Age-friendly Town and Parish Guide

December 2025

Version 1.0

Age-friendly Town and Parish Guide

Contents

Age-friendly definition

This guide defines 'age-friendly' as a service, space, activity or process that is accessible and inclusive to all ages. In practice this often means making specific efforts to ensure older people are not excluded, considering how experiences and needs may change across the life course.

The detail of what it means to be 'age-friendly' can vary according to what is being described – e.g. age-friendly employment, age-friendly volunteering, age-friendly communications – and where this is the case we have endeavoured to explain this within the guide.
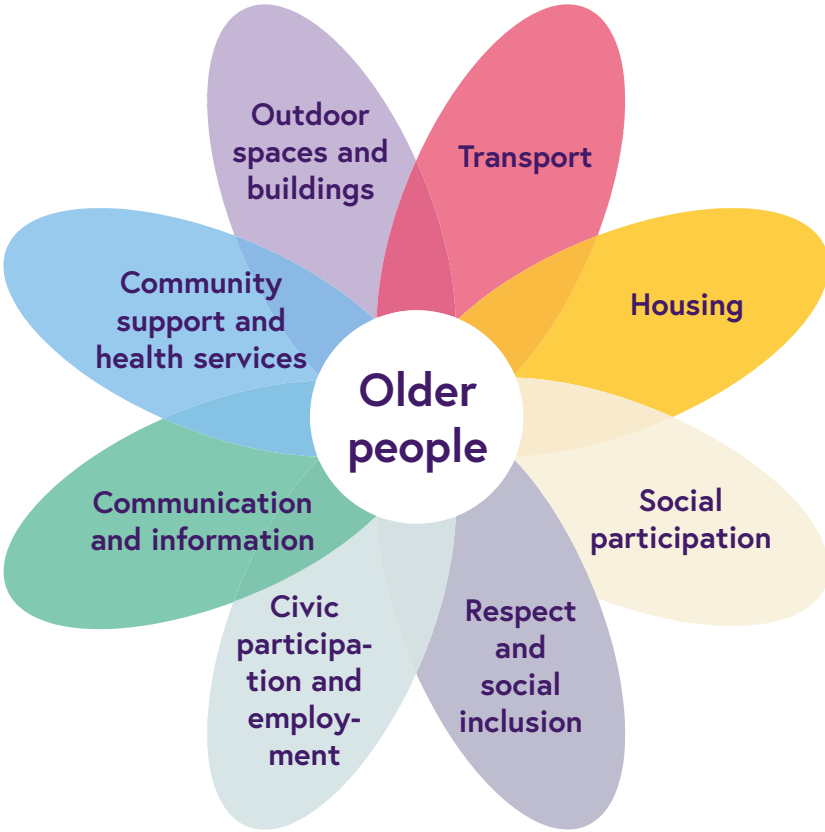
About this guide

Building an age-friendly town or parish requires coordinated efforts between local older people, the local council and principal authorities, health services, transport providers, businesses, and voluntary organisations. Town and parish councils have an important role to play, as they are uniquely positioned to facilitate or support these partnerships and advocate for decisions that enhance the wellbeing of their communities. This guide is not only for those who work in towns and parish councils but also those who would like to work with councils.

This guide is grounded in the WHO Eight Domains of Age-friendly Communities, which outline key areas of community life that enable people to age well. It highlights the diverse range of stakeholders essential to making towns and parishes age-friendly.

Designed for town and parish councils in England, the guide explores how their statutory duties, powers, and influence can be aligned with the eight domains. The age-friendly activities wheel in this guide offers a practical framework to help councils consider, expand, and celebrate age-friendly initiatives in their local areas.

To support councils in their journey toward becoming age-friendly communities, the guide includes examples of age-friendly activities, case studies and relevant resources for each domain. For more insights across different tiers of local government, see Centre for Ageing Better's Age-friendly Handbook.

Why we need age-friendly towns and parishes

An age-friendly community is a place that enables people to age well and live a good later life. Age-friendly communities enable people to stay living in their homes, participate in the activities they value, and contribute to their communities, for as long as possible. When older residents are actively involved, they generate social, economic, and cultural benefits that enrich life for everyone.

Town and parish councils play a vital role in fostering these environments, as many factors that influence health, activity, and social connection are shaped locally. With 10,000 local councils across England, 100,000 councillors, and over £2 billion invested annually (NALC), this guide highlights how councils can build on existing age-friendly efforts and expand their impact.

● More than 5 parish councils per local authority

● Fewer than 5 parish councils per local authority

England's population over the age of 50 is projected to reach 46% by 2065, with the fastest growth occurring in towns and parishes. This demographic shift presents a powerful opportunity to strengthen communities by embracing the contributions of older people as volunteers, leaders, and engaged citizens. Failing to do so risks compounding health and social challenges for councils and individuals.

The Equality Act 2010 recognises age as a protected characteristic, placing legal obligations on public bodies to prevent discrimination and consider the needs of all age groups. The Public Sector Equality Duty reinforces this by requiring inclusive policy and service design, helping to ensure fairness and dignity for older individuals.

Town and parish councils, as statutory local authorities, have the discretion to act on a wide range of issues. According to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), their work typically spans three areas that are all fundamental to an age-friendly community:

- **Delivering services to meet local needs;**
- **Giving the community a voice and representation;**
- **Improving the quality of life and community wellbeing.**

Their proximity to residents and influence over key determinants of health uniquely positions local councils to shape age-friendly communities. Their roles as place-makers, facilitators, and service providers allow them to respond effectively to local needs, and this role is set to grow as government evolves.

Foundational ways of working for meaningful change

Centre for Ageing Better have identified four foundational ways of working that are important for age-friendly communities of any size to embed an age-friendly way of working across their locality: **Data, Voice, Stakeholders, Leadership**. All are important but you may start by focusing on one or two. The process actions below are examples of where to begin.

Data

- **Better understand your demographics** – analyse the current age breakdown and other demographic factors of your local area, and future projections.

Voice

- **Enable older people to influence and inform age-friendly activities** – specific to local people's needs and wants across all domains.
- **Conduct an age-friendly survey** – understand the experiences and priorities of your older residents and use this to inform plans and strategies within your council and community. Consider a survey seeking to understand intergenerational experiences.
- **Hold an age-friendly town/parish meeting** – get residents together to discuss your age-friendly vision, understand what's already working well, and what more can be done.
- **Create an age-friendly ambassador scheme** – support older volunteers to get involved in initiatives to improve age-friendliness and spread messages of ageing well.

Leadership

- **Nominate a local councillor to be an older people's champion** – their role is to identify opportunities to make life better for older residents in your town or parish.
- **Name age-friendly as a priority in your town's overall strategy or community plan** – publicly commit to making your town more age-friendly, raising awareness of the agenda locally.
- **Join the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities** – and advocate for your principal authority to join as well.

Stakeholders

- **Facilitate a local network of organisations and groups** – support those groups interested in making your place more age-friendly to share plans, knowledge and resources.
- **Create a local age-friendly charter for businesses and organisations** – commit to actions that make them accessible and inclusive to all ages.
- **Create an age-friendly coordinator role** – add the responsibility to coordinate / advocate for the actions in this guide to an existing officer role.
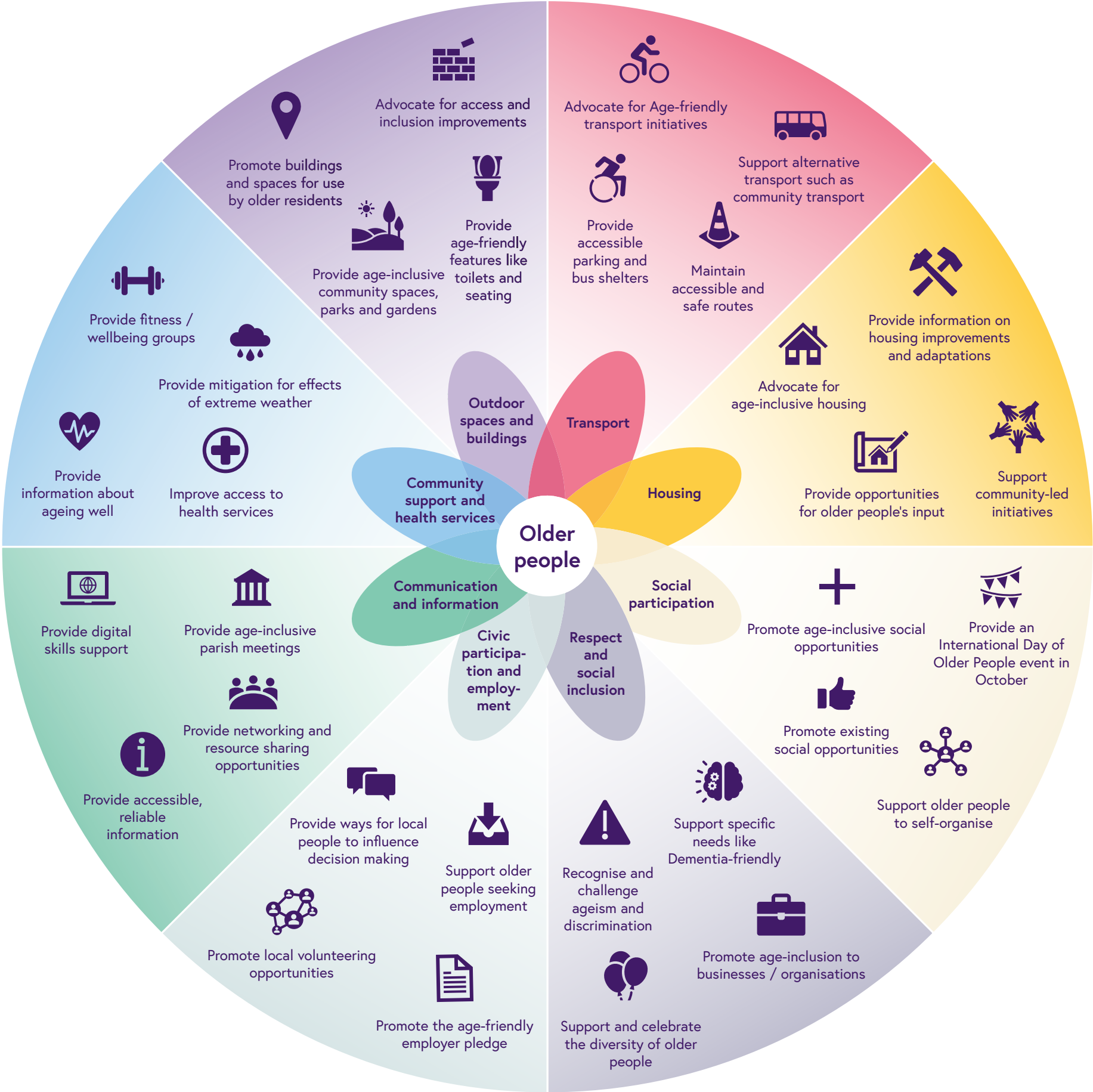
Age-friendly activities wheel

This wheel outlines a range of age-friendly activities that town and parish councils might pursue, drawing on their powers, duties, and wider responsibilities. These activities were identified through evidence reviews, focus groups, and workshops involving local councils.

At the heart of the wheel are older people, emphasising that age-friendly initiatives should be developed both **with** and for older people. Each petal represents one of the age-friendly domains, with a matching coloured wedge that illustrates the types of activities local councils can undertake to foster age-friendly communities. The wheel does not capture every way local councils might use their powers or responsibilities to support ageing well, it is intended to inspire and support local councils in identifying activities and actions that best reflect their local needs and available resources. More details are provided under each domain in the pages following.

The domains are interconnected, so they should be viewed as overlapping rather than isolated. Achieving meaningful progress in any area depends on collaboration with local residents, community organisations, health services, businesses, and other groups, working alongside the local authority to realise shared age-friendly goals.

We recognise that not every council will be able to act on all domains or suggested activities. Councils often face difficult choices when balancing time and resources across multiple priorities, and different town and parish budgets may vary significantly. However, even focusing on a few activities and associated actions can lead to meaningful improvements.

Age-friendly activities wheel diagram with "Older people" at the centre, surrounded by domains and activities:

Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Advocate for access and inclusion improvements
- Promote buildings and spaces for use by older residents
- Provide age-friendly features like toilets and seating
- Provide age-inclusive community spaces, parks and gardens

Transport
- Advocate for Age-friendly transport initiatives
- Support alternative transport such as community transport
- Provide accessible parking and bus shelters
- Maintain accessible and safe routes

Housing
- Provide information on housing improvements and adaptations
- Advocate for age-inclusive housing
- Support community-led initiatives
- Provide opportunities for older people's input

Social participation
- Promote age-inclusive social opportunities
- Provide an International Day of Older People event in October
- Promote existing social opportunities
- Support older people to self-organise

Respect and social inclusion
- Support specific needs like Dementia-friendly
- Recognise and challenge ageism and discrimination
- Promote age-inclusion to businesses / organisations
- Support and celebrate the diversity of older people

Civic participation and employment
- Provide ways for local people to influence decision making
- Support older people seeking employment
- Promote local volunteering opportunities
- Promote the age-friendly employer pledge

Communication and information
- Provide digital skills support
- Provide age-inclusive parish meetings
- Provide networking and resource sharing opportunities
- Provide accessible, reliable information

Community support and health services
- Provide fitness / wellbeing groups
- Provide mitigation for effects of extreme weather
- Provide information about ageing well
- Improve access to health services

Outdoor spaces and buildings

Age-friendly outdoor spaces and public buildings enable older people to enjoy where they live, take part in community life, and stay healthy and connected.

Age-friendly activities related to your powers	• **Ensure that any community spaces and parks and gardens are accessible and inclusive** to older and disabled residents. You can gain insight through walking audits, surveys, and speaking to those who already use spaces and services. • **Promote the use and awareness of age-friendly public buildings, spaces, and features,** such as toilets, seating, and warm/cool spaces. Encourage older residents to use buildings and spaces for group activities. • **Improve and provide age-friendly features in the community such as seating and toilets.** Work with older residents to agree design/locations. • Use Neighbourhood Plans to **advocate for better accessibility and inclusivity in the built environment and green spaces.**

Case studies

Wellington Place Plan – Wellington Town Council
The Wellington Place Plan was adopted in March 2023 by Somerset West and Taunton's Full Council. The document is a vision and spatial framework, used in planning and is intended to be referred to in determining planning applications and considering regeneration and conservation activities. It includes practical guidance and objectives for accessible places.

Happy to Chat Bench – Hellesdon Parish Council
As part of Age-friendly Norwich, the council opened a 'Happy to Chat' bench to the local community to help reduce loneliness and isolation.

Community Toilet Scheme – Penzance Parish Council
The scheme offers free, clean and accessible toilet facilities in the local area.

Key resources

- [Age-friendly Ireland Seating Guide](#)
- [Publicly Accessible Toilets guidance](#)
- [Living Streets Review Guidance](#)
- [AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit](#)

Statutory provision

- Localism Act 2011
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Litter Act 1983
- Highways Act 1980
- LGA 1972/76
- Public Health Act 1936
- Open Spaces Act 1906
- Inclosure Act 1857
- Commons Act 1876

Transport

Age-friendly transport enables older people to get where they need and want to go, promoting health and independence and preventing social isolation.

Age-friendly activities related to your powers	• **Provide accessible public car/cycle parking and bus stops close to key amenities.** Ensure payment options are affordable and do not exclude people who rely on cash or without smartphones. Ensure bus/tram shelters are weather-protected, with seating adhering to age-friendly principles. • **Maintain routes** to ensure they are accessible and safe, signposting ways for residents to report issues where possible. • **Support alternatives to public transport** in areas with limited coverage, such as community transport, 'ring and ride' services, or car sharing schemes - with non-digital booking and payment options. • **Promote active travel** by funding or advocating for new cycling and walking routes and inclusive cycle parking.

Case studies

Active Travel – Yate Town Council
Yate Town Council influenced South Gloucestershire's Travel and Highway Repair Strategy to include walking, wheeling, and cycling, which has informed the plans for a £3.5 million investment in active travel in the area. They are seeking to make their area more mobility scooter and bus friendly, and more accessible for people to stay active longer, without the need for a car.

Social Car Scheme – Wimblington and Stonea Parish Council
The council developed a social car scheme to improve transport and access for disabled people and people aged 60 and over. The service can be used for health appointments as well as social engagements and activities of daily life such as shopping. The service can be booked by phone.

Key resources

- [Age UK and ILC transport report](#)
- [Accessible bus stop guidance](#)

Statutory provision

- Local Government and Rating Act 1997
- Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
- Highways Act 1980
- Parish Councils Act 1957

Housing

Age-friendly housing enables older people to live safely, comfortably, and independently in homes and communities that support their wellbeing.

Age-friendly activities related to your powers	• **Advocate for age-friendly housing** in local planning processes, strategies, and Neighbourhood Plans to support a range of sizes and types, including accessible and easily-adaptable housing, near amenities and social spaces. • **Create opportunities for older residents to input** into housing / planning by promoting consultations online and offline through trusted sources. • **Support community-led housing initiatives** for older residents/ intergenerational groups through promotion, partnerships, or providing land. • **Promote information about homes to inform residents** about their housing options, advice on home improvements or adaptations, ways to avoid cold and damp, and trusted tradespeople directories.

Case studies

Neighbourhood Plan – Westbury Town Council
The Westbury Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire, to be looked to when assessing planning applications that affect land covered by the Plan. It identifies a range of housing types to meet the needs of local older people.

Hazelmead – Bridport Town
A multigenerational community-led housing project with 53 climate-resilient homes, a common house and shared green spaces.

Community-led Housing – Lyme Regis Town Council
Lyme Regis Town Council supported Timber Hill, a community-led housing development that created affordable housing that is open to all ages.

Registered Trader Scheme – Seaham Town Council
The scheme helps the local community to make an informed choice when they need the services of local vetted traders to carry out work or provide goods or services.

Key resources

- How to make a neighbourhood plan
- Good homes for all
- Homes for All Ages
- Affordable Rural Housing: A practical guide for parish councils

Statutory provision

- Localism Act 2011
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Social participation

Age-friendly social participation in leisure, cultural, and social activities enables older people to maintain good health, build relationships, and feel a sense of belonging.

Age-friendly activities related to your powers	• **Promote the opportunities already available for people to socialise** in your town or parish, through both online and offline communication. • **Support older people to self-organise activities and events,** including an older person's network or forum, by providing room hire, helping with funding applications and providing connections. • **Ensure any events or groups are age-inclusive,** following age-friendly principles of being accessible, diverse, and representative of the people in your community. Consider intergenerational and multi-cultural events. • **Host an annual event celebrating International Day of Older People (IDOP)** on 1st October.

Case studies

Cafes and Festivals – Yate Town Council
The council facilitates a pop-in cafe run by over 50s for over 50s. They host an annual Ageing Better Festival, a local, community-focused celebration that provides information, activities, and services to older adults and celebrates their contributions.

Free hall access – Flint Town Council
The council supports the local age and dementia-friendly group by providing free community hall use, refreshments, funding application support and links to town council activities.

Support Older People Led Activities – East Hunsbury Parish Council
The council Community Projects Officer started a social group that began as 20 people meeting in a pub and is now 350 people meeting regularly. They recognise older people have skills and encourage activities and events to be run by older people for older people. Activities include dance, history, Tai Chi, strolling, and meditation.

Key resources

- IDOP Activities Blog
- How to encourage greater participation in events for the IDOP
- Community Guide to Accessible Events & Meetings

Statutory provision

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Local Government Act 1972

Respect and social inclusion

Age-friendly respect and social inclusion enables older people to equitably participate in public and community life by challenging ageism and promoting fair inclusion.

Age-friendly activities related to your duties and powers	• **Recognise and challenge ageism and related discrimination** by raising awareness about ageism and how age intersects with other protected characteristics. • **Review language and imagery** of town council communications to ensure it does not reinforce stereotypes about older people. • Host events that **celebrate the diversity of older people** in your community, bringing people of different generations together. • **Consider specific needs** of different groups of older residents in plans or activities and related supports, such as dementia-friendly schemes. • **Promote age inclusion** to local businesses and third sector organisations, provide guidance on age-friendly businesses and workplaces.

Case studies

Age-friendly Pledge – Banbury Town Core Partners
Age-friendly Banbury Town Council is a core member of the wider Age-friendly Banbury Pledge partnership which encourages businesses, groups and organisations in the town to become more age-friendly by inviting them to adopt a pledge that comes with a checklist of actions to make their premises and services more welcoming and accessible.

For example, they have provided businesses with doorbells at wheelchair user height, providing residents better access to buildings.

Engaging with Older People Workshops – Corsham Town Council
The council ran two workshops prioritising engaging under-represented older voices in their town to complement their age-friendly survey to identify priority actions.
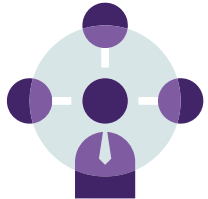
Key resources

- [Centre for Ageing Better: Ageism](#)
- [State of Ageing](#)
- [Age UK Dementia-friendly Rural Communities Guide](#)

Statutory provision

- Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011

Civic participation and employment

Age-friendly civic participation and employment enables older people to stay socially connected, financially secure, and feel a sense of purpose as they age.

Age-friendly activities related to your powers	• **Provide ways for people of all ages to influence local decision-making and policy**, such as accessible consultations, residents' forums, and clear ways for residents to ask questions or raise concerns or ideas. • **Provide community support to older people who are not in employment,** such as supporting job fairs or community-led job clubs. • Encourage your council and local employers to **sign the Age-friendly Employer Pledge**, a nationwide programme for UK employers who recognise the importance and value of older workers. • **Support age-friendly local volunteering opportunities,** ensuring they reflect the capacity and varied skills of your residents, providing flexible as well as formal options that are promoted on and offline.

Case studies

Farnham Job Club – Farnham Town Council
The Job Club offers free employment help and advice to people seeking employment.

Age-friendly Employer Pledge – Peacehaven Town Council
The council have signed the age-friendly employer pledge to improve the recruitment, retention and development of older workers.

Volunteering Support – Calne Town Council
Calne Town Council has an active volunteering sector, supported by their free online platform, Wiltshire Together, that is used across Wiltshire, which helps voluntary groups and charities connect, collaborate and promote themselves.

Key resources

- [Helping out: Taking an inclusive approach to engaging older volunteers](#)
- [Supporting the 50+ workforce back into employment](#)

Statutory provision

- Local Government and Rating Act 1997
- Local Government Act 1972
- Localism Act 2011

Communication and information

Age-friendly communication and information enables older people to access, understand, and use the information they need in everyday life.

Age-friendly activities related to your duty to host an annual parish meeting and your further powers	• Review communications to **ensure information is reliable, timely, and relevant and accessible.** Ensure digital formats are accessible for screen readers and hard copy information is available in visible community settings and via post, including large text and Plain English. • **Ensure that town/parish meetings are held in spaces that are physically accessible**, are promoted in an age-inclusive way and provide an opportunity to address the needs of older people. • **Promote networking and resource sharing** to spread age-friendly information such as key services, social opportunities, and health advice. • **Provide digital skills support**, such as drop-in tech cafes or tech buddy programmes or support to use digital council services for those not online.

Case studies

Community Agents – Leighton-Linsdale Town Council
The agents support benefit or Blue Badge applications and signpost to care services, housing support, transport options, social and volunteering opportunities.

Newsletter – Faversham Town Council
The council provides a printed paper newsletter for older residents (with plans for one specifically for care home residents).

Age-friendly Hartford Website - Hartford Parish Council
The council has created an Age-friendly Hartford website dedicated to sharing age-friendly activities in the local area.

Digital Inclusion – Houghton & Wyton Parish Council
The council provides a digital inclusion project that includes drop-ins and 1-1 support to help improve digital literacy.

Key resources

• Culture Toolkit: Internal Communications
• Standards for Age-friendly Communications – Manchester City Council

Statutory provision

• Local Government Act 1972

Community support and health services

Age-friendly community support and health services ensures that health and social care services are affordable, available and accessible for older people and their families and carers.

Age-friendly activities related to your powers	• **Improve access to health services** via transport, walkways, or accessible facilities. • **Provide fitness activities and walking groups** for older people, ensuring they are easy to get to by public transport and offer opportunities for people to socialise before or after. • **Distribute information around ageing well and support Citizens Advice.** Work with public health in your principal authority to ensure information is reaching people in all communities, and older people who are not online. • Identify ways for the community to **mitigate the effects of extreme weather**, such as providing warm and cool spaces, and distributing accessible guidance on keeping warm in winter and cool in summer.

Case studies

Health and Wellbeing Days – Fawkham Parish Council
In collaboration with Sevenoaks District Council, the Silver Sunday Campaign provides health and wellbeing days for residents over age 55 to visit local leisure centres for free health checks. Exercise and nutrition advice, strength / balance tests, opportunities to speak with public health professionals offering lifestyle support, as well as free hot drinks and a free day-pass to try facilities at the centre are included.

Free exercise – Wimblington and Stonea Parish Council
Free community exercise for older people is provided by the council.

Warm spaces – Calne Town Council
The Living Room is a free weekly drop-in for older people at Calne Baptist Church for anyone needing company or a warm space. A light lunch is available and activities are provided.

Key resources

• Neighbourhood networks: A model for community-based support

Statutory provision

• Localism Act 2011

Age-friendly activity planning

Ways to use the wheel to discuss and plan age-friendly activities in your local area.

Step 1: Fill in two versions of the wheel

Map what you are already doing
This activities wheel is designed to help town and parish councils and local community stakeholders think through and record what their community is already doing related to each age-friendly domain.
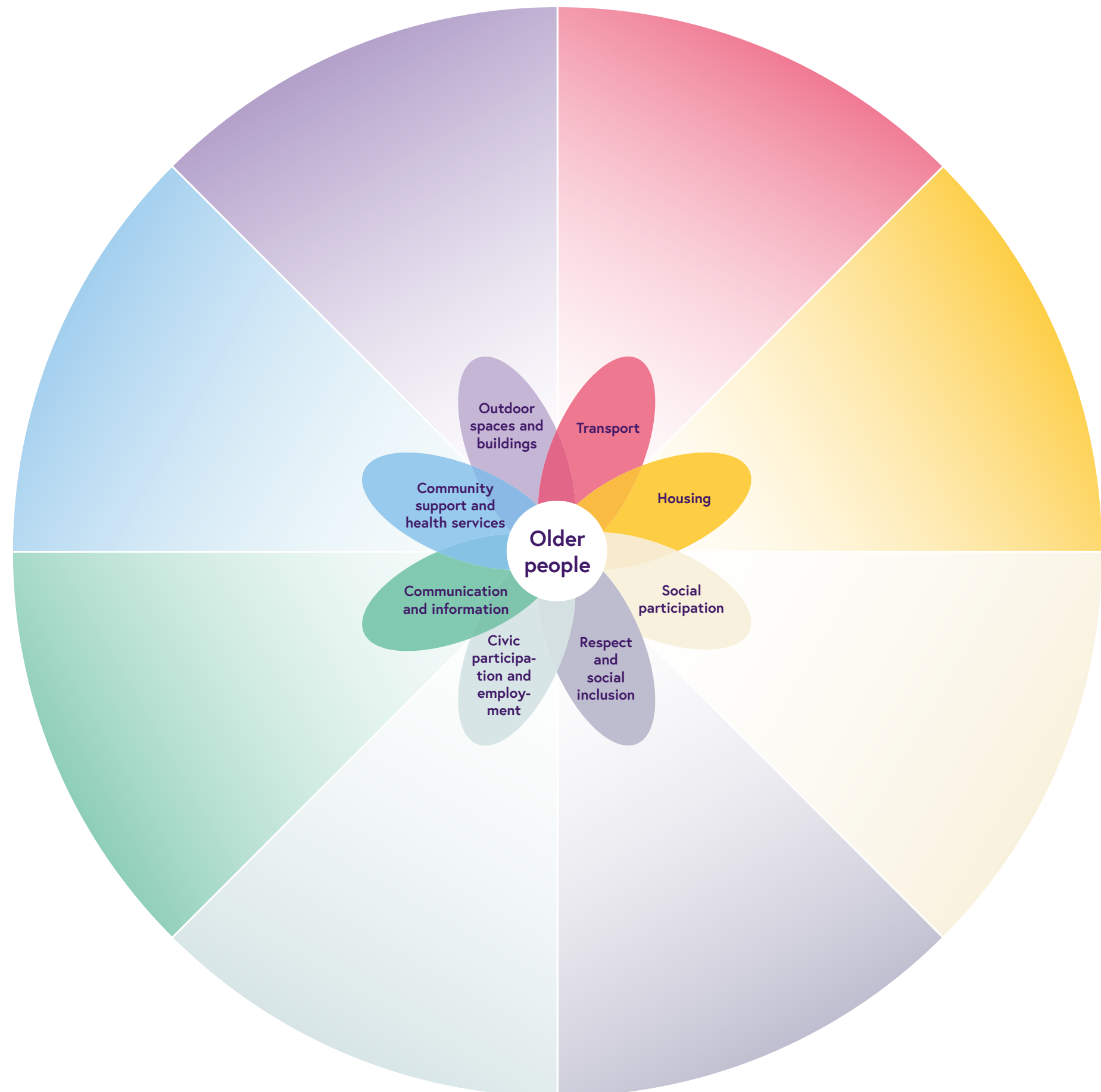
Map what you would like to do
Based on the age-friendly ideas and examples described in this guide or elsewhere, fill in an aspirational activities wheel to record your intentions for the age-friendly work you would like your council to undertake.

Step 2: Fill in the Age-friendly activities priority actions sheet (next spread)

The following spread shows examples of some of the key age-friendly activities and ways of working you may commit to as priority actions for your area. The actions you focus on may be different and you do need to have a priority in every domain, as they will be shaped by the local needs and wants of your community with your local resources and budget in mind. Use the blank template on the following page to list your top priorities.

Please see the Age-friendly Town and Parish Council Activities Matrix Annexe linked here for more detail on the evidence that sits behind the 'age-friendly activities wheel'.

Example of age-friendly activity priority actions

Outdoor spaces and buildings	Ensure all public realm spaces your town/parish council manages (community halls, town or village squares, parks, etc) are accessible to all. Involve older residents in decisions to make improvements to, or take ownership of, new spaces. Prioritise opportunities to create new toilets and seating, and/or improve existing ones.
Transport	Create opportunities for older residents to feed in their views and experiences to new strategies, plans and consultations related to the age-friendly domains, conducted by your principal authority and other agencies. In particular, engage on transport route changes, bus stops, bus shelters, bus times, and other transport related proposals.
Housing	Advocate as a town council for an age-friendly approach to be taken to new strategies, plans and consultations from your principal authority and other agencies, in particular for a mix of housing options and for housing to be built to an accessible standard.
Social Participation	Support older residents to self-organise groups and events they want to see in their local area. In particular, support an older people's group by providing free community space, applying for funding, and connecting people to other activities / projects in the area. Hold an annual event for International Day of Older People on 1st October.
Respect and social Inclusion	Use the preferred term of "older people", not "the elderly", and ensure language and images in council and community communications are positive and realistic.
Civic participation and employment	Promote employers to become age-friendly. Ensure volunteering opportunities in your town/parish are age-friendly – this means varied, flexible, and easy for people who are not online to find out about and sign up for them.
Communication and information	Audit your communications to ensure it is accessible for older people, particularly those who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted and those whose first language is not English.
Community support and health services	Promote and share information that will support older residents to age well including understanding housing options, health information, key local services, and social participation opportunities. Ensure information is widely available, not just online.

Your selected age-friendly activity priority actions

Outdoor spaces and buildings	
Transport	
Housing	
Social Participation	
Respect and social Inclusion	
Civic participation and employment	
Communication and information	
Community support and health services	

Foundational ways of working examples

Centre for Ageing Better have identified four foundational ways of working that are important for age-friendly communities of any size to embed an age-friendly way of working across their locality: **Data, Voice, Stakeholders, Leadership**. All are important but you may start by focusing on one or two. The process actions below are examples of where to begin.

Data

- **Better understand your demographics** – analyse the current age breakdown and other demographic factors of your local area, and future projections.

Voice

- **Enable older people to influence and inform age-friendly activitie**s – specific to local people's needs and wants across all domains.
- **Conduct an age-friendly survey** – understand the experiences and priorities of your older residents and use this to inform plans and strategies within your council and community. Consider a survey seeking to understand intergenerational experiences.
- **Hold an age-friendly town/parish meeting** – get residents together to discuss your age-friendly vision, understand what's already working well, and what more can be done.
- **Create an age-friendly ambassador scheme** – support older volunteers to get involved in initiatives to improve age-friendliness and spread messages of ageing well.

Leadership

- **Nominate a local councillor to be an older people's champion** – their role is to identify opportunities to make life better for older residents in your town or parish.
- **Name age-friendly as a priority in your town's overall strategy or community plan** – publicly commit to making your town more age-friendly, raising awareness of the agenda locally.
- **Join the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities** – and advocate for your principal authority to join as well.

Stakeholders

- **Facilitate a local network of organisations and groups** – support those groups interested in making your place more age-friendly to share plans, knowledge and resources.
- **Create a local age-friendly charter for businesses and organisations** – commit to actions that make them accessible and inclusive to all ages.
- **Create an age-friendly coordinator role** – add the responsibility to coordinate / advocate for the actions in this guide to an existing officer role.

Your selected ways of working for meaningful change

Name:
Date:
Collaborators:

Fill in the ways of working you would like to commit to below and fill in the age-friendly activity priority actions you would like to commit to on the following page.

Data

Leadership

Voice

Stakeholders

Author's note

This guide has been prepared by Arup and Housing LIN in collaboration with and on behalf of the Centre for Ageing Better. This guide has been created as the result of a research process involving engagement with local town and parish council representatives – thank you to all those involved in supporting this guide.

This guide is underpinned by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Age-friendly Programme, which is championed by the Centre for Ageing Better in conjunction with the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, which town and parish councils can join.

The guide is endorsed by the National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks.

Find out more here:
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Centre for Ageing Better