

Heneiddio'n Dda  
yng Nghymru

Ageing Well  
in Wales



# A guide to setting up a community learning club

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.

For more information, contact us on:

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# Introduction

**“Life is a continual learning process. Each day presents an opportunity for learning.”**

**Lailah Gifty Akita**

You're never too old to learn something new. Everyone has a skill or talent to share.

Learning isn't just about gaining skills and knowledge, its also a great way to meet people, make friends, and have fun.

Learning is also good for you, and is one of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, a set of actions that have been shown to promote wellbeing.

For more information, visit:

[www.ageingwellinwales.com/learning](http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/learning)

For more on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, visit

[www.fivewaystowellbeing.org](http://www.fivewaystowellbeing.org)

# About this guide

This guide provides practical tips for setting up your own community learning club. It also highlights organisations and resources that can help.

Starting your own club might seem really daunting, but it doesn't need to be. With the help of a few like-minded people, you'll be surprised at what you can achieve.

Additional guides and help for setting up general community groups can be found in the **Useful Resources** section of this guide.

# Everyone has a skill to share

Learning isn't just about courses, exams and qualifications. Learning is also about sharing.

We all have skills and knowledge that we can share, whether it be cooking, gardening, DIY, a love of film or music, dancing, different languages, using the internet, local history, or arts and crafts.

What might seem obvious to you can be a valuable learning opportunity for others, whether it be how to wire a plug or bake a cake.

# The U3A: A great way to learn

The U3A (University of the Third Age) is an international organisation for older people where they can enjoy educational, creative, and leisure activities in a friendly environment.

U3A groups are volunteer-led learning co-operatives run by their members. They draw upon the skills, knowledge and experience of members to organise interesting and fun activities.

U3A members provide opportunities to study subjects as varied as art, science, languages and computing, as well as engaging in practical skills such as photography or craft work and physical activities such as walking.

The U3A believes in learning for pleasure. There are no assessments or qualifications, and groups are open to all who are retired or semi-retired (don't let the University bit of the name scare you off).

There are U3As all over Wales. To find out if there's a U3A near you, or to help start a new one, visit [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk) or phone the National Office on **0208 466 6139**.

# GrandFest: Inspiring learning between generations

GrandFest is a festival organised by the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) which celebrates the skills of older people. In the festival, GrandMakers, older people over the age of 70, pass on the skills they have learnt and perfected to younger generations.

GrandFest has helped share skills including bread making, crocheting, weaving, wood turning and beer brewing to an enthusiastic audience of younger people.

The ideas behind GrandFest can be a great way to get people excited about learning.

Why not speak to local businesses, schools and libraries and see if there's any interest in sharing the skills and expertise of older people where you live?

You can find out more about GrandFest online at <https://grandfest.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk>

If you're interested in working with RVS on creating your own GrandFest-themed event, they'd love to hear from you at [grandfest@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk](mailto:grandfest@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk) or **02920 739 000**.

# Men's Sheds: Bringing people together

Men's Sheds are a way for men to pursue their interests, develop new ones, and to feel useful, fulfilled, and have a sense of belonging.

Men's Sheds are social groups based around the principles of kinship and friendship, set up in local communities for the benefit of men. Each shed is unique, built around the skills and interests of its members.

Men's Sheds support a huge array of activities. As well as focusing on practical skills such as woodwork, Shedders are also artists, collectors, storytellers, amateur historians, model makers and much more. All are welcome, and any interest, skill, or project is given equal consideration.

As well as encouraging lifelong learning, Men's Sheds are welcoming environments which help tackle loneliness and social isolation in their communities.

Men's Sheds is a movement growing rapidly throughout Wales. To find out if there's a Shed near you, or for help in setting up your own, contact Men's Sheds Cymru at [www.mensshedscymru.co.uk](http://www.mensshedscymru.co.uk) or on **01267 225 536**.

# The internet: A world of information and learning

There are loads of fantastic free learning courses and resources available online.

Want to learn a new language, find out more about history, or discover the wonders of astronomy? There is a free online course for you.

While online courses can be a great way to increase your own knowledge, why not consider getting some people together to share the experience?

Your club might be as simple as a few friends with a laptop, chatting about what you've learned over a tea or coffee.

Help on getting online, and a list of free online courses can be found in the **Useful Resources** section of this guide.

# OpenLearn: Free online learning from the Open University

OpenLearn is a website of free online learning resources from the Open University. The OpenLearn website has thousands of free learning items, from quizzes and games to full courses.

Whatever your interests, you're likely to find something of interest on OpenLearn. The website also has a Welsh language section.

The OU also support a network of OpenLearn Champions across Wales. OpenLearn Champions are given the knowledge and skills to use the OU's free learning resources to help learners in their communities.

For more information, visit [www.open.edu](http://www.open.edu).

To find out more about OpenLearn Champions, go to <http://bit.ly/OLChamps> or email [wales-partnerships@open.ac.uk](mailto:wales-partnerships@open.ac.uk).

# Support for community-based learning where you live

Many Local Authorities have an Adult Community Learning (ACL) department which supports community learning schemes.

In addition, Adult Learning Wales supports community learning activities through its branch network.

Your Local Authority and Adult Learning Wales can help you setting up a learning club by assisting with initial start-up costs and finding suitable venues, resources, and course materials.

Ask your Local Authority on what support they provide for community learning schemes.

To find out if there is an Adult Learning Wales branch near you or to start a new one visit [www.adultlearning.wales](http://www.adultlearning.wales) or phone **0345 4500 607**.

# Starting your club

Whatever type of group you're thinking of starting, there are some common questions you'll need to consider:

- What will your club do?
- How will I get people involved?
- What do I need to get started?
- Where will we meet?
- When should we meet?
- How do I let people know about the club?

Get in touch with your local Council. Many local authorities support adult education programmes in the community, and can help you get your club started.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a fantastic guide to starting up a local community group, the **Can Do Guide**. Details can be found in the **Useful Resources** section.

# What will your club do?

Do you want to share existing skills, or learn something new? Will you focus on one topic, practical skills or physical activities?

Be flexible, as your ideas might change as more people get involved.

Talk to other groups in your area. They can offer valuable advice and assistance. You might also find people keen to get involved and help out.

Your local library, Council or CVC (County Voluntary Council) can help you find existing learning clubs and community groups where you live. Contact details can be found in the **Useful Resources** section.

If you live near a college or university, ask if they support any lifelong learning activities locally?

If you already have a U3A or Men's Shed where you live, consider teaming up with them rather than starting a new group. If you'd like to setup a new U3A or Men's Shed, let them know so they can help you.

# How will I get people involved?

Whatever sort of club you start, you'll need people to join in.

You don't need lots of people to have a great group. Meeting with just a few others can be hugely rewarding.

Think about people you know who might be interested. Talk to friends, family and colleagues to see if they want to join in.

Put up a poster in your local library, supermarket or community centre asking people to get in touch if they'd be interested in taking part. Ageing Well in Wales can help you produce a poster or flyer.

If you're online, creating a group on Facebook or local interest website such as NextDoor can be a great way of finding people to get involved.

Be inclusive and be prepared to be flexible. If everyone feels involved, you're far more likely to have a successful group.

# What do I need to get started?

Depending on what sort of things you want to learn, you'll need different resources. Many councils have adult community learning (ACL) programmes which can help you with resources for learning

If you're cooking or baking, you'll need a kitchen and utensils. For practical activities, you'll need enough space and tools for everyone involved.

If you're using online resources, make sure that everyone is able to see and hear the course materials.

If you're learning from books, can you order enough copies from your local library?

Try and start with something that doesn't require you to buy or hire resources. Once your group is established, you can think about how to raise money for your club to expand the range of activities you offer.

# Where shall we meet?

Many groups meet at member's homes, and this can work really well.

However, meeting in a public space can make it less intimidating for new people to get involved.

Some ideas of places to meet:

- Library
- Café
- Pub
- Museum
- Local college / university
- Community centre
- Town or church hall

Your local Council and CVC (County Voluntary Council) can provide you with information on local meeting spaces.

# Some things to consider when picking a venue

- Is it easy to get to?
- Is the location well known?
- Is it on a bus route?
- Is parking available for people driving?
- Is it accessible for people with disabilities?
- Is there a cost involved in hiring the space? If so, how will you cover the costs? Think about asking members to pay a small subscription to cover costs.
- Is there suitable space?
- Do you have access to all the facilities you need?
- Do you have access to the internet, power, computers and screens / projectors if needed?
- Are lighting and noise levels conducive to learning?

# When shall we meet?

Having consistent, regular meeting dates and times is really useful when publicising your club, and makes it easier for people to get involved.

As your group gets larger, you will probably find it increasingly difficult to pick dates and times for meetings that are convenient for everyone. Try and aim for consensus and find dates and time that suit the majority of your members.

# How do I let people know about my club?

Once you have the basics about your club decided, you'll want to let people know about it.

Notices can be put up for free in most libraries, community centres and supermarkets. Ageing Well in Wales can help with producing posters.

If you're online, setting up a Facebook page for your group can be a great way to publicise your club, find new members, and keep in touch with existing ones.

# Running meetings

Once you have some members and somewhere to meet, you'll want to think about how you want to organise your meetings.

For your first meeting, take the time to let everyone introduce themselves and discuss what they want to get from the group. Have everyone suggest a skill they'd be willing to share – this can be a fun way to get to know each other, and you'll probably be surprised by the range of skills and knowledge available, even in a small group.

Setting an agenda in advance for each meeting helps people know what to expect, and helps meetings stay focused.

Don't allow the group to be dominated by a few people. Make sure that everyone gets a chance to have their say and be heard.

Whenever new people join the group, make sure to greet them and have existing members introduce themselves. Make an effort to talk to them after the meeting to get their thoughts.

There's no right or wrong way to run a group, so find a way that works for you. Remember that meetings should be fun, not a chore.

# Some other things to consider

Think about how to keep track of members – you'll want a written or electronic list of their contact details.

Consider how you'll be communicating with members – remember that not everyone may have access to email.

As your group grows, you may want to assign roles to different members to help manage things.

You might want to constitute your group, giving it an official status. This isn't essential, but is really useful if you want to carry out any fundraising for the group, or if you're managing money. Your local CVC (details in the **Useful Resources** section) can help you with this.

# Useful Resources

## Organisations that can help you

**Learning and Work Institute** 02920 370 900  
[www.learningandwork.wales](http://www.learningandwork.wales) // <http://xtlearn.net/p/sol>

**Men's Sheds Cymru** 01267 225 536  
[www.mensshedsymru.co.uk](http://www.mensshedsymru.co.uk)

**Open University** 0300 303 5303  
[www.open.ac.uk/wales](http://www.open.ac.uk/wales)

**Royal Voluntary Service** 0845 608 0122  
[www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk](http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk)

**U3A** 0208 466 6139  
[www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

**Colleges Wales** 02920 522 500  
[www.collegeswales.ac.uk](http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk)

**Adult Learning Wales** 0345 4500 607  
[www.weacymru.org.uk](http://www.weacymru.org.uk)

## Help setting up a community group

### **Can Do Guide from JRF**

[www.candoguide.org.uk](http://www.candoguide.org.uk)

### **Guide to setting up a new group from WCVA**

[www.wcva.org.uk/funding/advice/new-to-funding/setting-up-a-new-group](http://www.wcva.org.uk/funding/advice/new-to-funding/setting-up-a-new-group)

## Help with getting online

### **Get Online in Wales**

**0300 111 5050**

[getonline.digitalcommunities.gov.wales](http://getonline.digitalcommunities.gov.wales)

A free online directory of public places in Wales where you can use a computer, go online and get support.

### **Digital Communities Wales**

**0300 111 5050**

[digitalcommunities.gov.wales](http://digitalcommunities.gov.wales)

A Welsh Government project delivered by the Wales Co-operative Centre helping communities get online.

## Online learning resources

### **OpenLearn from Open University**

[www.open.edu/openlearn](http://www.open.edu/openlearn)

### **FutureLearn**

[www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com)

### **TED Talks**

[www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)

## Useful websites

### **DEWIS**

[www.dewis.wales](http://www.dewis.wales)

A new online service which provides information on local groups and services related to wellbeing around Wales

### **Facebook**

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Popular social media website - can be useful to find local activities and to promote your own.

### **NextDoor**

[www.nextdoor.co.uk](http://www.nextdoor.co.uk)

# List of all Welsh CVCs (Community Voluntary Councils)

**Anglesey**

**01248 724 944**

**Medrwn Môn**

[www.medrwnmon.org](http://www.medrwnmon.org)

**Blaenau Gwent**

**01633 241 550**

**GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations)**

[www.gavowales.org.uk](http://www.gavowales.org.uk)

**Bridgend**

**01656 810 400**

**BAVO (Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations)**

[www.bavo.org.uk](http://www.bavo.org.uk)

**Caerphilly**

**01633 241 550**

**GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations)**

[www.gavowales.org.uk](http://www.gavowales.org.uk)

**Cardiff**

**029 2048 5722**

**C3SC (Cardiff Third Sector Council)**

[www.c3sc.org.uk](http://www.c3sc.org.uk)

**Carmarthenshire**

**01267 245 555**

**CAVS (Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services)**

[www.cavs.org.uk](http://www.cavs.org.uk)

**Ceredigion** **01570 423 232**  
**CAVO (Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations)**  
[www.cavo.org.uk](http://www.cavo.org.uk)

**Conwy** **01492 534 091**  
**CVSC (Community & Voluntary Support Conwy)**  
[www.cvsc.org.uk](http://www.cvsc.org.uk)

**Denbighshire** **01352 744 000**  
**DVSC (Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council)**  
[www.dvsc.co.uk](http://www.dvsc.co.uk)

**Flintshire** **01633 241 550**  
**FLVC (Flintshire Local Voluntary Council)**  
[www.flvc.org.uk](http://www.flvc.org.uk)

**Gwynedd** **01286 676 626**  
**Mantell Gwynedd**  
[www.mantellgwynedd.com](http://www.mantellgwynedd.com)

**Merthyr Tydfil** **01685 353 900**  
**VAMT (Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil)**  
[www.vamt.net](http://www.vamt.net)

**Monmouthshire** **01633 241 550**  
**GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations)**  
[www.gavowales.org.uk](http://www.gavowales.org.uk)

**Neath Port Talbot** **01639 631 246**  
**NPTCVS (Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service)**  
[www.nptcv.com](http://www.nptcv.com)

**Newport** **01633 241 550**  
**GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations)**  
[www.gavowales.org.uk](http://www.gavowales.org.uk)

**Pembrokeshire** **01437 769 422**  
**PAVS (Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services)**  
[www.pavs.org.uk](http://www.pavs.org.uk)

**Powys** **01597 822 191**  
**PAVO (Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations)**  
[www.pavo.org.uk](http://www.pavo.org.uk)

**Rhondda Cynon Taf** **01443 846 200**  
**Interlink RCT**  
[www.interlinkrct.org.uk](http://www.interlinkrct.org.uk)

**Swansea** **01792 544 000**  
**SCVS (Swansea Council for Voluntary Service)**  
[www.scvs.org.uk](http://www.scvs.org.uk)

**Torfaen** **01495 742 420**  
**TVA (Torfaen Voluntary Alliance)**  
[www.tvawales.org.uk](http://www.tvawales.org.uk)

**Vale of Glamorgan**

**01446 741 706**

**GVS (Glamorgan Voluntary Service)**

[www.gvs.wales](http://www.gvs.wales)

**Wrexham**

**01978 312 556**

**AVOW (Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham)**

[www.avow.org](http://www.avow.org)

**For more information and resources on improving opportunities for learning and employment, please visit:**

**[www.ageingwellinwales.com/learning](http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/learning)**