



Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru  
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

# Age-Friendly Business Guide



**Heneiddio'n Dda**

Gwneud Cymru y lle gorau yn y byd i heneiddio

**Ageing Well**

Making Wales the best place in the world to grow older

## The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales protects and promotes the rights of older people throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives. She provides help and support directly to older people through her casework team and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon. The Commissioner's role is underpinned by a set of unique legal powers to support her in reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The Commissioner is taking action to end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

The Commissioner wants Wales to be the best place in the world to grow older.

## How to contact the Commissioner

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Twitter: @talkolderpeople

## Acknowledgements

This guide could not have been produced without the inspirational work of organisations including Age-Friendly British Columbia, Age-Friendly Ireland, Age-Friendly NYC, the Alzheimer's Society, and the International Federation on Ageing.

We would like to thank each of these organisations for their generosity in allowing us to reproduce their work in this guide.

More information can be found in the **Further reading** section.

## Introduction

Ageing well – ‘adding life to years, not just years to life’ – is important for all of us. It is something that everyone in Wales should be able to do. Older people should be seen as a vital part of our society and have opportunities to participate in and contribute to our communities and economy, but many find themselves unable to do the things that matter to them as they get older.

The Older People’s Commissioner for Wales wants to make Wales a nation of age-friendly communities that supports people to age well and do things that matter to them.

In an age-friendly community older people feel valued, included and respected and can:

- Get out and about
- Do things that they want to do
- Lead healthy and active lives
- Stay informed
- Have their voice heard

Businesses – whether the supermarket, café, pharmacy, post office, hairdresser, corner shop or transport operator – make a vital contribution to community life and this guide has been produced to provide simple hints and tips on how you can make your business more age-friendly.

Becoming age-friendly doesn’t just benefit older people, but all of your customers, and can help to make your business more successful.

**For more information on age-friendly communities, visit [www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageing-well/afcs](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageing-well/afcs)**

## Being age-friendly is good for your business

There are 830,000 people aged over 60 in Wales, almost one third of the population. This is set to increase to over 1 million by 2030.

People don't stop shopping and spending as they get older. In fact, older people are an increasingly important market, especially for local businesses.

Older people contribute over £2 billion to the Welsh economy each year, almost £6 million every day. Over 65s account for around £1 in every £5 spent in the UK, a number which is growing rapidly.

As the spending power of older people increases, businesses that cater for their desires and needs will be best placed to succeed.

**Becoming more age-friendly isn't just good for older people, it's good for your business.**

## Being age-friendly doesn't have to be expensive

Becoming age-friendly doesn't mean having to make expensive changes.

Ensuring your business is a friendly, respectful and welcoming place for all ages doesn't have to cost anything and is great customer service. Often, the changes that matter most to older people are those that can be implemented for little, or even no, expense.

An age-friendly business is a people-friendly business. By implementing facilities to be more age-friendly, you'll be making your business more welcoming for all sorts of people, including pregnant women, parents with children, people with disabilities or sensory impairments, and those with physical or mental health conditions. That's a lot of potential customers!

**An age-friendly business is a people-friendly business.**

# The Ageing Well Card

The Ageing Well Card is an initiative run by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales to support businesses to become more age-friendly.

The cards can be used by older people to let you and your staff know that they would like a little help or support. They help older people to maintain their independence, get out and about and continue to participate in their communities.

The cards contain a range of simple messages and come in a distinctive travelcard wallet which is easy to identify.



 Older People's Commissioner for Wales  
You can use these cards to let people know you need a little help. For more information, or more cards, contact us in 02920 448 530 or at [ageingwell@olderpeoplewales.com](mailto:ageingwell@olderpeoplewales.com)

These cards are based on the Better and Safer Journey card scheme developed by First Group. We would like to thank First for all their assistance and support. For more information, visit [www.firstgroup.com](http://www.firstgroup.com)



We are working with businesses and organisations across Wales to get the scheme widely recognised. Over 15,000 of the Ageing Well Cards have already been distributed, making a real difference to the lives of older people.



Supporting the Ageing Well Card is a great way to make your business more age-friendly and getting involved is easy. All you need to do is let us know that you and your staff will recognise the cards and will offer support to any customers using them.

Participating businesses receive promotional materials to let customers know that the cards are recognised, including window stickers, posters and leaflets. You'll also receive a supply of Ageing Well Cards which you can distribute to your older customers and will receive updates from us on future initiatives and campaigns we run to support age-friendly businesses in Wales.

There's no cost for getting involved. All we ask is that participating retailers complete a short survey once a year to help us understand how we can improve the scheme going forward.

**For more information, visit**  
**[www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageing-well/ageingwellcard](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/ageing-well/ageingwellcard)**



## Talk to older people

It may seem obvious, but the easiest way to start to make your business more age-friendly is to talk to older customers about what they like about your business and what could be improved.

There are lots of different older people's groups and forums across Wales that would be interested in helping you identify how you could become more age-friendly. If you need support to identify suitable groups in your area, please get in touch and we will be happy to help.

Crucially, don't just talk to older people, but remember to listen to them too.

Discuss what changes you can make to accommodate their ideas and discuss alternatives for those which you can't. People understand that you won't be able to change everything. By working together, you will often find simple and practical ways to improve your business which don't involve making drastic and expensive changes.

**Involving older people is at the heart of being age-friendly.**

## Involve your staff

Ask all of your staff to consider the needs of older people. While it's true that some older people might need a little bit of extra assistance, don't stereotype or make assumptions about your customers based purely on their age.

Welcome customers as they enter your business, and ask them if you can offer any assistance. Don't wait for them to ask for help, as this can be off-putting for some. Take part in the Ageing Well Card scheme, which helps your staff identify older customers who may need a little additional help.

Encourage staff to be respectful and patient, and to speak clearly when dealing with older people, whether face-to-face or on the phone.

Don't talk down to older people or be patronising. Older people are just as diverse as your other customers – remember to serve the person, not their age!

You might want to consider making a member of staff your age-friendly champion, who will be responsible for working with older people to help make your business more age-friendly.

Provide your staff with copies of this guide and highlight other useful guides from the **Further reading** section.

**Making these changes won't just improve customer service levels for older people, but for all your customers.**

## Think about light, space and sound

Ensure that your premises are well-lit, especially staircases and any other areas that might be tricky to navigate.

If you have a customer toilet, is it clearly signposted, regularly cleaned and does it have easy-to-use fittings (such as taps and flush handles)?

Make sure that your most popular products are within easy reach or offer help with reaching them. Think about where heavier products are located, as well as any products which may require people to bend, kneel down or stretch to reach, as this can be difficult for some people.

Be aware of trip hazards, both inside and outside of your business. Keep pavements and areas outside of your business clear. A-boards and advertising materials on footways and pavements can restrict access and are often disliked by older people.

Think about noise levels. Loud music can make shopping difficult for people who are hard of hearing.

**Making your business welcoming and accessible makes it easier for older people to become your customers.**

## Take a seat

Do you have somewhere for older people to sit and rest, or somewhere for them to put their shopping down?

Inspired by New York and Manchester, businesses in a growing number of towns and cities across the UK are getting involved with 'take a seat' campaigns, providing a seat and a friendly welcome to anyone who needs it.

Something as simple as having a chair which lets someone take a rest can make a big difference, giving people the confidence to get out and about and making it easier to use local businesses.

**If you have the space, think about making a chair available for older customers to take the weight off their feet.**

## Quiet times for shoppers

Some supermarkets and other shops have started to introduce regular 'quiet hours' each week, where all music and TVs are switched off.

Reducing the number of distractions has proved very popular with a wide range of customers, including people with disabilities and mental health conditions, people living with dementia or autism, parents with young children, as well as older people.

Consider trialling a regular 'quiet hour' in your own business. Speak to customers to see if this is something that might be of interest to them, and what times would be most useful.

**Regular, well-advertised quiet times where there are few distractions can be popular for many potential customers, not just older people.**

## Put yourself in their shoes

Think about how easy your business would be to use if you were an older person.

In particular, look at your premises and consider what it would be like if you had mobility issues and needed to use a wheelchair, walking stick or walking frame.

How welcoming would your business be if you had difficulty seeing or hearing, or needed somewhere to stop and rest?

Can you easily find what you are looking for?

Do staff offer support and assistance in a polite and respectful manner?

**Imagine yourself as an older person. How friendly would you find your business?**

## Make information accessible

Ensuring that important and useful information is readily available is a key part of making your business age-friendly.

Is signage and pricing clear and easy to read, using large fonts and high contrast backgrounds? The RNIB provide some excellent recommendations for making printed information easy to read, which can be found in the [Further reading](#) section.

Remember that not all older people are online. Make sure customers can contact you by phone as well as electronically. Ensure that you have useful information about your business clearly on display, with printed copies available for people to take away with them if they need to.

Being age-friendly doesn't mean being able to provide every facility customers might need within your own business. Make sure staff can assist older customers with enquiries and useful local information, including:

- Directions to the closest accessible or disabled toilet
- Offering to call for a taxi with a reliable local firm
- The location of nearby bus stops and railway stations
- Where nearby parking facilities are located (especially disabled parking)

If you are working to be more age-friendly, let your customers know. Put up a sign or notice telling them that you value their input and suggestions. Advertise any services that older customers might find useful, such as home delivery. If you are supporting the Ageing Well Card scheme, make sure to clearly display the stickers in your window.

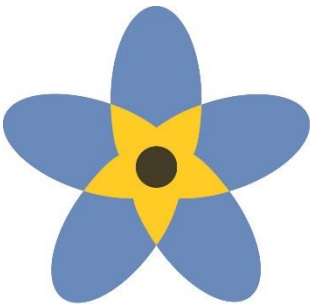
**Not all older people are online. Make sure customers can contact you by other means as well.**

## Become a dementia-friendly business

Over 45,000 people in Wales have been diagnosed with dementia. A diagnosis of dementia doesn't mean having to stop doing what you used to, including using local businesses.

The Alzheimer's Society provides a range of practical guides and support on becoming a dementia-friendly business, some of which are listed in the **Further reading** section of this guide. They also offer free Dementia Friends awareness sessions. These only take an hour to complete and are a practical way to get your staff to think about being more age-friendly.

You can apply to the Alzheimer's Society to have your efforts to make your business more dementia-friendly recognised and can then advertise this to your customers.



# Dementia Friends

An Alzheimer's Society initiative

**Working to become more dementia-friendly is a great way  
for your business to become more age-friendly.**



## Be an age-friendly employer

While the focus of this guide is on providing an age-friendly customer experience, it's also important to think about how you can be an age-friendly employer.

What is the age range of your employees? Do you welcome and encourage applications from older people for job vacancies?

Do you offer flexible working hours for people with caring responsibilities? Many older people are carers, looking after elderly relatives, children and grandchildren.

You can find more information about becoming an age-friendly employer in the [Further reading](#) section.

**Being age-friendly is not just about your customers, but also your employees.**

## What next?

Creating age-friendly communities requires the involvement of many different people, groups and organisations, not just businesses.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is working with town, community and county councils across Wales supporting them to become more age-friendly. Contact your local council to ask them about what they are doing to support age-friendly communities and tell them that you are working to make your business more age-friendly.

Share your experiences, ideas and efforts to become more age-friendly with others and encourage them to get involved.

Let other local businesses know about the Ageing Well Card scheme, and how they can support it.

If your business is located in an area working to become a Dementia-Friendly Community, contact the local steering group and find out how you can get involved.

**Working together, we will make Wales the best place in the world to grow older.**

# Age-friendly business quick checklist

## Staff

- Recognise the Ageing Well Card scheme, and offer support to older customers who need it
- Promote and distribute the Ageing Well Card to older customers
- Be respectful and patient towards older customers
- Ask older customers for their views on how you could be more age-friendly
- Speak clearly to older customers, both on the phone and face-to-face
- Are Dementia Friends
- Your business has an Age-Friendly Champion
- Welcome customers when they enter your business, and offer to assist them if needed
- Offer older customers help with reaching products that aren't within easy reach

## Recruitment

- Staff are a variety of ages
- Applications from older people are welcomed for job vacancies
- Support is given to staff with caring responsibilities

## **Environment**

- Your business is well lit, especially on stairs
- Customer toilets are clearly signposted and regularly cleaned
- Walkways and aisles are kept free of trip hazards, and wide enough for people with mobility difficulties
- Pavements and walkways outside your shop are kept clear and free of any trip hazards
- Music and noise is kept to a minimum
- You hold regular 'quiet hours' for shoppers
- Signage and pricing is clear and easy to read

## **Information**

- Advertise your interest in being age-friendly, and ask for customer suggestions
- If you recognise the Ageing Well Card, the window sticker is prominently displayed
- Opening hours and contact details are clearly visible
- Customers can contact you face-to-face and on the phone, as well as online
- Important information about your business is available in printed, easy to read formats
- Offer to help older people with enquires about local services and facilities

## Useful links

Age-friendly business

[Information on age-friendly communities](#)

[How to support the Ageing Well Card initiative](#)

[Age-friendly business, Age UK \[PDF\]](#)

[Age-friendly business recognition scheme, Age-Friendly Ireland](#)

[Age-friendly business resource guide, Age-Friendly NYC \[PDF\]](#)

[Creating an age-friendly business in B.C., Age-Friendly British Columbia \[PDF\]](#)

[Age-Friendly Belfast Charter: Information for organisations, Age-Friendly Belfast \[PDF\]](#)

[Business Toolkit, Age-Friendly Bristol](#)

Making information accessible

[Clear Print Guidelines, RNIB and Sensory Trust \[PDF\]](#)

## Age-friendly employers

[People don't have a best before date: An employer's guide to employing and training older workers](#)

[Becoming an age-friendly employer, Centre for Ageing Better \[PDF\]](#)

## Dementia-friendly business

[Dementia Friends](#)

[Dementia-friendly business guide, Alzheimer's Society](#)

[How to help people with dementia: A guide for customer-facing staff, Alzheimer's Society \[PDF\]](#)

[Dementia-friendly retail guide, Alzheimer's Society](#)

All links were correct as of January 2020