

Take a Seat initiatives

How-to-guide

This guide sets out options for delivering a Take a Seat initiative and the steps to make it a success. These

initiatives are designed to be flexible and tailored to local needs, which means they look different across the country; from over 40 outdoor benches installed in Barnsley, 60 indoor premises signed up in Nottingham and 6 Chesterfield-style chairs in Bournemouth town centre - there's no single 'right' way to approach this initiative.

In this guide, you'll find ideas, examples, and resources drawn from existing initiatives across the UK to help you plan and implement your own Take a Seat project. The aim is to support you in adapting the initiative to your local context and creating spaces that enable older people to stay active and connected.

1 - Understand the Purpose

Before launching a Take a Seat initiative, it is important to clarify the purpose of your campaign to ensure strong foundations. Although Take a Seat initiatives have been widely

adopted across the UK and globally, each responds to a different local need and context, and will therefore have a unique ask to the community.

Consider whether your initiative addresses a direct practical need (such as a lack of seating or inclusive warm spaces), an indirect practical need (for example, promoting social connection, falls prevention, or local economic activity), or aims to make the wider age-friendly programme more visible in the community.



Insights from surveys, community forums, and stakeholder feedback can help define objectives and plan an initiative that meets your local needs such as insights from an Age-friendly Community Survey.

2 - Assess What You Already Have

Mapping existing seating options and reviewing their age-friendliness helps identify priorities. For example, outdoor benches may be plentiful, but indoor seating could be limited. Mapping also provides a

neighbourhood-level view and highlights potential pilot or priority areas for Take a Seat.

Partners such as Neighbourhood or Planning teams, Parks teams, or local Business Improvement Districts can help access and assess data on existing seating or benches as well as areas that you might want to prioritise. Speaking to local businesses or community premises early to gauge interest and understand practical considerations is also useful at this stage.

3 - Define your Ask

The first two steps should provide an understanding of the need this initiative addresses. At this stage, translate that into a clear, attractive, and actionable ask for your community.

The ask should reflect the local context and remain flexible, considering available resources and capacity. In some areas, Take a Seat is simply about offering a chair, but in others, it can form part of a broader age-friendly checklist that may include businesses offering water or toilet facilities or a specific style of chair. Centre for Ageing Better's [Age-friendly Business Framework](#) could be a useful resource for shaping your ask.

A simple and clear message is often most effective. Businesses often have limited capacity, so providing a

clear outline of needs and any associated costs can make participation easier. Framing this positively and offering support or training can help businesses view this as an opportunity rather than a burden.



South Ayrshire's ask to businesses

South Ayrshire aimed to keep their ask simple and straightforward, to make sure that businesses could clearly see what is required from them:

- *Provide a suitable chair (doesn't need to be sitting out all the time)*
- *Display the window sticker prominently in door or front windows*
- *Ensure all staff members are aware of the scheme and know what is expected of them should someone ask for a seat*

To enhance their ask, Age-friendly South Ayrshire also awards framed certificates to participating businesses which they can display and use as a photo opportunity for advertising purposes.

4 - Identify Key Partners

Partnerships are essential for success. Begin by identifying existing allies and partners who may support the initiative. Depending on resources, it may be best to start

small with key stakeholders such as your local Business Improvement District (BID) or tourism board.

Your Age-friendly Steering Group and networks can help find champions to engage businesses. Trusted figures such as BID teams or ward councillors can secure buy-in and maintain momentum.



Utilising Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's existing Age-friendly Partnership Network

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) utilised the existing networks and knowledge that were already part of their Age-friendly Network.

The Chair of the Age-friendly Network in BCP was also involved with the local BID. This existing relationship facilitated a rich collaboration between Age-friendly BCP and Bournemouth BID, particularly through the engagement of the BID's CEO, who was able to allocate staff time and resource to drive the project from the ground.

5 - Plan for Delivery

Take a Seat initiatives are low-cost and partnership-driven but require coordination and planning. Clarifying roles and responsibilities early helps ensure smooth delivery. Consider who will monitor seating and who

will promote the scheme after launch. Building sustainability into your plan ensures the initiative remains active and visible.

These initiatives often lack dedicated funding, so plans should be realistic and achievable.



Finding potential funding streams

- **Direct funding from Local Authority or project budgets:** *Can cover printed resources like stickers or information packs, and potentially also provide a financial incentive to businesses who take part.*
- **Donations:** *Individuals or organisations may donate benches.*
- **Match funding:** *Local Authorities may match funds for seating provided by organisations or voluntary groups.*
- **Support from local BID or businesses:** *Businesses may cover costs for chairs, stickers, or launch events.*
- **Volunteers:** *Local groups – such as local Men's Sheds Groups – can make or maintain benches/seating that can be used in your initiative.*

6 - Develop Branding and Communications

A strong and consistent brand builds trust with businesses and visibility in

the community. Clear signage helps older people identify participating organisations so that they know where they can “Take a Seat.”

A press release can help attract media attention and raise public awareness of the scheme. Launch events provide an opportunity to share the business case for age-friendly practices and encourage wider participation. Some areas have boosted visibility by offering promotional items such as tote bags or information packs, while others have partnered with local schools to create intergenerational involvement and community pride – reinforcing that these spaces are for everyone.

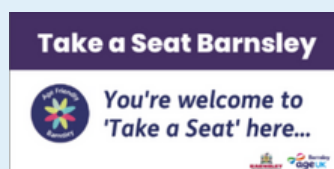


Examples of Take a Seat Logos

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole developed a logo in partnership with their local BID which combined features of both.



Barnsley used their age-friendly logo, accompanied with a clear and simple message. They also included the logos of key partners that would be recognisable within the community.



7 - Drive Uptake on the Ground

Face-to-face engagement is often most effective. Working with partners who have strong relationships with businesses, such as BID staff or councillors, can build trust and encourage sign-up. Raising awareness of the initiative through methods such as door knocking, community events or visiting sheltered housing schemes helps to raise awareness of the availability of the scheme to the people who might rely on it most.

Often, what you need for Take a Seat is already there. For instance, council buildings such as libraries are already open to the public and have accessible and free seating. Getting these organisations on board can be a good way to build momentum and scale of Take a Seat.

8 - Evaluate and Adapt

Regular evaluation helps you respond to changing circumstances, and keep businesses and organisations engaged with the initiative. Flexibility is key as businesses may face economic pressures or staff changes.

Some communities broaden the initiative to include general accessibility or simplified their offer (e.g., focusing only on seating). Adaptation ensures relevance and sustainability.



Nottingham: Evaluating Take a Seat

6 week check-in

Once businesses sign up to Nottingham's Take a Seat initiative, there will be an arranged check-in around six weeks after the launch to make sure that there are no immediate issues, and also to see if there have been any immediate impacts of adopting this initiative.

1 year check-in

After the business has been offering a seat for a year, there will be a more in-depth evaluation where there will be a conversation about uptake and any stories about the impact that their Take a Seat initiative has made. They also use this meeting as a way to see if the organisation is offering anything in addition to the seat such as a toilet or specific discounts to older customers. Colleagues in Nottingham found that this helped to build relationships with the organisations involved and keep them engaged in the initiative.

Public Awareness

After around two years of running the initiative, Age-friendly Nottingham led some public consultations in the community to gauge public awareness of the scheme.

They asked:

- *Have you heard of Take a Seat?*
- *Do you know of any premises/ businesses that offer a seat for free?*
- *If you have used a seat in any of these premises, how have you found the experience?*

Read the full case study on Nottingham's Take a Seat initiative on [Ageing Better's website](#).