How to Age Well
A guide to planning for a better later life

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 and chaired 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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This guide was produced in partnership with:

![GIG Cymru NHS Wales](image1)
![Positive Ageing Associates](image2)
Introduction

“Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans.”

Allen Saunders

Growing older is something we all aspire to, and something which should be celebrated. However, we don’t just want to live longer, we want to age well and be able to do the things that matter to us.

While later life can bring its challenges, it can also bring freedom and joy. No matter how old you are, the decisions you make today can have a big impact on how you age. There are things you can do which will help you to deal with the challenges and enjoy the benefits of growing older. You have more control than you might think in influencing your chances of ageing well.

This guide covers some of the key topics to consider if you want to age well. Don’t feel embarrassed to talk about ageing. Use the information in this guide to start conversations with friends, family or colleagues, and start to take control of your ability to age well.
Be positive

Ageing gets a very bad press! When not being made to feel as if they are invisible, older people tend to be portrayed in terms of frailty or as burdens to society. There is very little about growing older that is celebrated or considered desirable. The reality is very different.

You can enjoy some of your best years later in life. The vast majority of older people are much happier than middle aged people. Make sure that your expectations and ideas about ageing are balanced. Growing older isn’t all good, but it certainly isn’t all bad either.

Think more positively about your future. People with positive attitudes towards ageing live longer, healthier and happier lives. One study showed that people with a positive attitude to ageing lived seven and a half years longer on average than people with more negative attitudes.
Stay physically active

As we get older, it’s important to keep physically active.

Our bones and muscles start to be affected by ageing in our thirties. Keeping physically active will help you stay independent and live the life you want to lead, and is essential to ageing well.

Being active isn’t just about going to the gym. Make time for an activity you enjoy, whether dancing, gardening, swimming, or walking the dog - even light exercise can make a big difference.

Keeping active isn’t just good for your physical health, it’s also a good way to keep your mind healthy, and can be great fun, too.

Think about what you eat and drink – eating well and staying hydrated are increasingly important as we get older. Be aware of your alcohol intake. As we get older, our bodies can’t process alcohol as well as they used to.
Keep your mind active

It’s important to keep our minds active, as well as our bodies.

Arts and crafts, puzzles, games and quizzes are all great ways to keep you mentally fit.

Why not take the time to learn something new? You’re never too old to learn, and we all have a skill or talent to share. Learning isn’t just about gaining skills and knowledge, it’s also a great way to meet people, make friends, and have fun.

Find out what’s going on around you. Join a local club or group, or start a team to compete in a pub quiz. Volunteering can be a great way to keep active, make new friends and develop new skills, all while doing something you enjoy.

If you’re not already, why not get online? There’s a wealth of information available online for free, covering almost any topic imaginable.
Get on top of money matters

Whether you’re retired, working or looking for a job, you’ll want to plan for how you will manage financially as you age.

Do you have any loans or debts? Are you relying on savings to support you as you get older? Would you like to sell your current home at some stage in the future to downsize or move?

Does a partner manage your financial affairs? Would you feel confident managing them yourself if they passed away?

Understand how much you will receive as part of a state pension, and also from any private pensions or savings. You should also make sure that you are receiving the benefits that you are entitled to.

You’ll find details for organisations that can advise you and help you manage your finances in the Useful Contacts section.
Stay connected

Maintaining good relationships with friends, family and the people around us is vital to ageing well.

Few of us take time to think about our social connections, and how we would cope if they suddenly changed. As we get older, it’s easy to lose touch with people, whether through bereavement, people moving away, changing jobs or retiring.

Think about the people who are important to you. If you rely on work colleagues for social interaction, what would you do if you stopped working? If you rely on a spouse or partner, what would happen if they died?

Thinking about these things doesn’t need to be morbid or depressing. Use this as an opportunity to think about what you enjoy doing, and make an effort to get involved with local community groups or clubs to explore your interests. It’s one of the best ways to make new friends and keep in touch with old ones.

Whatever some people might like to believe, getting older doesn’t mean the end of intimacy. We don’t stop enjoying sex just because we’re getting older. However, it’s important to pay attention to your sexual health whatever your age. Safe sex isn’t just for young people!
Think about your home

For most of us, living independently in our own homes is a key part of ageing well. Think about what your home means to you. Is it the physical property that you live in, or the neighbourhood where you live?

How would you cope in your current home if you were living alone, were unwell, or unable to drive? Would you like to downsize or move to a more manageable property in the area you know? Do you have plans to move closer to friends or relatives further afield?

Clearing out clutter can make our homes safer and easier to manage. Ensure your home has adequate lighting and heating, and that you feel safe (especially on stairs and in bathrooms).

As we get older, we may need to make changes to help us stay living independently in our own homes. If you’re over 60 and either living in your own home or private rented accommodation, Care & Repair may be able to help with home adaptations in your current home, or to discuss any concerns about where you live in and to explore what alternatives may be available.
Make the most of work

Many of us are working longer, whether through choice or necessity.

It’s important to keep your skills up-to-date, whatever your age. Don’t rule yourself out of training because you think it’s only for younger people.

Think about the skills you have developed in your working life, and those you would like to acquire. Discuss job opportunities and skill requirements with your managers. Know your rights – it’s illegal to discriminate in the workplace solely on the basis of age.

It’s never too late to start a new career. Many of the skills we develop as we get older are transferable and valuable in many different jobs. There are a variety of training schemes in Wales open to people of all ages – apprenticeships aren’t just for the young!
What if something happens to me or the people I care about?

As we get older, it is increasingly common to have caring responsibilities for family or loved ones, or to have someone helping to care for you.

Most of us don’t think about how caring for someone or being cared for will impact our lives until it happens. While it might never happen to you, make your wishes known to the people important to you. Talk to friends and family. Find out what they would want, and let them know what would be important to you if something unexpected should happen.

Think about writing an Advance Care Plan, listing your wishes and preferences. This can then be referred to in the future if you are unable to answer questions yourself. Having your wishes clearly stated can be a huge support to friends and family during difficult times.

Make the time to ensure your legal affairs are in order. Arranging for a lasting power of attorney and a will doesn’t have to be complicated or expensive, and will help to ensure that your wishes are respected whatever may happen to you.
The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Making small and simple changes to your everyday life can make a big difference to your wellbeing. There are five ways to wellbeing that have been proven to make a real difference, and can be especially important as we get older:

**Connect**

Connect with people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, at home, work or in your neighbourhood. Strong relationships are central to wellbeing, so make sure to invest time in developing them.

**Be active**

Go for a walk or run, step outside, cycle, play a game, do some gardening or dance – physical exercise makes us feel good. Discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

**Take Notice**

Be curious, catch sight of the beautiful, remark on the unusual, notice the changing seasons, savour the moment. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Some people find meditation and relaxation techniques helpful for this.
Keep Learning

Try something new, rediscover an old interest, or sign up for that course. Learning new things will make you more confident and is also great fun.

Give

Do something nice for a friend or a stranger. Thank someone, smile, volunteer your time or join a community group. Helping others is a great way to help ourselves feel good, builds friendships, and is also good for your physical health. Research has shown that people who volunteer regularly are healthier, happier, and live longer.
Useful Contacts

Thinking positively about ageing

**Action for Happiness:** Helping people take action for a happier and more caring world.

- Web: www.actionforhappiness.org

**Life Reimagined:** Information and short courses on how to age positively.

- Web: www.lifereimagined.aarp.org

**Positive Ageing Associates:** Positive Ageing Associates is a consultancy which promotes positive approaches to ageing and later life, working with individuals, communities and organisations throughout the UK.

- Web: www.positiveageing.org.uk

**Positive Psychology:** Resources on the positive thinking, in theory and practice.

- Web: www.positivepsychology.org.uk

**Strategies for Successful Ageing:** Five week interactive course designed to challenge negative assumptions about ageing (available free of charge).

- Web: www.futurelearn.com/courses/successful-ageing
Keeping physically active

**Living Streets Wales:** The UK charity for everyday walking.
- Tel: 07714 616 598
- Web: [www.livingstreets.org.uk/who-we-are/wales](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/who-we-are/wales)

**My Sport Wales:** Help to find sports facilities near you and keep active.
- Tel: 0300 300 3123

**Public Health Wales:** The national public health agency for Wales.

**Ramblers Cymru:** People and groups who come together to enjoy walking.
- Tel: 02920 644 308
- Web: [www.ramblers.org.uk/wales.aspx](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/wales.aspx)

**Sustrans Cymru:** UK charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.
- Tel: 02920 650 602
- Web: [www.sustrans.org.uk/wales/our-work-wales](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/wales/our-work-wales)
Eating and drinking

Age UK: Nutrition Advice: Useful advice from Age UK.
  • Tel: 08000 223 444
  • Web: http://bit.ly/1pJBhje

Are you eating enough? Advice for older people: Handy guide on nutrition for older people.
  • Web: http://bit.ly/2rsq63D

Change 4 Life: Advice on staying fit and healthy.
  • Web: http://change4lifewales.org.uk/?lang=en

Drink Wise, Age Well: Helping people make healthier choices about alcohol as they age.
  • Tel: 0800 161 5780
  • Web: http://drinkwiseagewell.org.uk/
Sexual health

Sexual health: A practical guide for the over 50s from Age Cymru


The over 50s: Relationships & Sexual Health: Great booklet produced by NHS Manchester.

- Web: http://bit.ly/2qX3KVt
Getting online

Age UK: Technology and the Internet: Guides to help you stay safe online and make the most of the internet.

- Tel: 08000 223 444

BBC Webwise: Help from the BBC on using the internet and staying safe online.

- Web: www.bbc.co.uk/webwise

BT: Get IT Together: Advice and guidance on helping a friend or family member to get online.

- Web: http://bit.ly/2svwAx1

Digital Communities Wales: Support for people to access and use the internet.

- Tel: 0300 111 5050
- Web: http://digitalcommunities.gov.wales/

Digital Eagles: Free help to do more online from Barclays Bank.

- Web: www.barclays.co.uk/digital-confidence/eagles

Get Online @ Home: Affordable computers and support to get online

- Web: www.getonlineathome.org
Learn something new

**Adult Learning Wales:** Support for community and workplace learning.

- Tel: 0345 4500 607
- Web: www.weacymru.org.uk

**FutureLearn:** Free online courses on a wide variety of topics.

- Web: www.futurelearn.com

**GrandFest:** Celebrating the skills of older people.

- Tel: 02920 739 000
- Web: https://grandfest.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/

**Guide to setting up a community learning club:** Practical guide from Ageing Well in Wales

- Tel: 02920 445 030

**Men’s Sheds Cymru:** Supporting Men’s Sheds in Wales

- Tel: 01267 225 536
- Web: www.mensshedscymru.co.uk
Open University: Experts in part-time, flexible learning.

- Tel: 0300 303 5303
- Web: www.open.ac.uk/wales

OpenLearn: Free online courses from The Open University

- Web: www.open.edu/openlearn/

U3A: Supports older people to enjoy educational, creative and leisure activities in a friendly environment, with groups throughout Wales.

- Tel: 0208 466 6139
- Web: www.u3a.org.uk
Financial advice

Age Cymru: Money Matters: Advice and guidance from Age Cymru.

- Tel: 08000 223 444
- Web: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/money-matters

Citizen’s Advice: Free, confidential and independent advice.

- Tel: 03444 77 20 20
- Web: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Tax Help for Older People: Free, independent and expert advice for older people on lower incomes.

- Tel: 0845 601 3321
- Web: www.taxvol.org.uk

UK Government: Working, jobs and pensions: Information from the UK Government

- Web: www.gov.uk/browse/working/state-pension


- Tel: 0800 138 7777
Legal advice

An easy guide to lasting power of attorney: Practical guide from the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales.

- Tel: 02920 445 030
- Web: http://bit.ly/2rW1y4u

Citizen’s Advice: Free, confidential and independent advice.

- Tel: 03444 77 20 20
- Web: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Making a will: Guidance from the UK Government

- Web: www.gov.uk/make-will

Solicitors for the Elderly: Independent, national organisation providing specialist legal advice for older and vulnerable people.

- Tel: 0844 567 6173
- Web: www.sfe.legal
Being Mindful

Be Mindful: Mindfulness resources from the Mental Health Foundation.

- Web: http://bemindful.co.uk/

Mindful: Promoting the learning and application of mindfulness.

- Web: https://www.mindful.org/
Advance care / end of life planning

**Advance care planning:** Guidance from NHS Wales and the National Council for Palliative Care.

- Web: http://advancecareplan.org.uk/

**Advance statement for end of life care:** Guidance from the NHS on making a written statement that sets down your preferences regarding future care.

- Web: http://bit.ly/2sICiLw

**Death Cafés:** Informal groups getting together to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death.

- Web: www.deathcafe.com

**Dying Matters in Wales:** Helping people to talk more openly about dying, death and bereavement, and to make plans for end of life.

- Tel: 08000 21 44 66
- Web: www.dyingmatters.org
Getting involved in your community

**Dewis Wales:** Online information with details of community services and facilities related to wellbeing in Wales.

- Web: www.dewis.wales

**Royal Voluntary Service:** A volunteer organisation that enriches the lives of older people.

- Tel: 0845 608 0122
- Web: www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

**Spice Time Credits:** Supporting community action throughout Wales.

- Tel: 02920 566 132
- Web: www.justaddspice.org

**Volunteering Matters Wales:** Engaging with over 3,000 volunteers in Wales each year.

- Tel: 0203 780 5870
- Web: www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk

**Volunteering Wales:** Help to find volunteering opportunities where you live.

- Web: www.volunteering-wales.net
Carers and caring

Carers Trust Wales: Support for carers in Wales
- Tel: 02920 090 087
- Web: http://bit.ly/2wHk678

Carers Wales: Support and expert advice for carers.
- Tel: 02920 811 370
- Web: www.carersuk.org/wales

Your life and your choices: Plan ahead: Practical advice from Macmillan Cancer Support.
- Tel: 0808 808 00 00
- Web: http://bit.ly/2rDdjtF
Your home

Care & Repair Cymru: Helping older people to live independently in their own homes.

- Tel: 0300 111 3333
- Web: www.careandrepair.org.uk

Free Home Safety Check: Free service provided by Fire & Rescue that covers much more than just fire safety.

- Tel: 0800 169 1234

Hoardings: A self help practical guide: Practical advice from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.

- Web: http://bit.ly/2s4tgMI
Skills and training

**Adult Learning Wales:** Support for community and workplace learning.

- Tel: 0345 4500 607
- Web: www.weacymru.org.uk

**Apprenticeship Matching Service:** Online listing of apprenticeships from Careers Wales.

- Tel: 0800 028 4844
- Web: http://bit.ly/1qpPaly

**Business Wales Skills Gateway:** Advice and guidance on how to improve your skills.

- Tel: 03000 6 03000
- Web: https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/

**Value my skills: Card game:** Great game available free of charge from TUC Unionlearn which helps you identify your transferable skills.

- Tel: 02920 347 010
- Web: http://bit.ly/1UictNT
Jobs and employment

**Age of No Retirement:** Challenges negative stereotypes about work and age.

- Web: www.ageofnoretirement.org

**Careers Wales:** Search for jobs and courses throughout Wales.

- Tel: 0800 028 4844
- Web: www.careerswales.com

**Chwarae Teg:** Supporting women of all ages to succeed in the workplace.

- Tel: 0300 365 0445
- Web: www.cteg.org.uk

**PRIME Cymru:** Prince’s Initiative for Mature Enterprise in Wales. Provides practical support for people aged 50+ who want to become and remain economically active.

- Tel: 0800 587 4085
- Web: www.primecymru.co.uk

**WorkSMART:** Website from the TUC covering guides to your rights at work.

- Web: https://worksmart.org.uk/