

WLGA Briefing

Age Friendly Cities and Communities

Welsh Public Sector Engagement and
Local Authority Participation

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Purpose

This briefing sets out an opportunity for public sector organisations, and specifically local authorities in Wales, to join with other parts of the UK and regions within Europe to collaborate on developing policy and practice to create age friendly places by 2020. The Ageing Well in Wales Programme, of which local authorities are key strategic partners, is linking with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and European Networks to ensure that Wales has the opportunity to participate and collaborate at a local and national level.

Background

Europe has a rapidly ageing population and parts of Wales can already see the effects of demographic change amongst their communities and on their resources, with a significant and growing percentage of their communities now 50+ years. Councils are already planning to adapt but there is value in sharing and learning from others to create a coordinated and strategic approach across Wales.

The public sector and governments at all levels accept that future policy and practice will need to reflect this unprecedented global trend and that greater emphasis on integrated policies that connect agendas for the environment, housing, health and social care is the most appropriate way forward.

Led by the WHO and supported through global networks, the WHO have produced a strategy and action plan for *Healthy Ageing in Europe 2012-2020* which gives invaluable insight into how small and subtle changes can significantly improve the daily lives of older people and how integrated action is the most appropriate way forward.

Their strategy is underpinned by evidence based practice, toolkits and guidelines to support local agencies amend policy and practice. It articulates that “postponing implementation of healthy ageing policies in a period of austerity may prove more costly in the long term and can be counter-productive to the sustainability of agencies and social policy”.

Within the Welsh and local context, the public sector and in particular local councils consistently recognise that integrated policy and practice, working with and listening to

communities whilst placing the voice of older people at the centre of local delivery is the way forward to reshape places, policies and practice. Councils have led the way in implementing joined up action as part of the Older People's Strategy and the first round of Integrated Plans is a key vehicle to capitalise on the connectivity of aligning local authority, the NHS and other partners' contribution.

Phase Three of the Strategy for Older People (2013-2023), which will be launched in May 2013, will identify 'creating age friendly places' as a key priority within the overall concept of improving the wellbeing of older people (defined as 50yrs+). The contribution of reshaping social, environmental and financial resources to this overall goal is a vital element to achieving success. Councils therefore are best placed to lead this action at local and national level.

The '*Ageing Well in Wales*' Programme

This five year strategic programme, supported by the WLGA and other national partners, is hosted within the Office of the Commissioner for Older People in Wales. Immediate priorities for action were agreed in 2012. One key strategic strand of its 2013-2015 plan is to develop ways in which councils and partners can respond to demographic change.

A unique element of Ageing Well in Wales is its commitment to ensure that Wales links with European partners on specific themes of active healthy ageing in order to enhance local action across Wales and improve opportunities for individual councils and their partners to draw down vital external funding.

Since the autumn of 2012, the programme has been participating in the European action group on creating sustainable age friendly communities. Welsh councils therefore have a voice at this European level and their achievements are well regarded.

In March 2013, *Ageing Well in Wales* held an engagement event on how to take forward work that would assist with creating age friendly communities in Wales. One key outcome was the support for an All Wales Thematic Network on Age Friendly Communities that councils could participate within as an additional mechanism to assist them share, adapt and implement bespoke action across Wales. Another significant outcome from the day was the desire from local agencies to work with the WHO and its networks, including the influential and highly regarded Age Platform Europe which is promoting joined up action lead by senior decisions makers from across Europe. Our involvement in this global network is beginning to show the potential benefit for Wales and we have highlighted the potential to adapt the WHO guidelines and principals to reflect the nuances of distinct local, community, valley and rural settings which typifies Wales. Future engagement has the potential for Wales to lead the way and play a significant role in this particular aspect of future development.

The Dublin Summit in June 2013 and Declaration of Commitment

Under the auspices of the Irish Presidency of the European Union, senior political representatives of European cities, municipalities, communities and regions are gathering together at a Summit on "Age friendly communities" in June 13-14 in Dublin. Wales has been invited to participate and attend the summit which is funded by the EC. Wales, should

they wish to do so, have also been invited to join a public declaration of signing up to a common set of principles and actions that will be known as the Dublin Declaration. A similar initiative occurred in Madrid in 2007 which helped to strengthen collaborative action across Europe.

The principles and the commitment proposed within the Dublin Declaration align fully with existing Welsh policy and local plans to implement the Older People Strategy in Wales. These are shown in the Appendix to this document.

In June 2013 the Welsh Government will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Irish Government on healthy active ageing. Engagement from local government will complement the Welsh commitment to work collaboratively on these issues.

Local Authority Engagement

Recognising that it may be difficult for all councils in Wales to attend this event, working with the EC and Age Platform Europe, a system has been devised to allow individual councils to remotely sign the declaration. WLGA in collaboration with the Ageing Well in Wales Programme would facilitate this for councils wishing to take up this offer.

Age Platform Europe is currently submitting a bid for EC funding to underwrite the participation of councils across selected parts of Europe to a European-wide Age Friendly Network open to politicians and senior officers embarking on age friendly implementation. Wales is supporting the development of this bid which if successful (July 2013) would give us an influential and prestigious place within this European forum.

Decision

Councils are invited to:

- Consider the merits of engaging in a Wales and European wide network of excellence and innovation to create Age Friendly Communities by 2020.
- Determine whether they wish to make a public declaration of intent as set out by the proposed Dublin Declaration (with the WLGA to coordinate representation through remote arrangements)
- Consider participation and attendance at the Summit to be held in Dublin which is free to a maximum of 200 delegates.
- Participate within the thematic network on creating Age friendly communities coordinated by the Ageing Well in Wales programme
- Support further dialogue through the WLGA with the WHO for Wales to contribute to adapting their guidelines for communities using Welsh communities as pilot sites.

Appendix one

THE DUBLIN DECLARATION ON AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE 2013

On the occasion of the 'EU Summit on Active and Healthy Ageing', held in Dublin, Ireland on the 13-14 June 2013, under the Irish Presidency of the European Union, we, the mayors and senior political representatives of European cities, municipalities, communities and regions unanimously declare the following:

We will:

Promote the 'Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe 2013' (Dublin Declaration 2013) in appropriate national and international forums, fostering the maximum adherence possible to its values, principles and premises, in terms of plans, programmes and resources, in order to implement the commitments in this Declaration within a reasonable period of time.

Collaborate with all relevant regional and local stakeholders to support the full application of the pledges in the Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe 2013, including cooperation with the WHO European Regional Office and its Network of Cities committed to developing age-friendly environments as part of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. This will involve commencing a multi-year cycle of continual assessment and improvement to make their environments more age-friendly.

Communicate through local and regional channels and networks between the various cities and communities to stimulate and support advances in the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for older citizens and to share learning about advances in policies and practices which improve their lives.

Supporting Pledge

The undersigning cities and communities also pledge, where it is within their area of responsibility and economically feasible, to further the following specific actions, and to incorporate them into key planning instruments to strengthen long term sustainability: Promote among the general public **awareness of older people**, their rights, needs, and potentials, and highlight the positive social, economic and cultural contribution they make.

Ensure that the views and opinions of older people are valued and listened to and that structures and **processes of citizen-centred engagement** are developed to ensure that older people have an adequate involvement in decision making and are actively involved in the design and creation of innovation and change.

Adopt measures to develop **urban spaces and public places** that are inclusive, sharable and desirable to all, including older people, and ensure that publicly used buildings promote the dignity, health and well-being of users of all ages, and are fit for purpose to meet the changing needs of an ageing society.

Promote and support the development of neighbourhoods and communities for all ages that are diverse, safe, inclusive and sustainable, and that include **housing** for older people that is of the highest quality. Particular attention should be given to the needs of older people in assisted living, residential care and nursing homes where their dignity and autonomy is at greater risk.

Work to establish **public transport systems** that are available and affordable to all, including older people, and are 'seamless' within and across the various modes of transport that exist. The transport systems should also promote and facilitate personal transport use, such as cycling and driving by older people.

As these become more difficult, personal alternatives such as affordable taxis and car-pooling, which interconnect with the public system, should be made available.

Promote the **participation of all, including older people, in the social and cultural life** of their community by making available a diverse range of events and activities that are accessible, affordable and tailored to be inclusive of them and promote their integration into the community. This should include the promotion of intergenerational activities.

Promote and support the development of **employment and volunteering opportunities** for all, including older people, and recognise their positive contribution, and include the provision of **lifelong learning** opportunities in order to empower older people and promote their autonomy.

Ensure that a comprehensive and integrated range of affordable, easily accessible, age-friendly and high quality **community support and health services** is available to all, including older people, to include health promotion and prevention programmes, community-based support services, primary care, secondary acute hospital, rehabilitation services, specialist tertiary, long-term residential and compassionate end of life care.

Dublin, 13 June 2013

SIGNATURES OF CITY MAYORS, COMMUNITIES AND REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES: