6% in RCT compared to 12.1% in Wales as a whole). There are 9389 residents providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care each week. Again, this is a higher percentage than in other areas of Wales (4% in RCT compared to 3.4% across Wales). The role of unpaid carers is hugely valued and it is recognised that carers too may need help and support to continue to care, such as the provision of information, advice or counselling or more practical help for the carer and the person for whom they care.

The Local Wellbeing Assessment informs us that dementia across the local health board region is increasing with a larger rise in Rhondda Cynon Taf compared to Bridgend and Merthyr. According to predictions by Social Care Wales there will be continued significant increase over the next 20 years. By 2040 it is predicted that in excess of 5,190 people over the age of 65 in RCT will be living with dementia.

Data from the Department of Work and Pensions confirms that more of our local residents are living with disabilities and claiming a range of disability allowances, including attendance allowance (14.2% compared to 13.8% for the Wales average). ONS data identifies that the life expectancy (77 in RCT compared to 78 across Wales) and healthy life expectancy here (64 in RCT and 68 across Wales) are both lower than in other areas of Wales. 42% of our population live in health deprivation hot spots which is more than double the Welsh average (19.3%), with more than a quarter of our local residents live with a limiting long term illness (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014).

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

In Rhondda Cynon Taf there has been a great deal of work to develop community support and services to improve the health of older people.

British Red Cross Community Support Service is delivered in RCT and aimed at people over 50. The team works with residents who may be lonely, socially isolated, or where personal resilience, independence or confidence have been impacted leading to an inability or reluctance to engage in activities in their communities. To support individuals trust and confidence is built between the team and service users with the care received centred on their needs and tailored to their circumstances. Each case is reviewed together with service users and their family if appropriate. Support plans are co-produced to ensure needs, preferences and aspirations are identified and supported with individual goals set at the outset and monitored throughout as individuals needs change. The support is individually tailored and may broadly include the following.

- ❖ A listening ear so concerns can be discussed and goals can be set
- ❖ Practical support – for example requesting housing adaptations or carers assessments, or support to attend medical appointments
- ❖ Resilience and confidence building

Individuals can be referred by social workers, health professionals, other organisations, family, friends or via self referral.

Resident Support Services

Strengthened partnership between Single Point of Access and community support services via Community Resilience Hubs allows residents to access good quality information, advice and assistance which support the social prescribing model avoiding the need for statutory social service intervention and ensuring residents receive the support they need in a timely manner through community support. Support is coordinated from the Community Resilience Hubs where residents can ask for support, alternatively via the request for support form online, or by calling the team. Support will be provided by; Council Staff, Community Resilience Volunteers; 3rd Sector and community partners.

Support & Assistance includes:

- ❖ Shopping support within the community
- ❖ Support to find work or receive work related training
- ❖ Information and guidance about money or benefits
- ❖ Information about the 'At Home' library service
- ❖ Information about the Lifeline Plus Service
- ❖ Wellbeing support if you are feeling lonely or isolated or would like to be put in contact with a local Community Group in your area.
- ❖ Wellbeing Assessment – includes a home visit to discuss and record the position of the whole family, including things that are going well and things you may need help with from our Community Partners

Further to this, non-statutory [wellbeing assessments](#) form part of the resident support service, ensuring that the Community Resilience Hubs can document and plan support around an individual's wellbeing needs. This included the launch of a Winter Pressures Pilot with partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Primary Care Team and GP Cluster within the Taf area. Using a multi-disciplinary approach targeted support is provided to patients with chronic conditions through the winter pressure period. Teams within the hub receive direct referrals from Health Colleagues within this area and Community Coordinators follow up with the wellbeing assessments. During the initial pilot period 21 referrals were received with a range of support put in place in response to the identified needs of the individuals receiving support.

Dementia Support Group, Gilfach Goch

Through the local Dementia Listening Campaign and conversations with a range of local partners and residents at Taf Ely Neighbourhood Network meetings to better understand local need and to identify where additional support is required locally, it was identified that there was a lack of provision for those with dementia and their carers.

Feedback included:

“There's isn't anywhere for us to signpost people to locally if they have dementia.”

“There is no support for people with dementia in this area, when my mum needed help there was nothing.”

“There needs to be more help, support and opportunities for carers and more things to do for families who care for someone with dementia.”

“Something informal could work, there are dementia cafes in other areas, perhaps this could be replicated.”

Following this feedback, the Older Persons Coordinator consulted with the NHS Memory Team, Age Connects Morgannwg and the Alzheimer’s Society and a pilot project was initiated to give local people with dementia and their carers somewhere safe to go, where they will be able to access a range of information, opportunities, advice, and support helping people with dementia and their families to better maintain health, wellbeing and social connections.

The project increased local capacity, where previously there was no provision at all, to meet identified need and gaps in dementia provision in Gilfach Goch. The support group now acts as a hub for information and advice, helping people access appropriate local support and more opportunities.

There are regularly 12-16 people attending the group and benefitting so far. They were referred to the group via local partnership working with the relevant groups and agencies.

Feedback has been positive:

“It’s wonderful to have a group like this on the doorstep.”

“It is great to have somewhere locally to come to get support as a Carer and heart-warming to see the delight on my partners face when playing games and making friends with others.”

Specific services run by **Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board** include initiatives which enable older people to remain in their own homes, including the following:

@Home service for frail elderly patients approaching a crisis admission, for example those experiencing frequent or recurrent unexplained falls, acute changes to gait and balance or sudden changes in mobility, challenging polypharmacy with complex comorbidity, unexplained weight loss which is unlikely to be malignancy and patients requiring intravenous antibiotics at home. The service is based at Dewi Sant Health Park and is made up of an interdisciplinary team of Health Professionals aiming to offer an alternative to hospital admission. Patients are referred for assessment which takes place at Dewi Sant or in the patient’s own home, once interventions have been completed patients are discharged to their GP with a full summary.

Stay Well@ Home: The purpose of the service is to keep people safe and supported at home so they do not have to go into hospital unnecessarily. The service is open 7 days a week 8.30am-8pm and provides a direct link to assessment teams (*known as Single Point of Access*) by taking referrals from community health and social care professionals. This includes GPs, district nurses and the Welsh Ambulance Service. If somebody is unwell but does not need to go into hospital, the person’s health or social care professional can ring the *Single Point of Access* team, and a

tailored package of support can be agreed within four hours. This means that the person will receive the right support and care to stay safe in their own home. Adult Services in partnership with Health also has a new hospital discharge service called “**discharge to recover and assess**” to improve patient flow, supporting people to be discharged as soon as they are well enough. This runs along with the Stay Well@Home service.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Those with dementia and their loved ones report that they feel their condition isn't understood, even by GPs.
- ❖ There is no continuity of medical people or places, with older people having to tell their story from scratch over and over again.
- ❖ Travel to hospital appointments can be challenging due to distance, lack of transport and timing of appointments.
- ❖ Older people report that medical terminology feels alien to them and there is too much paperwork to read, understand and complete.
- ❖ Those diagnosed with dementia felt a lack of support was available during initial diagnosis.
- ❖ Those receiving support via dementia cafes, support groups etc would like to see a more frequent offer available.
- ❖ Lack of specific older persons counselling support available.
- ❖ Lack of knowledge about what support is available for unpaid carers, also where to attend which is of interest to both the carer and the cared for.
- ❖ Delays to hospital treatment impacts older people's ability to get out and about for social opportunities which can affect emotional wellbeing.
- ❖ Concern for those who are housebound.
- ❖ Access to GP appointments is challenging with difficulty navigating / long waits associated with automated telephone systems.
- ❖ There are concerns about delays in emergency response when older people fall.
- ❖ Cost of lifeline services can be prohibitive.
- ❖ There is a lack of awareness about lifeline service being available.
- ❖ Carers of those with dementia highlighted a lack of support for them, linked with deteriorating mental health, and being lonely was a common concern for those caring for people with dementia.
- ❖ People say they need access to social groups and peer support service where they can chat to people and socialise.
- ❖ Access to improved financial support was also raised by a number of people.

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Working in partnership to continue to ensure older people have access to safe, warm affordable homes which are suitable for their needs as they age. This may include support to maintain independence to remain in their own homes or to move to alternative accommodation locally ensuring they remain connected to their community, but which may include the need for additional support services to be in place – this support may be in place from a range of sources within the community or via services where needed.
- ❖ Continue to promote the availability of housing support via agencies like Care and Repair.

Overview

Housing is a basic necessity, and human right. The type, location and condition of housing can have impacts on the health, well-being and safety of older people. There are links between housing and access to services in communities which influence independence and quality of life for older people. The World Health Organisation research shows that housing and the availability of support to allow older people to remain in their own homes and communities as they age is something that is valued by many. Good quality housing, which supports older people to remain active, independent, yet connected to their community is key.

More than 50% of the homes in RCT were built prior to 1939 – this can present significant challenges to older people living in these properties. According to *The State of Older People's Housing in Wales* report, from Care & Repair Cymru, vulnerable older adults are at risk of ill health and hospitalisation because of the condition of their home.

Across Wales, over 56,000 low-income older people needed urgent and essential repairs and adaptations to their home in 2022, and it is predicted that figure will rise this year. As Wales has some of the oldest housing stock in Western Europe, with 26% of housing being built before 1919, repairs and adaptations are vital to ensure safety at home. Given the high proportion of older housing stock in RCT this is likely to be of significant concern for older people locally. Recent history with the global pandemic, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, including significant increases in household utility costs which can be particularly challenging for older people on fixed income via their pensions, alongside the UK political and financial uncertainty has created a perfect storm that has led to a decline in housing conditions in the homes of our older generations. This has put agencies like Care and Repair under further pressure with larger caseloads, increased complexity of cases in terms of health and housing needs combined with rising costs for materials to undertake repairs and a shortage of reliable contractors available to deliver services.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that most older people would prefer to stay living independently for as long as possible.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 puts a focus on preventative interventions. In the context of housing and older people, this means ensuring timely adaptations of existing homes, providing information to ensure informed choices can be made, and enabling the availability of a range of affordable, suitable and good quality accommodation types which will assist with prolonging independence for people in later life.

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

A range of housing options for older people are available within Rhondda Cynon Taf. For example, extra care facilities have been developed in recent years. This type of accommodation provides a balance allowing older people to maintain their independence but with support available as and when needed, this is particularly useful as care needs can change with time. Additional accommodation options are available to older people including independent living, traditional nursing and residential settings and sheltered housing. Older people are also supported to remain in their own homes via the services of Cwm Taf Care and Repair.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's ['Plan for Housing in Later Life'](#) sets the direction for the provision of accommodation and housing services for older people, providing a "position statement" so that providers and partners are clear what the accommodation needs of older people are and how the Council would like to see those needs addressed.

The Council's vision is that "people in later life can live independently in their home of choice for as long as possible". In order that this vision can be realised, three strategic aims have been identified.

1. Make available person centred and preventative support to minimise the escalation of critical need.
2. Easily Accessible Information, Advice and Assistance.
3. To enable a range of good quality housing choices that promote independence, prolonged health and well-being.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is committed to providing support for prevention, a choice of provision, accessible information and a tailored, person centred approach to the housing needs of people in later life.

In order to achieve this the following actions are currently being progressed:

- ❖ to increase the number of extra care schemes in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- ❖ to reduce the dependency on residential beds.
- ❖ to increase the opportunities for older people to be able to maintain their independence within their home and the community.

Housing Related Support

Support can help residents to gain the skills needed to live independently within local communities, this is not just having somewhere to live but being able to live there

safe and happily. It can support residents with current or new tenancies and offers supported accommodation. The type of support can include:

- ❖ Support to settle and maintain homes, including managing a tenancy.
- ❖ Support with budgeting, debts (e.g. rent arrears), benefits, managing money and maximising income.
- ❖ Support to develop practical living skills.
- ❖ Signposting and support to link with other agencies such as Drug/Alcohol Services, GP, Mental Health etc.
- ❖ Support looking for work, training, volunteering or finding activities in your local area.
- ❖ Advice on housing issues, arrears, eviction etc.
- ❖ Help filling in forms or reading forms (e.g. letter and bills).
- ❖ Support to move and look for alternative accommodation.

Independent living schemes including Sheltered Housing are available across RCT managed by a range of local registered social landlords including Cynon Taf Housing Association, Newydd Housing Association, Trivallis, Hafod and Rhondda Housing Association. Residents from many of these schemes have stated that they have a lovely friendly community feel about them where everyone is welcome to join in during coffee mornings, bingo sessions and other related activities held in the communal lounges, but that they also appreciate the flexibility offered where it is also an option to spend time alone in your own home on occasions where you don't feel like socialising.

Modernisation of residential care – Extra Care

A £60m capital investment in care accommodation modernisation was agreed by RCTCBC in February 2023, which is on top of the £50m extra care investment agreed in 2017 to increase the number of extra care beds in Rhondda Cynon Taf to 300. Building upon the previously agreed extra care proposals, this modernisation programme will retain five Council care homes and provide major funding for four state-of-the-art new care accommodation facilities in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village. To date, 100 extra care beds have since been created across new schemes in Aberaman (Maesyffynon) and Graig (Cwrt yr Orsaf), plus a new 60 bed extra care scheme in Porth is under construction and new care accommodation for people with a learning disability in Gelli received planning approval in April. Mountain Ash proposals for new development to support residential dementia care (15 beds) and extra care accommodation (25 apartments), with additional accessible later living housing – responding to the demographic needs of the area. This proposed flagship scheme, with combined care accommodation, would build upon the existing state-of-the-art extra care developments in Talbot Green, Aberaman and Graig – which are already established as popular, modern hubs at the heart of their communities. The development further demonstrates RCTCBC's commitment to modernise residential care for older people, to adapt to an ageing population and to respond to the changing expectations of the sector.

The Hospital to Home Service developed in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health board uses a Multi-Disciplinary Team approach with Care and

Repair staff based in hospital settings supporting hospital discharge by addressing housing needs to facilitate timely discharge from hospital and return home for patients who are well enough.

Interlink Wellbeing Coordinators link adults, including older people to sources of support in their local communities this could be to assist them with any social, emotional or practical needs. Support available includes housing, benefits and financial issues, loneliness and isolation, connecting to local groups and activities, volunteering opportunities and accessing specialist services.

Care and Repair provide a range of support to older people via their **dedicated case work team** – taking a person-centred approach to assess the home environment, considering home safety, falls risk, required repairs, adaptations and improvements, warmth, disability support and the specific needs of their clients who may be living with specific conditions including sensory loss, dementia or stroke recovery. Clients are also provided with help and support for benefits checks, advice, information and signposting and can access building advice and the handyperson service to support with simple maintenance and repairs to the home.

Reablement services are available to support people to return to self-care following intervention with a gradual step-down approach in support needed.

Disabled Facilities Grants are a non-repayable grant available to finance the cost of adaptations to properties to be able to aid vulnerable or disabled persons to live independently in their home. Examples, include provision of appropriate toilet and bathing facilities and alterations to improve access to and within the property, e.g. ramps, rails, stair lifts etc.

Care and Repair also provide minor repairs up to the value of £500 via their in-house Handyperson Service and deliver minor adaptations via the “**ENABLE**” programme. The type of work completed would cover:

- ❖ Undertaking minor home repairs which make them safe and comfortable.
- ❖ Preventing health problems caused by poor housing and heating.
- ❖ Preventing accidents, slips, trips and falls from hazardous housing.
- ❖ Undertaking adaptations to housing to minimise the necessity for residential care, hospital admission and facilitate speedier hospital discharge.

Better@Home this free service provided by Age Connects Morgannwg provides short-term support to people aged 50+ who have recently been discharged from hospital. With many of our older residents living alone or with an elderly partner or relative, the return home following a hospital stay and the period of transition can be challenging, with additional support sometimes required. Better@Home can support older residents with a range of services depending on individual need, including help to adjust to life at home, information and advice, and help to regain independence and confidence.

Heat and Save Team provide a range of advice and information services to local residents, including direct engagement with older people at local events and

information pop ups for community groups. The team are able to support residents with access to grants or loans for energy efficiency improvements in homes, impartial and free tariff switching advice, general energy efficiency advice to save energy at home, access to sign up to priority service registers, advice and support for utility debts, and signposting or referrals to key partner agencies for additional support this includes Welsh Government's NEST scheme, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and local foodbanks and food pantries.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Challenge the stigma around Extra Care and other forms of housing for older people to increase understanding of the available types of housing for older people
- ❖ Increased availability of lifetime homes and bungalows
- ❖ Some older people report that they are unsure how to access housing advice

Section 10: Domain 5: OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Continue to work with and support local communities to ensure access to a range of public buildings and open spaces that enable older people to remain connected, taking part in a range of activities and accessing the services they need to maintain their independence, health and wellbeing.

Overview

The outdoor environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of people as they age. In Rhondda Cynon Taf our residents benefit from access to a higher percentage of parks and green spaces when compared to other areas of Wales.

Having outdoor spaces for leisure purposes is important for both the physical and mental wellbeing of all people and research suggests that physical activity in older age can reduce dementia risk and increase life expectancy. Research indicates, for example, that walking helps to preserve cognitive functioning in those with dementia and that by maintaining the ability to get out and about older people retain confidence leading to increased wellbeing. Communities which are accessible with walking routes which are free of hazards will promote and encourage physical activity, which is also important for older people to maintain fitness, mobility, strength and balance and to prevent obesity and chronic disease. In addition, leisure activities and maintaining access to the local community encourages ad-hoc social contacts, which can help to prevent isolation. Age-friendly outdoor environments should

include green spaces, walkable streets, outdoor seating, and accessible buildings incorporating ramps, lifts and stairs with rails. Consideration should also be given to adequate public toilet facilities to ensure that older people can access facilities when needed.

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a wealth of accessible outdoor spaces and buildings allowing older people to connect with their local communities. These include a range of parks and open spaces, leisure facilities including the National Lido of Wales, numerous Leisure Centres as well as community resilience hubs, libraries and local community centres each offering a range of opportunities for older people in respect of activities and services which support their independence, health and wellbeing.

The Local Development Plan 2022 – 2037

Rhondda Cynon Taf is preparing a new version of its Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP is a legal document for RCT, which sets out where new development will take place, what land is protected and planning policies to guide the details of future development through planning applications up to 2037. The process involves revising the LDP and preparing a Preferred Strategy which will soon go to public consultation, this document sets out objectives for the plan and very high level strategic policies, many of which will support:

- ❖ Access to services and facilities
- ❖ Facilitation and provision of transport and community infrastructure
- ❖ Creation of safe and accessible places
- ❖ Development proposals that support the needs of our ageing population whilst considering the needs of future generations also
- ❖ Accessibility of public buildings

Further to this a more detailed Deposit Plan will be produced, this will include detailed policies which are used to make decisions on planning applications. This plan will look in greater detail at the above requirements.

In line with Welsh Government guidance the LDP will seek to ensure that new development is in sustainable locations which reduce the need to travel and cater for the needs of all.

Community Asset Transfers - a process by which communities can own and/or manage facilities that may be surplus to Council need or may otherwise be closed down or disposed of if the Local Authority is unable to fund them any longer.

Community Asset Transfers can support local innovation, community action and resident led solutions and can enable groups to access funding that public bodies may not be able to. It can be a genuine route to empowering and enabling local communities to shape their local neighbourhoods delivering services and activities which are important to each community.

The aims of a Community Asset Transfer from Rhondda Cynon Taf Council are:

- ❖ To encourage local communities and groups (new or existing) to become empowered and active citizens by delivering services and managing local buildings in their communities.
- ❖ To develop capacity in communities and promote shared use of community buildings through a collaborative approach between public, private, voluntary and community sectors.
- ❖ To safeguard and protect valued local spaces, buildings and services for community use and benefit.
- ❖ To maximise social value i.e. the value of importance that people place on the positive changes they experience in their lives.

We have many examples in RCT where groups have transformed and revitalised former Council buildings and spaces and used these assets to deliver services which support people's health, wellbeing, learning and prosperity. Groups have worked with funders, public sector teams and voluntary sector support agencies to bring about positive change for local communities, including scores of older people.

One local example is at **Lee Gardens Pool** in Penrhiwceiber where the local pool is now in community ownership with the help and support of dedicated volunteers. These volunteers have developed a whole range of opportunities for the local community including a Knit and Natter group, gardening activities, training, art clubs, food support, a local history project, table top sales alongside opening up the pool to residents during the summer months. The success of the organisation has recently been recognised with the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.



A common concern regarding the outdoor environment raised by older people locally is regarding obstructed pavements due to parked vehicles. Welsh Government are currently reviewing existing legislation so that authorised officers can issue fixed penalty notices for vehicles obstructing the footway (**Welsh Pavement Parking Taskforce**). In addition Welsh Government have recently introduced legislation for a national **default speed limit of 20 mph** in residential areas, this promotes and supports safer walking routes enabling older people especially those with mobility issues to get around and to cross roads safely.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's **Community Resilience Hubs** aim to bring together a wide range of services, information and support to one location. Each of the hubs have a

range of facilities which may include Library Provision with associated meeting and education rooms, Gym, Resident Support, One4All, Public Access Computers, Employment Advice, Community Learning, Local Payment Point, Citizen's Advice, accessible public toilets and changing place facility.



In addition to these key Hubs, there are a number of smaller, informal often **community run hubs** across the local authority area. Many of these venues, including **Café 50** and **Bryncynon Strategy** support older people by hosting a range of activities, groups and classes as well as providing opportunities for a warm, safe space and time for socialisation and meeting with friends.

There are a range of **Community Gardens and Woodland Projects** available across RCT, these provide opportunities for outdoor activities like food growing and gardening, and are hosted at locations such as **Meadow Street, Grow Rhondda**, and the **Arts Factory. Welcome to our Woods** also offer a range of opportunities to stay active in the outdoors and socialise with other like minded people, these include: walking activities for a range of abilities, woodland therapy, Walking Rugby and Cold Water Therapy.

Our local **Leisure Centres** offer a range of physical activity opportunities which are suitable for older people, these include Low Intensity Circuits/Aerobics, Mobility and Balance, Chair Aerobic, SuperAgers Boxercise, SuperAgers Yoga, Aqua Aerobics, Swimming and access to the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS).

There are also a vast array of local community sports clubs and activities available including numerous Bowls Clubs, Walking Rugby, Walking Football, Petanque, Cricket, Golf, Walking Netball, Cycling Clubs, Walking Groups, Running Clubs, Tennis Clubs, Triathlon Clubs and Fishing Clubs.

Local Parks offer opportunities to stay active in beautiful surrounding, including at Park Runs in Aberdare and Pontypridd with opportunities to volunteer at these events also.

Work is underway to implement a revised [Local Toilets Strategy](#) in RCT. The strategy will seek to promote and enhance the range of existing provision available across the county borough ensuring local residents and visitors including older people are aware of locations where they can access toilet facilities and that those facilities are accessible to their needs.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Challenges with parked cars obstructing pavements making walking safely difficult especially for those with walking aides and mobility scooters and wheelchairs.
- ❖ The condition of pavements and drop kerbs are often challenging for those with mobility issues especially for those with walking aides and mobility scooters and wheelchairs
- ❖ Lack of public toilets, or awareness about where they are located
- ❖ Loss of high street banks, everything going “online”
- ❖ Loss of local shops in town centres – not everyone wants to shop online
- ❖ Dog mess
- ❖ Access to buildings and considering those with mobility issues
- ❖ More seating along walking routes
- ❖ Having a place to go where older people are made to feel welcome
- ❖ Parking close to venues, especially in built up areas is difficult.

Section 11: Domain 6: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Continue to champion and celebrate the contribution of older people in our communities, promoting a range of opportunities for them to be involved including activities and projects, especially those which allow for intergenerational participation.

Overview

In an age friendly community people of all backgrounds are enabled to actively participate and are respected regardless of their age, leading to greater inclusivity. Intergenerational activities can help to facilitate this where different generations come together to share experiences and skills and learn from one another. In many communities’ older people are valued and respected. Unfortunately, however there remain some negative stereotypes and connotations around ageing with ageism being a factor faced by some older people. Changing perceptions of ageing and of older people with active, positive images can help to dispel these stereotypes and connotations. It is also important that older people remain actively involved in any decisions affecting them.

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a range of opportunities for older people to ensure their ability to be included socially and centrally within communities upholding respect for them in society. Including many opportunities for intergenerational activity where the

generations are brought together benefiting both old and young to share experiences and learn from one another. Older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf also play an active and key role, contributing to policy and decision making via our well established 50+ Forums and Older Persons Advisory Group.

A number of local **Dementia Friendly Communities** have been established across Rhondda Cynon Taf, with recent local interest in developing additional communities to support those living with dementia. These include communities in Maerdy, Pontypridd, Tonypany and the newly launched Dementia Friendly Treorchy where the local Rotary are working with town centre partners to increase awareness and understanding of dementia to better support those living with the condition. This community also work closely with a group based at St Matthew’s Church who meet regularly providing a range of social opportunities for those affected by dementia, these include regular intergenerational activities with the local primary school who they have an established partnership with enabling meaningful and sustained intergenerational engagement which brings benefits for both old and young.

Intergenerational activities are also facilitated by a number of local community groups and organisations including the Arts Factory, Gilfach Goch Community Facility and Pontypridd Museum and Town Council, where recently they hosted the local 50+ Forum members and a local primary school for a show and tell providing an insightful and enjoyable session for all involved. Other activities include those which support digital inclusion and heritage sessions where older residents are able to share their knowledge with younger people locally. Many of these activities challenge ageism with people from different generations sharing a common interest and participants commenting that “age is just a number”!

Have your Say Day was recently held locally, facilitated by our local CVC Interlink RCT, where residents were encouraged and supported to come forward to provide feedback on their Care Treatment Plans.

HAVE YOUR SAY DAY!

Tell us about your care and treatment plan (CTP)

When: 26th October 2023 Time: 1pm to 5pm

Where: Pontypridd Museum, Bridge Street, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taff, CF37 4PE

Contact: Shaun Parfitt (07511829985)
E-mail: sparfitt@interlinkrct.org.uk

Refreshments . Public transport expenses refunded.

Cannot make it on the day?

Scan the QR below to complete the survey and have your voice heard.

Council Care Home Residents are encouraged to provide comments and feedback through resident meetings and comments/suggestion boxes. This feedback has resulted in menu updates, changes to entertainment and activities offered and being involved in decision making regarding colour schemes and redecoration of facilities.

The introduction of **Magic Moments** in older people's day services has allowed for the capture of examples of service user experience in these settings. This ensures users have a feeling of a sense of value and purpose, and captures successes of working together to achieve personal goals and outcomes.

Magic Moments' at Cwmni Dda

Cwmni Dda has been supporting a man who had experienced life changing events. His wife had died and following this, he decided to move in with his daughter. The change in his living circumstances combined with a progression in his dementia meant a change to his social activities, which centred around going out to pubs and live music events which he enjoyed attending with his wife. The remaining family did not have the capacity to provide this level of support and he could not attend independently.

Initially when attending Cwmni Dda, he found it difficult to settle. Filling in his life history with the team, he told them that he was a musician and had travelled nationwide with a band that were very successful.

As a result, staff were able to access a guitar for the 'music corner'. The man picked it up but struggled to play at first, however, staff encouraged him to persevere and over a series of visits, he managed to tune the guitar and started to play recognisable tunes. Staff observed that he was starting to move to the rhythm and tapping his feet and it was evident that he was quite a showman! They have continued to encourage him, and he has now progressed to taking requests for specific tunes.

This has been a very positive outcome, enabling the man to pursue an activity that appears to have given him a new sense of purpose. It has also enabled him to settle in at Cwmni Dda. From a health perspective, encouraging him to use hands, has enabled him to retain dexterity and the ability to co-ordinate his movements. so encouraging activity can help to retain skills for longer.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Increased opportunities for intergenerational activity across the RCT area, older people are keen to share their knowledge and experience but don't always have the opportunity to do this
- ❖ Growth in dementia friendly initiatives to increase awareness
- ❖ Available activities which are dementia inclusive
- ❖ Older people want to feel part of their communities
- ❖ Some older people report that they don't feel listened to
- ❖ Ageism feels like a barrier – not all venues feel welcoming for some older people

Section 12: Domain 7: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Continue to support opportunities for social participation for older people across our communities, via local groups, organisations and clubs and ensure older people can access these opportunities via suitable promotion. Support local organisations to access funding to sustain these activities for the ongoing benefit of older people.

Overview

Participating socially and having social support around you is important for good health and wellbeing at all stages of life. Being able to participate in leisure, social, cultural and worship activities in communities, and more closely with family, allows older people to maintain important relationships and support networks. Conversely an older person lacking in social connections can have poor health and wellbeing, becoming socially isolated and lonely. Social connections can also be important for older people to access the wider community with older people who may be facing mobility and access issues relying on family or friends for help. Being involved in community activities can increase connections and lead to feelings of belonging in a community, this is something that is strongly felt in close-knit valleys communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf and something that came through richly during our engagement work.

The Age UK Loneliness index confirms that there is a higher probability of loneliness for the over 65s in RCT (-3.6) than there is across other areas of Wales (-3.8).

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

There are a vast range of opportunities for Social Participation available to older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf supporting them to remain connected to friends, family and the wider community which in turn maintains their health and wellbeing. Many of these opportunities are delivered on a local basis supported by a range of funding streams which sustain the local groups and organisations involved in delivery.

Funding opportunities including those via the RCT Together Community Development Team from Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC. Funding accessed by older people's groups and organisations includes the UKG Shared Prosperity Fund RCTCBC Community Grant, Neighbourhood Network Fund, SPF Community Micro Grant, Food Support Funding, Community Dementia Prevention Programme Funding, Community Facilities Grant and the Winter Hardship Fund. Many of these funds support a range of age friendly activity but most importantly provide a host of opportunities for older people to socialise close to home among friends and loved ones, these groups have often been established by dedicated older people who volunteer and deliver for their fellow older people in communities. These social opportunities provide support to individuals which combat feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Bryncynon Strategy's Listening Project was established initially as a befriending project to support isolated lonely people who were unable to leave their homes during the pandemic, the project has since grown and developed to provide a wealth of support and opportunities to local residents including a hot meal service to 120 recipients delivered to resident's homes accompanied by a call to take orders which is discreetly also a friendly check-in to assess individual's wellbeing and any need for support or intervention. In addition regular activities are held at the venue for local residents to take part in. These include social opportunities, information events from partner organisations, including Pension Credit advice from Citizen's Advice Bureau, games like bingo and tombola, tea parties, musical and exercise-based activities alongside food support for those in need via the established Food Pantry. Recent developments now include healthy cookery sessions, chair yoga, kurling and a lunch club which now has over 30 members including many older men who enjoy a hot meal and some male company. Local residents talk of the benefits of attending and recent feedback includes:

"The food pantry is really good value and helps with the cost of living. It's also a social thing. I never went anywhere as it was too expensive to go out. Now I have met new people, I'm not stuck in the house and I come to everything here".

There are a range of opportunities for **Singing and Choir Groups**, including Singing for the Brain sessions, and Song Therapy at the Jolly Good Group at Café 50, Pontyclun. These sessions provide opportunities to participate in community music and movement making and are led by a trained song therapist. The workshops involve an array of musical activities and low movement dance or gentle exercise, including rhythm games, lyric writing, exploration of melodies, and appreciation of traditional Welsh and English classics and good old fashioned music-hall singalong around a piano. Sessions support cognitive retention, social engagement and inclusion, encourage speech retention and boost mental health and wellbeing.



There are a number of local **Men's Sheds** in the area, including at Pontyclun, Porth, Tynwydd, Ynysybwl, Hirwaun and Pontypridd. The **Pontypridd Men's Shed** was established to provide social activities for men in the local area. The group provides an opportunity to meet new friends, enjoy new hobbies, learn skills and share experiences. The aim of the group is to prevent loneliness, reduce social isolation and improve mental wellbeing of those attending providing a space for men to talk and share together. The group meet twice a week at their base in Treforest and again for a third time each week in Pontypridd itself.

Local Churches in the area also host a range of groups and activities for older people including **St. Fagans Church** in Aberdare who host Tea and Toast weekly and Caffi Cinio, which is a weekly two course lunch followed by range of activities like quizzes, bingo and singing for just £4.00. **Providence Church** in Ystrad also host weekly sessions to bring older isolated residents together for social opportunities with a wide range of different activities to suit all interests. **Acts Community Church** in Tylorstown host Café Croeso, and Memory Lane Dementia Café, together with a regular Walking Group, Warm Hub, Choir, and opportunities for worship. **Salem Chapel** hosts their Shalom Café weekly offering a safe space where local people can meet to enjoy the company of others over a hot drink. They host informative guest speakers, music, cookery and craft sessions alongside light-hearted quizzes. Many other local churches across the county support the local authority with Winter Welcome Centres providing a warm space, with hot drinks and snacks and a chance for social participation with other local residents.

There are scores of **Community Groups** for older people in communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf. The groups vary in size and format but they all provide invaluable support to local residents, affording older people a host of opportunities to be in the company of others to help reduce isolation and loneliness. One example are **Fernhill and Glenboi over 60s** who meet weekly at their venue in Abercwmboi where they enjoy regular afternoon tea and entertainment, Tai Chi, guest speakers and trips to the theatre.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Older people want access to social opportunities in their local community
- ❖ Improved promotion of opportunities so older people understand what is available to them
- ❖ Older people talked about missing traditional community events like tea dances, going to chapel and snooker halls
- ❖ Sustained funding to support activities when something is working well and providing social opportunities for older people
- ❖ Some groups feel too large and overwhelming, making it difficult to connect with individuals and make friends
- ❖ Groups talk about the frequent difficulty in engaging older men in their social activities
- ❖ Some older people need support to access social opportunities, befriending etc

Section 13: Domain 8: TRANSPORT

What is our Shared Age Friendly Vision within this domain?

- ❖ Continue to work with partners to promote the services that are available, whilst also raising the issues older people face when transport services fall short of their needs, working with these same partners to explore opportunities for improvement where possible.

Overview

Transport, including accessible and affordable public transport, is a key factor for older people. Having the ability to get and about to access shopping, medical appointments, visit friends and family, or for social activities is crucial to ensure older people can participate and access services they need to maintain their health and wellbeing. Rhondda Cynon Taf like other similar communities in South Wales faces significant challenges given the geography and topography of the county making access via high sided valley streets to local bus and rail services running along the valley floors challenging for older people especially those with mobility issues. An age-friendly transport system should provide accessible, appropriate and reliable transport services which encourage people to maintain their mobility and independence, and allowing older people to maintain their social connections as they age. Such a system would need to include accessible and reliable public transport, demand responsive from the door services, and passenger support for those who need it.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf we have 23600 pensioner households and 10480 of these households do not have access to their own car. This presents significant challenges for older people getting out and about to access services, shopping and social activities.

What is working well in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Community-based examples

In Rhondda Cynon Taf there are a range of local transport services available these can provide a much needed lifeline to older people to ensure they are able to access services, retail, health and social opportunities. Alongside services older people often share that they receive kind help from friends, family and neighbours who provide them with lifts so they can get out and about.

Community Transport is provided by a number of local partners including **Accessible Caring Transport** operate services in the Cynon area including the demand responsive Range Rider Dial-A-Ride service, the Route 68 service covering the area between Abercynon and Aberdare which can be accessed free of charge using the concessionary travel pass and the PCH Hospital Visiting Service to support those with family or friends at Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr Tydfil so they can attend during visiting hours in the evenings Monday- Saturday.

Accessible
Caring
Transport

Visitor Transport

Monday to Saturday pick up at **5:30pm** and returning from **Prince Charles** at **8pm**.

This scheme is available to residents living in the Cynon Valley area wishing to visit friends and family at **Prince Charles Hospital** during the evenings between **6pm – 8pm**.

**Monday – Saturday
between
5:30pm – 8pm**



To book your journey please call **01443 478013** between **8:00am and 3:00pm** on the day before travelling. **Answering machine bookings will be accepted during out of office hours.**

There is a charge of £3 per passenger, however children under 11 years and concessionary bus holders can travel free.

Book early to avoid disappointment!

For more information on this service, or our other services call **01443 478013** or visit us online www.accessibletransport.co.uk

**Registered Office: 4 Knight Street, Mountain Ash, RCT, CF45 3EY
Charity No: 1072933 | Company No: 2730904 | VAT No: 615790430**

Other local providers include **Travol** who are primarily based in the Taf area providing demand responsive services in and around Pontypridd and Talbot Green. **Village and Valleys** services cover areas of the Rhondda supporting sheltered housing tenants in Maerdy and Ferndale to access the local area, with transport for Care Home residents for organised trips, and a twice weekly service in the Treorchy and surrounding area picking up older people allowing them to access services, shopping and social opportunities in the town centre.

The **Concessionary Travel Pass** which is available to all residents over the age of 60 in Wales, before the national retirement age of 67, and provides good access to local towns but often those with mobility challenges or those who live away from the main bus routes struggle to access services.

The **Fflecsi Bus** service operates locally in Hendreforgan, Tonyrefail & Dinas, Porth and Wattstown. This partnership service with Transport for Wales, Stagecoach and the local authority provides a different way to travel by bus, customers can book on the fflecsi app or call when they need to travel, they choose their pick up and drop off points and are met at their chosen pick up point and dropped off at their requested

location. The service runs a daytime zone service from 08:00 - 12:15 and then from 13:00 until 17:15 in the afternoon, the evening zone service runs from 19:00 - 23:30. Both zones run between Monday and Saturday and can be booked up to 7 days in advance.

The **South Wales Metro** developments continue to progress, the ambitious project will create improved access to an integrated network of travel benefiting local communities and residents.

Areas for further development

Through engagement with our local communities, residents have told us these things could be better and these are the things they would like to see developed under this domain:

- ❖ Older people want access to services and social opportunities locally in their own communities to reduce the need for transport
- ❖ Transport is something that is a challenge for many in our local communities but potentially older people feel particularly impacted by when they may not have alternative means of getting around due to mobility issues or having given up their driving license and access to a car.
- ❖ Significant decline in frequency and reliability of bus services post pandemic leaving older people unable to access services, retail and social opportunities
- ❖ Lack of services in the evenings - "it's like we are not allowed a life after dark"
- ❖ Lack of knowledge around availability of community transport provision
- ❖ The loss of street buses has impacted older people's ability to get out and about with many older people unable to access the main bus routes.
- ❖ Could volunteer drivers support with a community car scheme like in neighbouring areas – is this something that could be developed.
- ❖ Improved transport is needed to support independence and older people's ability to access health, social activities, shopping and services
- ❖ There is a lack of bus drivers to run services
- ❖ Fflexsi bus is reported as not being flexible enough and not well promoted.
- ❖ Withdrawal of bus services leaving entire communities and their residents isolated and unable to access anything outside of the immediate area
- ❖ Challenges for older people to access main road bus services due to steep side streets combined with mobility issues

Section 14: Rhondda Cynon Taf's Ongoing Commitment to Older People

It is hoped that this plan demonstrates our ongoing commitment to older people across Rhondda Cynon Taf, in support of our application to join the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. Together we continue to commit with our partners to:

- ❖ Listen to the voices of a diverse range of older people and consider these in developing priorities to take forward the Age Friendly Communities agenda across the county borough.
- ❖ Enable older people to secure and uphold their rights at times when they may be vulnerable.
- ❖ Recognise, value and respect the contribution older people make in their communities in terms of their knowledge, skills and experience and allow them opportunities to share this with others.
- ❖ Support the creation and development of resilient communities, community networks, community facilities, buildings and outdoor spaces which allow for support of older people.
- ❖ Deliver services on a local basis, working with community partners, wherever possible.
- ❖ Support those living with dementia and their loved ones, including via local dementia friendly communities to ensure individuals and families feel included and connected to their communities and have access to information, advice and guidance they need.
- ❖ Support older people to participate, contribute to and access a range of opportunities as active citizens, including volunteering and continued learning which maintain and enhance their wellbeing and can be accessed in their local community.
- ❖ Ensure older people including carers are in receipt of advice and information needed to maintain their wellbeing and independence via a range of means, this may include support to access digital information or working with groups and organisations who support individuals. Organisations may require funding support to sustain themselves for the benefit of their members, ensure they are signposted and supported to access funding opportunities.
- ❖ Support and promote the range of local community transport options available to older people and encourage older peoples voices to be heard in terms of the challenges faced so that service improvements can be considered where possible.
- ❖ Support and promote a range of opportunities for social participation for the benefit of older people to reduce loneliness and isolation.
- ❖ Support older people to remain safely in their communities with their established network of support around them as they age by providing suitable housing options, including extra care, modernised residential care, lifetime homes or by supporting them to remain in their own home, living independently for as long as possible.

Section 15: Contributors

Rhondda Cynon Taf would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions of all partners in this work, notably as follows:

- ❖ Older people living in RCT
- ❖ Older Persons Advisory Group
- ❖ RCT 50+ Forums
- ❖ Older Peoples voluntary community groups
- ❖ Various internal Services and teams from across RCTCBC
- ❖ Age Connects Morgannwg
- ❖ Cwm Taf Care & Repair
- ❖ The Ageing Well Team at the Older People's Commissioner for Wales
- ❖ Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- ❖ Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board
- ❖ Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board
- ❖ South Wales Police
- ❖ South Wales Fire & Rescue
- ❖ Interlink RCT
- ❖ Transport for Wales
- ❖ British Red Cross
- ❖ Accessible Caring Transport
- ❖ Travol
- ❖ Village and Valleys Transport
- ❖ RCT Citizen's Advice Bureau
- ❖ Local Registered Social Landlords including Newydd Housing, Trivallis, Cynon Taf Housing, Rhondda Housing Association, Hafod and Linc Cymru
- ❖ Department of Work and Pensions

World Health Organisation: Application for membership of the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

Process to be recognised as an age-friendly community

Section 1: City / Community Details

Name of city / community

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Region or state

Wales

Country

United Kingdom

City / community's population size

237, 658 (2021 Census Day)

%age of residents over the age of 60

24.4% (2021 Census Day)

Are you applying via membership of one of the Network's affiliated programmes?

Yes, via Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Section 2: Commitment towards becoming an age-friendly city / community

Letter of commitment from the mayor

Attached

Mayor's name and title

Councillor Andrew Morgan,
Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Email of the Mayor's office

Andrew.Morgan2@rctcbc.gov.uk

Address of the Mayor's office

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
2 Llys Cadwyn
Taff Street
Pontypridd

Section 3: Designation of contact person for the Global Network**Title**

Mrs

First name

Hannah

Last name

Watson

Position

Older Persons Coordinator

Role in city / community's age-friendly initiatives

Local Authority Lead Officer for Age-Friendly Communities

E-mail address

Hannah.L.Watson@rctcbc.gov.uk

Telephone number

07799 132179

Section 4: Description of your age-friendly activities to date

Please provide a brief summary (250-300 words) of your city/community's policies, programmes and services targeted at older people and how you are planning to make it more age-friendly.

The summary must be in English.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) the Local Authority is proud to support and value Older People, working in close partnership with other agencies and organisations since 2004. Following the development of [The Strategy for Older People in Wales](#), the appointment of an elected member as Older Persons Champion, a dedicated Older Persons Coordinator was appointed to develop this area of work, funded by the Local Authority continuously reaffirming the commitment for improvement. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's signed the [Dublin Declaration](#) in 2015, which was the first and significant formal step to committing to developing Age Friendly communities. This was further complemented with the support of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) which overarches five local 50+ Forums which were developed from 2004 and continue to thrive today acting as a key voice of older people in our local communities and feeding directly into our engagement work in support of an Age Friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This work continues to be a priority for the Council and its partners, supporting Welsh Government's vision to create an age friendly Wales. A range of partners from public, voluntary and third sectors are engaged via the established Community Support Steering Group where together they can consider the needs of older people and work in partnership to identify and address issues of concern, developing age friendly solutions which support community resilience across RCT.

In 2021, the role of the Older Persons Coordinator was refocussed onto ensuring integration was assured for older people in terms of the RCTCBC Community Resilience Hub, Neighbourhood Network and Community Grant model.

At the current time there are seven Community Resilience Hubs that each reflect a recognisable community in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Community Resilience Hubs and Neighbourhood Networks work with communities to deliver improved public services that are joined up, efficient, coordinated and located close to the point of need, in line with the legislative requirements of the Welsh Government's Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

The integration of Age Friendly Communities has seen increased membership of Older People's groups, such as 50+ forums, within Neighbourhood Networks. Neighbourhood Networks have a fair, proportionate representation of Older People's groups within these forums which ensures Older People's voices are heard, considered, and acted upon.

Members of the Neighbourhood Networks have access to a suite of grant funding that is set aside for not-for-profit community groups. These grants support local activity and encourage participation and innovation. Community Grants, both large and small, are available throughout the year. Older People's groups are supported to apply, manage, and report on community grants

in a way that is bespoke to individual circumstances. This is especially important where group leaders are digitally excluded.

Working together these arrangements have increased local capacity, including within the voluntary and third sectors, via a combination of additional staff, community facility improvements, activities and services to meet identified need and mitigate against gaps in provision. This has reduced demand on health and social care provision, by encouraging greater personal independence of residents and building capacity and resilience within communities.

Please provide a picture (skyline or logo) to illustrate your age-friendly activities



If you have a dedicated web page on your age-friendly activities, please include it here. If not, indicate your city or community website.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/RCTTogether/RCTTogether.aspx>

(specific link from the RCT Together page is to be developed – this will showcase up-to-date Age-Friendly services/initiatives/activities)

If you have already conducted an age-friendly baseline assessment of your city/community, please upload it.

Attached:

- **Appendix A - Baseline Assessment Links**

If you have already developed a strategy of action plan to make your city/community more age-friendly, please upload it.

Please refer to:

- **Appendix B - “Working Towards an Age Friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf”** this details an assessment of existing provision, engagement information and forward vision including Rhondda, Cynon Taf’s Commitment to Older People

Section 5: Engagement of older people

How are you engaging and involving older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly city/community

Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG)

Older People are engaged via the OPAG and five local 50+ Forums representing different areas across RCT. This provides a platform to provide details on the range of provision, identify good practice, gaps and opportunities for improvement which will help to inform our action plan. These forums which have in excess of 300 members are also linked with other groups such as the Neighbourhood Networks.

Neighbourhood Networks

Neighbourhood Networks have been established geographically across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Neighbourhood Network membership include community stakeholders including community groups and service providers. Neighbourhood Networks meet monthly to have conversations, share good practice and resources and identify and plan actions against locally identified need. OPAG and the 50+ Forums have been encouraged and supported to join Neighbourhood Networks, which has ensured that Older Peoples voices are being championed and heard when local delivery plans are being made.

Neighbourhood Networks have attracted new membership particularly from older people’s groups as a result of the suite of available grant funding opportunities, which includes: Neighbourhood Network Fund, Winter Hardship Fund and the UKG Shared Prosperity Fund

RCTCBC Community Grant. Many of these groups were successful in securing funding enabling them to run projects for the benefit of older people in their local community, including a range of Winter Welcome Centres in communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Underrepresented groups

Some underrepresented groups of older people, for example those living in residential care often feel that their voices are lesser heard when compared to the wider community. In the hope of including these often-lesser heard voices in our engagement activities work is underway to develop links with key partners to overcome this.

These partners include staff from our Accommodation Services, Extra Care facilities and partners in the Housing sector including Care and Repair and Registered Social Landlords with sheltered / independent living schemes for older people. Opportunities have been explored to build on existing engagement activity to capture relevant information and utilise it for the purposes of Age Friendly Communities to better understand the needs of the older people who form part of these underrepresented groups.

Public Events and Day to Day work of Community Development Team

Engagement with Older People is led by the Older Persons Coordinator with support from the Council's wider Community Development Team. The team works closely and supports a range of local community groups for older people.

The team utilise engagement opportunities at public events including those organised for International Day for Older Persons, and events which supported national [Dementia Action week](#). Specific consultation materials have been developed for Age Friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf to engage with older people and facilitate conversations about Age Friendly Communities.

This includes focussing on the eight domains which are essential in the development of age friendly communities, allowing community members the opportunity to talk about the things in their local area that help and support them to age well, and also about the things that need to improve to make the lives of older people better in their communities.

Section 6: Cross-sectoral collaboration

What mechanisms have you / are you planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different departments of the local administration and across sectors?

Community Support Steering Group (CSSG)

The CSSG is a partnership of key stakeholders and partners involved in providing services to local communities across RCT. This includes Council departments such as Adult Services, Children's Services, Community Services, South Wales Police, Registered Social Landlords, University Health Board, Citizens Advice, Interlink RCT, Third Sector, DWP. This group provides a key mechanism for engagement with partners for collaborative planning and implementation sharing in the vision of an Age Friendly RCT.

Neighbourhood Networks

Neighbourhood Networks are established geographically across RCT. Neighbourhood Networks are made up of local community groups and service providers from that particular area. This allows for Age Friendly discussions to be had on a locality basis both in terms of understanding existing provision and also in developing actions to overcome identified gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Dementia Care Pathway of Standards Workstream 1

The workstream group for this Dementia Standard focuses on community engagement to better understand what dementia care and intervention looks like in our region. The listening campaign undertaken in two local communities has provided a wealth of information which has been utilised to improve experiences for those living with and affected by dementia locally. The group is made up of representatives from across the health board region, including colleagues in health, local authorities and the third sector, this provides opportunities for regional collaboration and sharing of best practice.

Section 7: Participation in the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

What motivated your city/community to become a member of the Global Network?

We wish to celebrate our older population in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Rhondda Cynon Taf is an excellent place to live well and age well. Global Network status would recognise this. We are committed to ensuring that older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are able to enjoy the opportunities this success brings.

By being equipped to meet the challenges faced with ageing and ensuring that older people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, can access the support and services they need to thrive and to remain active and healthy.

We also hope that being part of this network will help us to continue to strengthen increased partnership working between key public bodies and third sector agencies with a shared view to enable older people to remain valued and active participants within local communities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council want to encourage our older population to live full and healthy lives and be able to participate and contribute to their communities. We believe that Age-Friendly communities create the conditions within which people can age well, adding life to years – not just years to life.

How do you hope to contribute to the Global Network?

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council hope that by joining the Global Network this will allow us an opportunity to shine a light on the existing good practice in place in our county to support older people, and that other communities in the network can benefit from this shared learning, whilst also allowing us an opportunity to learn from them.

Joining the network will allow us to fulfil the commitment made when signing the Dublin Declaration (in 2015) to support the development and growth of age-friendly communities.

Being part of the network will also allow for opportunities to work with similar communities across the world to develop innovative and practical approaches to age-friendly community development, to welcome and promote innovation, inspire action, and to empower older people. Ensuring they understand their legal rights and how they can exercise them to make their voices heard and challenge poor practice.

Rhondda Cynon Taf hope that by becoming members of the network we will contribute to inspiring change across the global network, ensuring older people across the globe remain valued and active participants in community life.