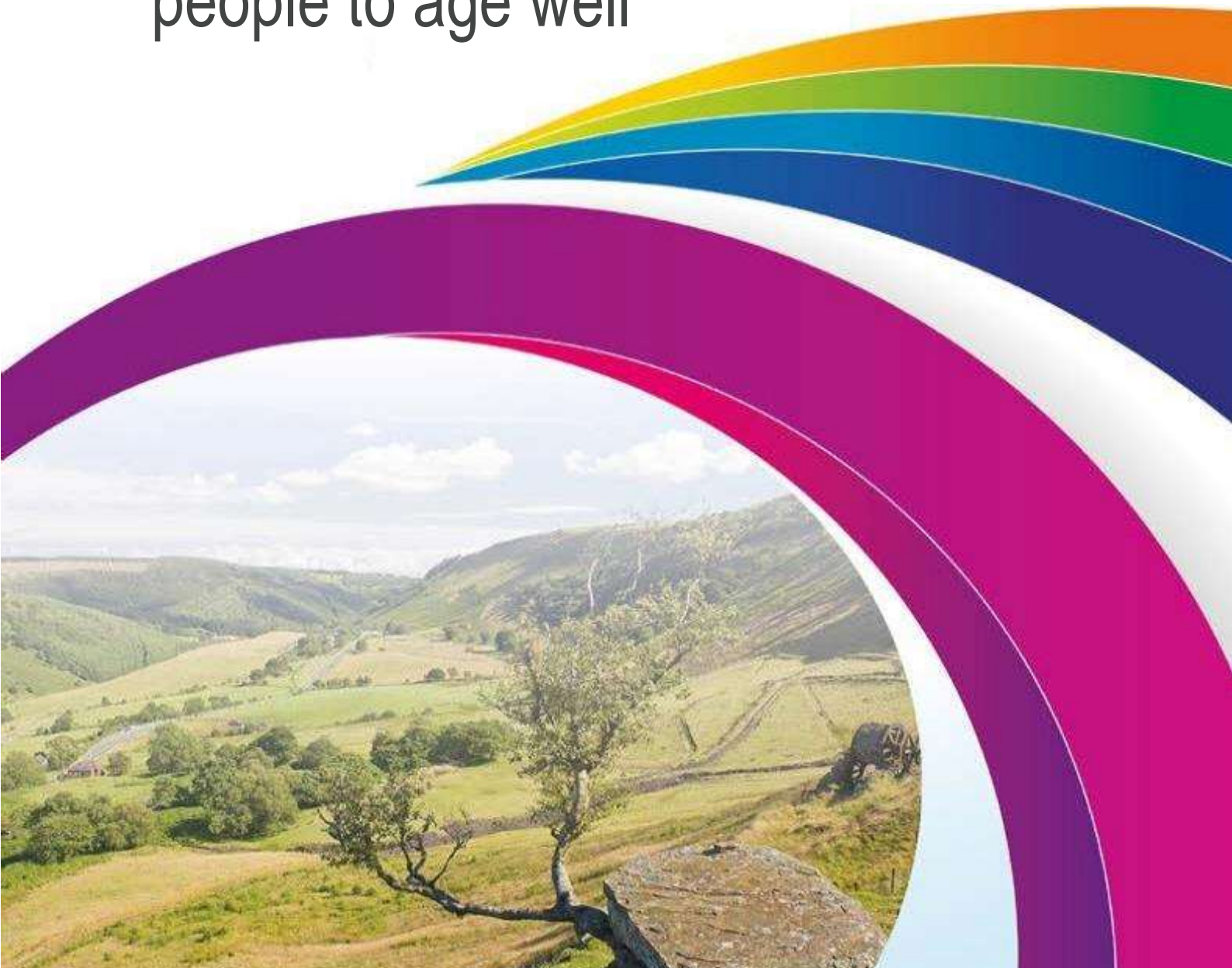




BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

# Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent 2021-24

A safe and friendly place for  
people to age well







BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD



This document is available electronically at the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board website and is also available in hard copy at each of Blaenau Gwent's local libraries.

If you would like to receive a copy of this document in another format please contact:

**Policy & Partnerships**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Civic Centre  
Ebbw Vale  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP23 6XB



**Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**

This document is available in Welsh





BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

# Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board Partners





# Blaenau Gwent

## Age-Friendly Partners



# What is in this document?

Foreword	1
Background	2
Introduction	4
Social Participation	8
Respect & Social Inclusion	11
Communication & Information	13
Community Support & Health Services	15
Outdoor Spaces & Public Buildings	17
Civic Participation & Employment	19
Transport	21
Housing	23
Digital Inclusion	25
Action Plan	27
Looking Ahead	35



# Foreword

We are delighted to present the first Age-Friendly Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent that demonstrates our commitment to making our communities age-friendly, particularly given the difficulties faced by older people during and beyond the Covid19 pandemic.

We recognise we are beginning our age-friendly journey in-line with the objective in the 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' Well-being Plan to create safe and friendly communities for people of all ages.

As a partnership, there are a number of key projects, programmes and services available locally, and also regionally, that aim to improve the physical, social or economic well-being for people of all ages across Blaenau Gwent, but particularly as they age.

Some key information on this work is captured in this document. The Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent Action Plan also sets out our vision for how Blaenau Gwent can become even more age-friendly in future as we recover from the social and economic impact of the Covid19 pandemic.

We are really optimistic about us continuing to work together with all partners to help deliver our age-friendly vision for our wonderful area.



**Cllr Nigel Daniels**

**Chair of the Public Services  
Board & Leader of Blaenau  
Gwent County Borough Council**



**Stephen Tiley**

**Chief Executive of GAVO & PSB  
Age-Friendly Communities  
programme Sponsor**





# Background

The Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) published its five year Well-being Plan 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want' in May 2018. The Plan was the result of a comprehensive engagement programme of involvement and collaborative work to develop a coherent approach for delivering social, economic, physical and mental well-being across Blaenau Gwent.

It prioritises five key well-being objectives set out below to take forward in order to bring about positive change for local people and communities:-

## Blaenau Gwent We Want Well-being Objectives

1	Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life...	Ensuring early years of future generations are healthy, happy, free from harm and ready to succeed.
2	Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities...	Creating safer communities, where people feel safe and have good social connections, are socially responsible and have a good cultural life.
3	Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its natural environments...	Creating a vibrant area that lives in harmony with its natural environments, using resources in a fair and sustainable way.
4	Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity...	A place where people thrive and achieve their full learning and lifelong potential.
5	Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play.	A place where people live longer with better health, a place where healthy behaviours is the 'norm'.

Although life in Wales has changed considerably over the last year, the focus and vision of 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want' Well-being Plan remains relevant and very important to achieve.

The Covid19 pandemic showed us how communities can come together and support each other, the third sector's ability to flex and adapt its services to meet individual need and the commitment and resilience of professionals who care for the most vulnerable members of our society.

The physical, social and mental well-being of all Blaenau Gwent residents has been a key priority for all public services providers during the Covid19 pandemic. Services were adapted immediately and lessons were learned quickly to ensure households needing help with advice, shopping collections, prescription deliveries, or simply someone to talk to were supported effectively.

Action to support our communities was a collaborative effort between local and regional partners, as well as being preventative in nature through signposting residents to the appropriate help or advice services at such a difficult time many people.

We have seen a significant impact of the pandemic on older people throughout Blaenau Gwent. Some people have become more and more isolated due to new challenges like shielding, travel restrictions, reliance on digital technology for communicating with family and friends, and the closure of regular group meetings and activities.

The purpose of this Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent plan is to ensure that future generations of older people are well equipped for later life by highlighting the challenges faced by today's older generations and secure a commitment from public service providers and local partners to continue to develop age-friendly communities across the borough.

It is hoped that the vision for age-friendly communities highlighted throughout this document will enable public service partners to integrate and embed age-friendly practices into strategies and ways of working across all sectors, making it easier for older people to connect with people, their communities, and the local economy as we look beyond the Covid19 pandemic.





## INTRODUCTION



By 2040, it is expected that 1 in 4 people in Wales will be 60 or over. Blaenau Gwent, like the majority of the UK, has an overall population which is ageing. Generally, this is because less people are being born than previously, and those people that are alive are living longer.

In 2019 (latest available data), 20.3% of the Blaenau Gwent population were aged 65 or above, which is more or less in line with the Wales average of 21%. However, the proportion of people aged 65+ in Blaenau Gwent has risen from 17.5% in 2011. By 2030, it is expected that the proportion of people aged 65+ in Blaenau Gwent will increase to 25%.

According to the Welsh Government's 2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) (latest available data), Blaenau Gwent is the local authority area with the highest percentage (44.7%) of its Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 20% in Wales. 85.1% of the LSOAs in Blaenau Gwent are in the most deprived 50% across Wales.

This means that many people in the area may not be able to afford to use public transport to get out and about or take part in regular social activities. Local people reported during the Blaenau Gwent [Well-being Assessment engagement programme](#) that the cost of public transport was already too high.

Lack of affordable transport can lead to social exclusion, loneliness and isolation amongst older people, which has a negative impact on mental and physical health and can prevent people from becoming more involved in their local community.





However, local people identified community spirit and the people that live within our communities as a particular asset to Blaenau Gwent as part of the PSB's Well-being Assessment. The outcome of this engagement programme, as well as additional consultation with older people through the 50+ Forum and age-friendly steering group has informed parts of the Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent programme.

Making our community more age-friendly does not need to be difficult or complicated. There are lots of examples of age-friendly activities, programmes and best practice already happening within our communities across Blaenau Gwent.

Age-friendly places are communities where age is not a barrier to living well and where the environment, activities and services support and enable people to:

- have opportunities to enjoy life and feel well;
- participate in society and be valued for their contribution;
- have enough money to live well;
- feel safe, comfortable and secure at home; and
- access quality health and care as we age.

The concept of AFCs was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as part of a global initiative to identify the changes needed for cities and communities to adapt to and benefit from ageing populations.

AFCs make life better for all people who live in a community, particularly as they age. They recognise lonely people in the community and encourage activities that people of all ages can participate in. Decisions on what it means to be age-friendly sit closer to local communities; ensuring local people have a voice based on their own lived experiences. Being age-friendly means designing our communities and services *with* older people, not just *for* them.

The eight domains of an AFC identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) are:-



Set out below are the eight domains of an age-friendly community as defined by the WHO in 2007. This Plan outlines why each of the eight domains, plus an additional one in Digital Inclusion, is important for us in Blaenau Gwent as well as what we can do, and what we're already doing, to help make our local communities more age-friendly for all.

These nine local domains represent opportunities for the AFC programme to demonstrate integration with other PSB programmes that deliver against the other Blaenau Gwent We Want well-being objectives.





## SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

---



## **What is social participation?**

Being able to interact with others, take part in social activities, and stay connected with friends and family.

## **Why is social participation important?**

Social activity and relationships with friends or family greatly contribute to quality of life in terms of practical and emotional support. Participating in leisure, social and cultural activities helps to keep older people integrated within society and enables people stay engaged, informed and motivated to take part in activities for which they are valued and needed.

This has been particularly difficult for so many during the Covid19 pandemic due to people having to shield, travel restrictions, and a reliance on digital technology to stay connected with friends and family.

The 50+ community's participation in social activities helps prevent loneliness and social isolation. One in five people in Gwent report feeling lonely, whilst data from the Cognitive Function and Ageing Study Wales found that 25.3% of people aged 65 and over in Wales reported being lonely and 26.9% socially isolated. It is therefore important that there are a range of opportunities available locally for people of all ages to get out and about, take part in activities, see friends and family and meet new people.

Intergenerational activities are mutually enriching and fulfilling for all groups: older people pass on knowledge, traditions and experience whilst young people may help older adults with new technologies and ways of working, for instance.

## **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

Ensuring safe and friendly communities where people of all ages can feel safe and secure to participate in a variety of social activities. This should include people with limited access to transport or internet facilities who must be provided with opportunities to participate in events and activities.

The continued development of community hubs at local community centres and public buildings should allow people of all ages to access the information they need, as well as opportunities to gather, meet like-minded people, take part in activities, and feel like they are a real part of their local community.



# RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

## What is respect and social inclusion?

Mutual respect between generations and an understanding of the positive contribution that older people make and have made to society.

## Why is respect and social inclusion important?

Negative preconceptions of ageing still exist within our society, which is why the Older People's Commissioner for Wales is making tackling ageism and increasing respect as one of the priorities in her [Strategy 2019-22: Making Wales the best place in the world to grow older](#).

Public attitudes, behaviours and representations of older age can result in the potential marginalisation and exclusion of older people, potentially exacerbating loneliness and isolation problems amongst older people. Ageism and social exclusion prevent older people from feeling valuable in their communities. It can also prevent society from feeling the benefits of older people's experience and knowledge.



There can be a lack of involvement of older people regarding decisions that concern them. If we want to maintain relevant and adequate services for older people, they have to be consulted throughout the thinking, the designing and the development processes. The examples in the What's Happening in Blaenau Gwent section below demonstrate how this is already underway.

Age-friendly communities must also recognise and respect the contributions made by local armed forces veterans, many of whom are over 50.



Blaenau Gwent's **Armed Forces Covenant**, signed by the council and many other local and regional partners, pledges that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.



## Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent

A place with a sense of community where we look after our neighbours in times of need, demonstrate strong community cohesion and **social interaction between different generations**. Older people have a say on the decisions that matter to them via engagement through local fora, like the 50+ Forum and others.

Young people learn about Blaenau Gwent's local history and share their experiences of the Covid19 pandemic so that they can better understand the sorts of challenges faced by older generations.

# COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

---

## What is age-friendly communication and information?

Staying connected with family, friends, news, events and activities through accessible and practical information.

## Why is effective communication and information important?

Staying connected with others is a key part of active ageing. As part of the Well-being Assessment's engagement programme, people identified how close knit our communities are in Blaenau Gwent, with local people always willing to help each other out. This suggests that there is already a positive flow of information between local people and communities, but improvements can be made to ensure people of all ages are aware of news and events relevant to their local community.

Technology, for instance, can sometimes contribute to social exclusion as not all older people will possess a good understanding of computers and the benefits of new technologies.





In Blaenau Gwent, the existing resources and programmes outlined in the Case Studies section below are already in place to address any communication issues and make the availability of information more age-friendly for all.

Access to information and advice can keep people healthy and active and prevent needs from escalating. In planning for an ageing population, effective and easily accessible information and advice is a priority.

## **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

New and effective ways of sharing information with the older community are readily available through community hubs, the internet, and community groups and are regularly updated.

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES

---

## What are age-friendly community support and health services?

Accessible, affordable and conveniently located health and care services, with adequately trained staff and a wide variety of services offered for people of all ages.



## Why are community support and health services so important?

Access to community support and affordable health and care services is strongly connected to good health and well-being throughout life. Age should not be a barrier to this.

Integrated, preventative, person-centred services help improve quality of life and reduce pressure on public health and social care services. This approach can also help people with long-term health conditions to live independently, access community and voluntary activities and services, and provide live-in carers with the support they need to maintain their own physical and mental health and well-being.

The 2011 Census showed that 28% of Blaenau Gwent's population at the time had a limiting long-term illness or health problem. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest level in Wales, much higher than the national average of 23%. As at 31 March 2016 (latest available data), Blaenau Gwent had the second highest rate of people aged 65 or over whom the local authority supports in care homes per 1,000 population.

Statistics from the 2016/17 national Population Survey showed that significantly above average levels of disability continues to exist in Blaenau Gwent, with a total of 31.6% of local working-age people being defined as disabled compared to a national average of 22.8% across Wales. This demonstrates that making our local



health and care services age-friendly is particularly important for communities across Blaenau Gwent.



## **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

Good, accessible and conveniently located health and care services for a wide range of physical and mental health conditions are available across Blaenau Gwent.

People should be able to receive general health and well-being advice, help and support away from traditional health services to reduce the need for GP or hospital visits.



# OUTDOOR SPACES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

---

## What are age-friendly outdoor spaces and public buildings?

Well-maintained and well-lit walking routes, clear signage, safe road crossings, green spaces and accessible public toilet facilities all contribute towards accessible age-friendly communities.

## Why are outdoor spaces and buildings important?

Outdoor spaces and the built environment are key elements to whether a place supports or hinders physical activity and health and well-being. They impact upon the availability and accessibility of services, social participation, independence, and quality of life for older people as we go about our daily lives beyond the comfort of our homes.

Clean and safe communities with well-maintained and plentiful recreational areas, rest areas, safe pedestrian routes and accessible buildings provide an ideal age-friendly living environment. This encourages people of all ages to better use outdoor spaces and help them participate and interact with other residents. Adapting urban outdoor spaces can also be beneficial for attracting new older tourists to the local area.





## Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent

New and existing green open spaces are utilised for health and well-being activities to make it easier for people of all ages to get outdoors and get active. Accessible public toilets and pavements free of obstructions to enable people with buggies and wheelchairs to actively travel easily.



# CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

---

## **What is age-friendly civic participation and employment?**

Aspects of community life that extend beyond people's routine activities, such as volunteering, part and full-time employment, becoming politically active, or taking part in local community groups.

## **Why is civic participation and employment important?**

For people of all ages to participate in employment and civic activities, the social and economic contribution that older people can make to their community, e.g. through employment or volunteering, must be recognised.

Active involvement in voluntary activities or work is fulfilling for everyone. It provides satisfaction, has a positive impact on health and well-being, and keeps people socially engaged whilst enabling society to benefit from young and older people's knowledge and experience, strengthening the intergenerational relationships in the population and offering lifelong learning opportunities.

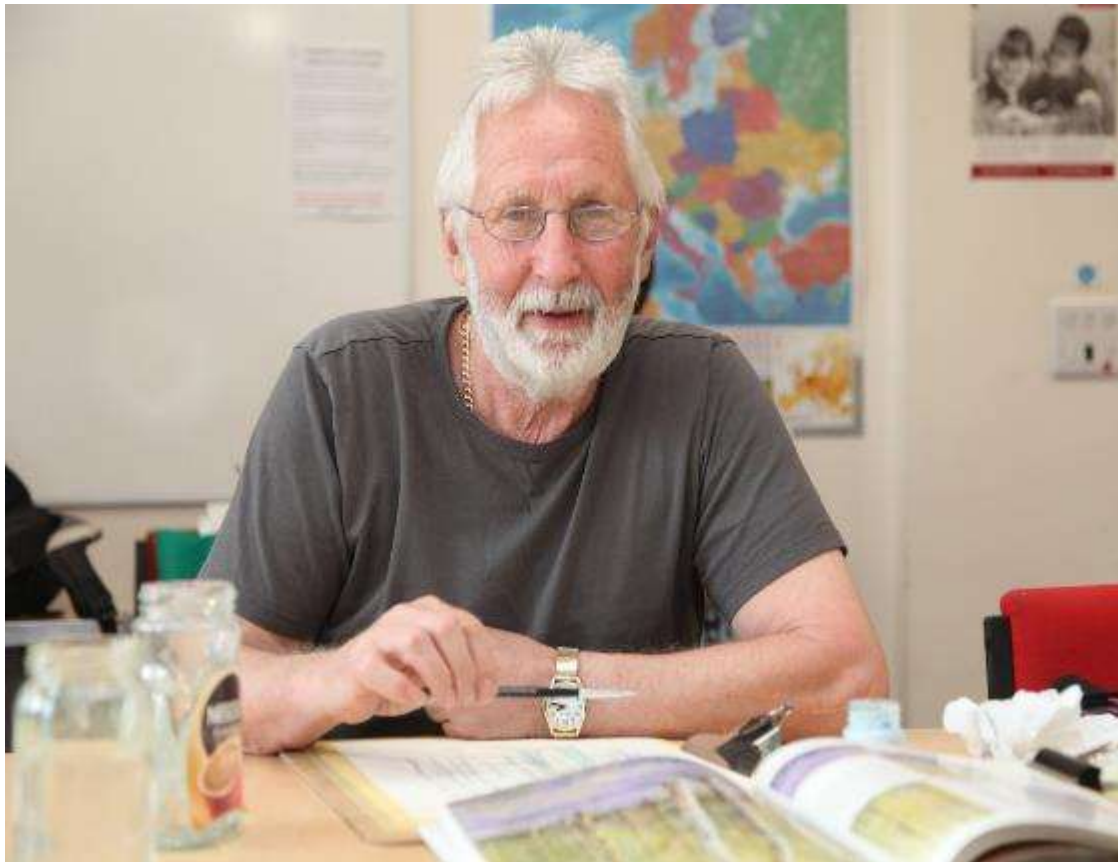
Age discrimination in the workplace still exists across Wales, as highlighted by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales in her [2019-22 Strategy](#). Improving employers' positive attitudes towards retaining and recruiting older workers would help ensure equal employment opportunities for all ages and better knowledge transfer opportunities that benefit younger workers.

A mapping exercise undertaken in Blaenau Gwent in 2012 showed that older people are involved in a very wide range of roles, from supporting lunch clubs to legal work, from reading in schools to supporting people in prisons. Nationally, 12% of volunteers are people aged 80 and over.

On average, 42% of volunteers across Blaenau Gwent were 50+. Welcome Friends (formerly the Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme) said 95% of their volunteers were older people. Many other volunteers under 50 carry out



voluntary activities across Blaenau Gwent that support or benefit the 50+ community.



## **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

For a wide range of volunteering, learning and employment opportunities available to older people that utilise their expertise and help them to support themselves, their families, their communities and the wider Blaenau Gwent economy.



# TRANSPORT

---

## What is age-friendly transport?

Affordable, reliable and convenient transport options for those with mobility issues and people who do not drive or do not have access to a car.

## Why is transport important?

As people age, their mobility patterns change, particularly later in life. The availability of accessible and affordable public transport is essential to ensuring that older people are able to age actively, remain engaged with their communities, and can access local amenities and services such as shops and health centres.

Transport is key to enabling older people to live independently and again helps to prevent loneliness and isolation by increasing a person's ability to visit family and friends. Driving conditions, taxis and parking facilities should also keep older drivers in mind considering private cars and taxis are often the only solution for older people living in rural areas like Blaenau Gwent.

30% of people within Blaenau Gwent do not own a car. In contrast, 85% live within half a mile of a bus station. Public transport provision is therefore very important for social inclusion and active participation in the community for older people without a car, impacting upon their access to social activities and employment and learning opportunities.

As well as public transport, community transport also plays an important role in enabling local people with mobility issues to enjoy a greater level of independence. Community transport services can help those who have difficulty getting out and about to do the ordinary things in life that others may take for granted, such as shopping, visiting family and friends, hospital and GP appointments, or attending social events. The role of voluntary community transport drivers should also be properly acknowledged and supported.

## **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

The PSB recognises the importance of the mandatory concessionary fares scheme reflecting the wider demographic changes that are taking place across Wales in terms of an ageing population and an older workforce. However, the Welsh Government's proposal to increase the eligibility age for free bus passes in accordance with the women's pensionable age does not align with our vision for an age-friendly Blaenau Gwent.

The scheme is and will continue to be integral for social and economic mobility amongst older people in Blaenau Gwent. It provides people over 60 on low incomes with opportunities travel to work, visit family and friends, and take part in social activities without the burden of transport costs.

Decision makers must be mindful of the impact increasing the eligibility age could have on loneliness and isolation amongst older people.

We want to see a Blaenau Gwent with more regular transport links to shopping hubs and employment opportunities; a reliable bus service that enables older people to travel easily at a reasonable cost; Well-kept, accessible road crossings, pavements and public transport hubs; and enhanced community transport provision to support vulnerable people and people with mobility issues stay connected.



# HOUSING

---

## **What is age-friendly housing?**

Appropriate and affordable housing with a choice of styles, tenures and locations that incorporate flexibility through adaptive features.

## **Why is housing and accommodation so important?**

Most people want to age in a place of their choosing where they feel valued as a part of the local community. Sufficient, affordable, adaptable housing and relevant support services that allow people to age safely and well in later life is essential to people's sense of safety and well-being.

We all become increasingly at risk of unintentional injury and falls in the home as we age. Falls in the home are estimated to cost the NHS more than £2.3 billion per year, so it is important that housing and accommodation designs reduce this risk for people of all ages, especially as we get older.

One indicator related to falls amongst older people is the number of recorded hip fractures. In 2017 (latest available data), the rate of emergency admissions for hip fractures in Blaenau Gwent was 612 per 100,000 population, higher than any other in Gwent and well above the national average of 579 per 100,000.

Information on the different housing options available can also be difficult to find. An age-friendly community supports people to make decisions about where they live and how to adapt their homes as we get older, enabling us to stay nearer the people and places that mean most to us.

## **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

Affordable, accessible, adaptable and energy-efficient housing that is of a sufficient quality standard for people of all ages, particularly for older people with any additional needs as they age.

People are able to live in their home as independently as possible, for as long as possible as they age, by receiving the support necessary to find solutions that work for them.



# DIGITAL INCLUSION

---

## What is digital inclusion?

Digital Inclusion looks at ways of improving the access to the internet and digital technology for those who are still excluded or have a limited access to the digital world, enabling people to stay connected with friends and family and take part in their hobbies and interests online.

## Why is Digital Inclusion so important?

We know being online can make a significant difference to people's lives. Digital inclusion can also reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness by helping individuals stay in touch with friends or family and other support networks.

10% of the population of Wales (300,000 people) are digitally excluded. These are likely to be older, less educated and in poorer health than the rest of the population. Digitally excluded people are some of the heaviest users of health and social care services, so risk being left behind in the digital health revolution.

In summary, digitally excluded people are likely to be:

- **Older** – 40% of people over 75 use the internet, compared with 97% of 16-49 year olds.
- **Have a disability or long term condition** – 74% of people with a disability or long term condition use the internet, compared with 90% of those without.
- **Less skilled** – 53% of those with no qualifications use the internet, compared with 95% of those with higher education qualifications

Due to the COVID19 pandemic and the importance of supporting people who are still struggling with internet access and lack of digital technology, it was decided by the PSB, 50+ partners and stakeholders that the promotion of existing and introduction of new digital inclusion programmes is essential to help older people or anyone unfamiliar with I.T. to stay involved with their hobbies and interests during and beyond the COVID19 pandemic.



Promoting volunteering by working with partners could also develop more opportunities for people to volunteer as befrienders and/or digital inclusion trainers.



During the COVID19 pandemic, many activity groups in our community have been paused or closed down due to COVID restrictions. Some of them continue to engage and run via virtual platforms. This however highlighted issues with Digital Exclusion, as well as sight and hearing problems faced by older people, which quite often make it hard or prevent them from participating in online activities. This represents a real disadvantage with people increasingly feeling left behind, as more and more services, including vital public services, go online.

### **Our Vision for an Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent**

Developing digital skills amongst our communities can lead to greater economic opportunities, a more equal society and improved socio-economic development, whilst reducing the impact of loneliness and isolation by enabling people to stay more connected with one another online.

## ACTION PLAN

The Age Friendly Action Plan 2021 – 2024 contains actions that will enable communities to work towards the aspirations set out within this Strategy. The actions with this document are constantly under review, including proposed leads and potential support organisations, and will be updated and added to over the lifespan of the Strategy.

OUR FIRST YEAR				
Age-Friendly Theme	Action	What difference will it make?	Which partners are involved in shaping, supporting, and delivering it?	When will it be done by?
ALL	Develop a Post-COVID Age-Friendly Audit via the Age-Friendly steering group, involving key partners in the mapping of current/future services and support available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will shed more light at the most affected groups and services in our community and what actions needs to be taken to reinstate/organise them again as soon as possible.</li> <li>Our focus is shifting towards creating safer and functional Post- COVID future/community ?</li> </ul>	GAVO BGCBC ABUHB Aneurin Leisure Trust Police & Crime Commissioner's Officer BG 50+ Forum Other e.g. community groups, local service providers	December 2021

	<b>Deliver a Blaenau Gwent Participatory Budgeting programme that involves and benefits people of all ages.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involving members of public in the decision-making process will allow people of all ages to have their say on ways to improve well-being in their local community.</li> <li>The PB programme aims to help our communities recover and emerge from the Covid19 pandemic.</li> </ul>	ABUHB BGCBC GAVO NRW Tai Calon Aneurin Leisure Trust 50+ Forum Community Groups	March 2022
	<b>Review of mechanisms for engaging with older people during and beyond the Covid19 pandemic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New ways to engage with the 50+ community virtually and in-person will enable PSB partners to shape the way they deliver their services for the benefit of older people.</li> <li>Sharing best practice with community groups and activity/event organisers could help to reduce/combat loneliness amongst older people.</li> </ul>	PSB Engagement Sub-Group	March 2022
<b>SOCIAL PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>Develop and improve the governance structures of a newly constituted Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possibility of creating new, more accessible opportunities and activities for 50+ citizens.</li> <li>A wider network connecting older people, giving them the opportunity to interact with each other, during and after the COVID19 pandemic.</li> </ul>	GAVO  50+ Forum r	December 2021
	<b>Encourage the promotion of new and existing digital inclusion or community I.T. training programmes adapted to the needs of older people.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help older people or anyone unfamiliar with I.T. to stay involved with their hobbies and interest during and beyond the Covid19 pandemic.</li> <li>Promoting volunteering by working with partners could develop more opportunities for people to volunteer as befrienders and/or digital inclusion trainers</li> </ul>	50+ Forum  Integrated Well-being Network Digital Inclusion Steering Group  GAVO	March 2022

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in partnership with Adult Learning Wales, it will be possible to deliver targeted digital inclusion sessions with community groups at their usual local meeting place.</li> <li>Improving access to and availability of (virtual) activities/places to meet to tackle loneliness and isolation, keeping in mind issues that people with hearing and visual impairment may face during those activities.</li> </ul>	BGCBC Adult Learning Wales Age Cymru	
<b>SOCIAL PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>Ensure the availability of a sustainable Telephone Befriending Support Service beyond the Covid19 pandemic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important source of support, guidance and general contact with outside world for many members of our community, especially older people.</li> <li>Funding to keep these Services up and running needs to be maintained as the loss of this type of support could have a big impact on vulnerable people.</li> <li>Case studies present a strong need to continue a Telephone Befriending Service as well as evidence of support given to those who need it and even successful fraud prevention.</li> </ul>	GAVO ABUHB Volunteering Matters Age Cymru Gwent Other Third Sector partners	March 2022
	<b>The Aneurin Leisure Trust to develop a range of activities within its facilities which are attractive and beneficial to older people e.g. walking football.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing people with more opportunities to take part in their hobbies and interests in a safe, local environment.</li> </ul>	Aneurin Leisure Trust	March 2022



TRANSPORT	<b>Deliver an Integrated Responsive Transport (IRT) programme for Blaenau Gwent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new type of public transport that will introduce flexible bus routes and pre-bookable journeys that interconnect with rail and other commercial routes, developing more demand-responsive transport will make it easier for people to plan journeys door to door.</li> <li>• Buses do not stick to a set route, allowing them to respond to the demand on the day, and people can book a journey through an app, online booking, or via telephone.</li> <li>• Concessionary Travel Card holders travel free. Other adult fares start from £1 up to a maximum of £3 for log journeys. Children can travel for as little as 50p (maximum £1.50 for longer journeys) – more info here: <a href="https://www.fflecsi.wales/locations/blaenau-gwent/">https://www.fflecsi.wales/locations/blaenau-gwent/</a></li> <li>• The project is also working with Job Centre Plus aiming to improve access to employment for those without access to a car, whilst also making it easier and cheaper for people to stay connected with friends and family, go shopping, and take part in their hobbies and interests.</li> </ul>	Welsh Government  Stagecoach  BGCBC  Job Centre Plus	June 2022
	<b>Community Transport – pilot schemes and volunteer car schemes with Transport to Health project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blaenau Gwent currently has no community transport schemes in operation. The ABUHB funded Transport to Health project has grants available of up to £10,000 to enable community transport operators to develop new services, enhance existing ones and engage in new partnerships to help residents access health settings to attend appointments or to visit loved ones.</li> <li>• Community Transport will provide residents with more accessible and inclusive transport options.</li> </ul>	GAVO  ABUHB  Community Groups	March 2022

<b>HEALTH &amp; COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>PSB Integrated Well-being Network programme for Blaenau Gwent to continue to develop more effective ways to support community well-being in Tredegar &amp; Brynmawr.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care, treatment, advice and support services to be provided as close to home as possible.</li> <li>Improving access to information and advice through a set of age-friendly principles established via engagement with local older people and their representatives.</li> </ul>	ABUHB  PHW  IWN Well-being Friends	March 2022
--	---	--	--	------------

## OUR LONG-TERM GOALS

Age-Friendly Theme	Action	What difference will it make?	Which partners are involved in shaping or delivering it?	When will it be done by?
<b>HEALTH &amp; COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>Encourage more local organisations and businesses to become Dementia Friendly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of more dementia-friendly environment will allow all members of our community to equally participate in a daily life and activities / widen social inclusion for people living with dementia</li> <li>More support and diversity for carers and families impacted by Dementia.</li> </ul>	Alzheimer's Society  Gwent Regional Partnership Board Dementia Friendly Coordinator	2023/24
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>Work together with local and regional partners to improve the experience of disabled and older passengers and ensure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More community transport initiatives will enable people with mobility issues to get out and about more and enjoy a greater level of independence. This will also greatly contribute to combating isolation and loneliness issues, especially among older people. Some community members feel like they've been forgotten about because</li> </ul>	GAVO  Welsh Government  BGCBC	2023/24

	<b>public and community transport is accessible and addresses social isolation.</b>	<p>they have no means of transport or there are great limitations in accessing public transport (lack thereof) now and pre-COVID.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making community transport options as sustainable as possible to protect the environment via electric or low emission vehicles.</li> <li>• Improving accessibility – working with Transport for Wales to ensure its investment across all rail stations in Wales for step-free access, better waiting rooms, shelters, toilets, lighting and seating. Transport for Wales is also improving the services it offers to people in need of assistance on their journeys.</li> <li>• Community transport to health services is essential for the well-being of those who have no other means to attend health appointments or visit family/friends in hospital sites across the health board area.</li> </ul>	Transport providers	
<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>Work in partnership to encourage delivery of affordable, quality homes that meet the needs of all people as we age.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working closely with the health, social care and housing sectors as well as Regional Partnership Boards to deliver a scalable programme of capital investment to ensure housing plays a significant role in the work of the Boards</li> <li>• Supporting the growth of new housing models that support people to age well. This will include contemporary sheltered housing and extra care housing</li> <li>• Consider opportunities for better training for housing / supported living staff to better understand the needs of older people.</li> <li>• Promote the types of home adaptations and home safety visits available to older people.</li> <li>• Ensuring older people have equal access to good quality, timely adaptations that support their independence, regardless of housing tenure.</li> </ul>	<p>Tai Calon</p> <p>United Welsh</p> <p>Linc Cymru</p> <p>Melin Homes</p> <p>BGCBC</p>	2023/24

	Use the promotion of new and existing digital inclusion opportunities to support older people with sustainable tenancies and reduce social isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible whilst maximising their opportunities to stay connected with friends, family, and housing support services.</li> </ul>	Tai Calon United Welsh Linc Cymru Melin Homes BGCBC	2022/23
OPEN SPACES & BUILDING AREAS	Ongoing consultation with older people regarding the accessibility and walkability of walkways and public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and development of routes that support people to walk and cycle to where they want to go.</li> <li>Ensuring our built environment is safe and age friendly, improving availability of public toilets, re invigorating our town centres</li> <li>Development of Safe Open Space Public Activities, once COVID restrictions are lifted, will encourage people to safely participate and enjoy social events.</li> </ul>	Aneurin Leisure Trust BGCBC Sustrans Welsh Government	2022/23
	Increase opportunities for outdoor recreation and use of natural spaces through increased active travel routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased exposure to natural environments and improved access to local green spaces</li> </ul>	NRW Gwent WLT BGCBC Local Community Groups	2023/24



<b>CIVIC PARTICIPATION &amp; EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>Promoting digital literacy and re-skilling of older workers, lifelong learning opportunities, and encouraging employers to consider their corporate responsibilities by supporting employees to volunteer.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting people to stay in jobs and helping them find work through a new £40m fund to support anyone 16 or over to access advice and help to find work, increase their skills, qualifications and employability, secure an apprenticeship, a job or to start a business.</li> <li>Working with partners to ensure older workers' skills and employment needs are actively considered and employers are encouraged to retain, train and recruit older workers</li> <li>Promoting and actively encouraging age friendly workplaces across a range of sectors.</li> </ul>	Aneurin Leisure Trust  GAVO  Welsh Government  BGCBC	2022/23
	<b>Wider range of employability programmes which are helping people to build their skills and enter sustainable employment.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting local communities and the most vulnerable members by lunching EU Transition Fund Food Poverty Grant as a part of Sustainable Food Programme.</li> <li>Introducing a new employability advice service delivered by Careers Wales which secures enhanced advice and guidance and provides individualised support for those facing barriers to work.</li> <li>Increasing take up of pension credit and Investing in Wales' foundational economy would provide more opportunities for older people to prosper</li> </ul>	BGCBC  Tai Calon  GAVO  Welsh Government	2023/24

# LOOKING AHEAD

---

## How will Blaenau Gwent become more Age-Friendly?

An Age Friendly borough must:

1. Establish mechanisms to involve older people throughout the Age Friendly process.

Older people and stakeholders from organisations who work with and/or represent older people will be involved through PSB partnership working via the PSB's Engagement Sub-Group, the Blaenau Gwent Integrated Well-being Network, the 50+ Forum, and other local community groups.

2. Develop a baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the area under the eight domains.

An Age-Friendly Assessment of Blaenau Gwent involving key partners in the mapping of current and future services and support available to older people will be published within the first six months of this plan.

3. Develop a 3-year borough-wide action plan.

4. Identify measurements to monitor progress against this plan.

Progress against the Age-Friendly Blaenau Gwent Action Plan will be monitored against the objectives of the Blaenau Gwent We Want Well-being Plan by the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board.

Ongoing consultation and feedback from older people will continue to be sought throughout the duration of the plan through age-friendly engagement, linked to other engagement programmes through the PSB Engagement sub-group to avoid consultation fatigue. The 50+ Forum and a range of other 50+ community groups will be offered opportunities to provide

feedback and practical engagement on individual actions of the plan.

Making Blaenau Gwent one of the best places in the world to grow old by fostering age-friendly communities across the county borough will only happen through successful partnership working amongst the public services, third sector partners and the local community.

By setting out our vision for an age-friendly Blaenau Gwent into the future and bringing together a range of age-friendly practices and services already happening and available locally, it is hoped that this document will enable organisations and local communities in Blaenau Gwent to better support people as they age.



BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS

**Blaenau Gwent**  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board

[www.blaenauwentpsb.org.uk](http://www.blaenauwentpsb.org.uk)

