

Heneiddio'n Dda
yng Nghymru

Ageing Well
in Wales



A guide to being an age friendly business

Ensuring Wales is a good place
to grow older for everyone

About Ageing Well in Wales

Ageing Well in Wales is a national Programme hosted by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

It brings together individuals and communities with public, private and voluntary sectors to develop and promote innovative and practical ways to make Wales a good place to grow older for everyone.

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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, 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.

This guide was produced with the support of:



Introduction

Wales is a nation of older people. Older people make a massive contribution to Welsh society, culture and the economy, but are often undervalued and excluded from decisions made which affect them.

An age-friendly community is one that listens and responds to the voice of older people, and enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities.

The term “age-friendly” originates from a World Health Organisation initiative to facilitate the inclusion of older people. It has since spread into a global movement with many cities and communities around the world taking active steps to become more age-friendly.

Businesses make a vital contribution to community life, whether it be the supermarket, café, pharmacy, post office, hairdresser, shop, or transport service.

This guide has been produced to provide some simple hints and tips on how you can make your business more age-friendly, and how this can benefit not just older people, but all of your customers, and help make your business more successful.

For more information on age-friendly communities, visit:
www.ageingwellinwales.com/agefriendly

Being age-friendly is good for business

There are over 1.1 million people in Wales aged 50+, over one third of the population.

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 represent a large part of the Welsh economy, making a net contribution of over £1 billion each year. 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, it is those businesses that cater for their desires and needs that will be best placed to succeed in the future.

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 more 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. Often, the changes that matter most to older people are those that can be implemented for little, or even no, expense.

This guide provides some practical hints and tips of how you can start to make your business more age-friendly.

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 many 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!

Talk to older people

It may seem obvious, but talk to older customers about what they like and what could be improved about your business.

Ask an older friend or relative to visit your business and make suggestions.

Every Local Authority in Wales organises one or more local 50+ forums. Ask these or other older people's groups 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.

Involving older people in the decision-making process is at the heart of being age-friendly.

Train your staff

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

Welcome customers as they enter your business, and ask if they require any assistance. Don't wait for them to ask for help.

Train staff to be respectful and patient when dealing with older people, whether face-to-face or on the phone. Have staff speak clearly, but not patronise older people.

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

Nominate a member of staff as an 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, or some of the other useful guides listed in the Further Reading section.

Making these changes won't just improve your quality of service for older people, but for all your customers.

Think about light, space and sound

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

If you have a customer toilet, is it clearly signposted, regularly cleaned and with easy-to-use fittings?

Signage and prices should be clear and easily visible. Where possible, use large fonts and high contrast colours.

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

Make sure that your most popular products are within easy reach, or offer help with reaching them.

Be aware of trip hazards, both in and out of your business. Keep pavements and areas outside 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.

Consider having regular quiet times where there are few distractions for customers.

Quiet times for shoppers

A number of supermarkets and other shops have started to introduce regular “quiet hours” each week, where all music and TVs are switched off.

Reducing the amount of distractions has proved really popular with a wide range of shoppers, including people with disabilities, as well as people with dementia, autism, and 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.

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're looking for?

Do staff offer assistance in a polite and respectful manner?

Information

Ensuring 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 provides some excellent recommendations for making printed information easy to read, which can be found in the Further Reading section of this guide.

Is information about your business such as opening hours and contact details easy to find?

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 clearly on display, with copies available for people to take away with them.

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

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

If you're working to be more age-friendly, make sure to let your customers know. Put up a sign or notice telling them that you value their input and suggestions.

If you provide any discount for older people, or any services that they might find particularly useful, such as home delivery, make sure to let people know and display these prominently.

Become a Dementia Friend

Over 45,000 people in Wales are diagnosed with dementia. Being diagnosed with dementia doesn't have to mean having to stop doing what you used to do, including using local businesses. Working to become more dementia friendly is a good way to become more age-friendly and there is a lot of support and help available.

The Alzheimer's Society produces a range of practical guides on becoming a dementia friendly business, some of which are listed in the Further Reading section of this guide. They also offer free dementia awareness sessions called Dementia Friends. These only take an hour, and are a great way to help your staff become more age-friendly.

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

For more information, visit www.dementiafriends.org.uk and www.ageingwellinwales.com/dementia.

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?

More information on being an age-friendly employer can be found at: www.ageingwellinwales.com/employment

What next?

Creating age-friendly communities requires the involvement of many different organisations and businesses. Please share your experiences, ideas and efforts to become more age friendly with others, and encourage them to get involved. Some ideas of people to speak to include:

- Your local County, Town, and Community Councils
- Local press and media
- Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, or other groups representing local businesses
- Other local business owners
- Local community groups

Age-friendly business quick checklist

Staff

- 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
- Staff are Dementia Friends
- Your business has an Age-Friendly Champion
- Customers are welcomed when they enter your business, and offered assistance
- Offer help reaching products which aren't within easy reach

Recruitment

- Staff are a variety of ages
- Applications from older people are welcomed for job vacancies

Environment

- Your business is well lit, especially on stairs
- Customer toilets are clearly signposted and regularly cleaned
- Walkways are kept clear 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 are clear and easy to read

Information

- Advertise your interest in being age friendly, and ask for customer suggestions
- 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 enquiries about local services and facilities

Further reading

Age-Friendly Resource Hub, Ageing Well in Wales

www.ageingwellinwales.com/agefriendly

Clear Print Guidelines, RNIB and Sensory Trust

www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/connect/infosheet_clearlargeprint.pdf

The Age of Investment, Welsh Government

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/age-investment>

Age-Friendly Business Recognition Scheme, Age Friendly Ireland

<http://agefriendlyireland.ie/age-friendly-business-recognition-scheme/>

Age-Friendly Business Guide, Age Friendly NYC

http://nyam.org/media/filer_public/bf/f7/bff7621c-cac7-4679-9e0f-f5e8bd6d3ae9/agefriendlybusinessguide.pdf

Creating an Age-friendly Business in B.C., Age-Friendly British Columbia

http://smallbusinessbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/resource_files/SeniorsBC_agefriendly_business_guide.pdf

Age-Friendly Resource Manual, International Federation on Ageing

www.ifa-fiv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Age-Friendly-Communities-Resource-Manual.pdf

Becoming a dementia-friendly retailer: A practical guide, Alzheimer's Society

https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=1915

How to help people with dementia: A guide for customer-facing staff, Alzheimer's Society

https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=1352

Age in the Workplace: Retain, Retrain, Recruit, Business in the Community

http://age.bitc.org.uk/system/files/research/bitc-age_inthe_workplace_report.pdf