

Heneiddio'n Dda
yng Nghymru

Ageing Well
in Wales

Rhaglen bartneriaeth ar gyfer gweithredu ar y cyd
ar draws Cymru ac yn Ewrop
.....
A partnership programme for collaborative action
across Wales and in Europe



Ageing Well in Wales:

Introduction to Co-Producing Age-Friendly Environments with Older People in Wales

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.

The Ageing Well Programme is actively supported by Welsh Government and key national organisations. It has a rapidly growing network of members encompassing diverse organisations and interests across Wales. Strong links are also maintained with partners across Europe, reflecting Wales being awarded the highest three star Reference Site status as part of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA).

For more information, email ageingwell@olderpeoplewales.com or refer to our website, www.ageingwellinwales.com.

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¹ http://afeinnovet.eu/sites/default/files/AFE-INNOVNET_D4.3_FINAL.pdf

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Introduction

This guide is designed as an introduction to the rationale and practice of co-producing age-friendly environments with older people. In a clear and straightforward way the guide makes the case for why it is essential to make older people equal partners at every stage of developing age-friendly environments. The new Social Services and Well-being Act places co-production at the heart of how we will work together to create better connected, fairer and more resilient communities for our future.

The guide also presents an overview of the core principles that need to be taken into account when developing such an approach. Co-production Wales have been essential to our considerations.

What are Age-Friendly Environments?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age.

A city or community is age-friendly when it enables people of all ages to actively participate, treats everyone with respect regardless of their age, and protects the most vulnerable. It is a place that helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages. Becoming age-friendly means listening to people in order to understand what they want and need as they age.

In 2007, the WHO published a guide that defines key factors associated with becoming age-friendly². It looks at eight domains of citizens' lives which impact on how people age. These domains are: housing, transportation, urban spaces and built environment, social participation, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, access to community support and health services, and communication and information. These form the eight petals of the WHO flower:



² http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

By gathering older people's needs and views, local and regional authorities can identify needs in each of these eight domains. Older people themselves are best placed to say how their community can become a better place for its ageing population. It is also important to consult all age groups to ensure that local and regional authorities take into account the needs of all generations.

Why should Public Authorities become more Age-Friendly?

Demographic change pushes local and regional authorities to adapt their cities, communities and regions to the needs of an ageing population, and to identify ways to help people live independently and actively for longer. Public authorities are responsible for social services, healthcare, education and training, entrepreneurship, the labour market, infrastructure and transport. Their action is thus crucial to allow older people to participate in communities, prevent isolation and make goods and services more accessible to all.

Age-friendly environments empower people to live healthy and independent lives for longer. This lowers the pressure put on family carers, formal care facilities and thus on public budgets. It supports people to actively contribute to the social and economic life of their community, through consumption of local goods and services, employment and volunteering.

In a 2011 study, it was shown that people aged 65+ made a net contribution of €47 million to the UK economy³. This includes contributions through taxation, spending, provision of unpaid care and the value of their volunteering. With populations ageing, it is estimated that this contribution will grow to €90 million by 2030.

Beyond economic benefits, age-friendly environments are also a means to ensure that the rights of older persons are protected, regardless of their age and abilities. While older people benefit from equal opportunities to participate in their communities and to age in dignity, all ages can benefit from age-friendly environments. For example better accessibility of outdoor spaces and transport is useful for families with pushchairs, travellers with heavy luggage and people with disabilities.

Last but not least, creating age-friendly environments is a great way to bring different partners together (policy-makers, employers, services providers, social actors, citizens, etc.) and make cities and regions more inclusive and dynamic through the participation of all citizens, regardless of their age.

³ http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/gold_age_report_2011.pdf

Co-production of Age-Friendly Environments

Co-production is a term that is being used more and more in Welsh political and civil life. Public services are changing both at national and local levels, and in every sector. Service providers are being asked to do more and more, with less and less money. In response they are increasingly adopting co-production as a way of delivering better services, while using budgets and resources in a more effective, relevant way.

This is the definition from Co-Production Wales (All In This Together) (www.allinthistogetherwales.wordpress.com) of co-production:

“Co-production enables citizens and professionals to share power and work together in equal partnership, to create opportunities for people to access support when they need it and to contribute to social change.”

What it means in practice is acknowledging that everyone is an expert in their own life and needs and that enabling people to support each other builds strong and resilient communities.

And that helps strengthen the relationship between citizens and service providers, improving the outcomes for everyone.

Traditionally, service providers ask the ‘tick-box’ questions: *what do you need, what are you eligible for, how do you fit into the system?* With co-production, the questions become a conversation: *what does a good life look like for you, what strengths can we build on, how can we work with you to achieve your goals?* It’s about thinking less about fitting people into services designed for a particular way of provision, and more about empowering people to contribute to their own requirements.

Co-produced activities draw on a wide range of experiences and perspectives, making it more likely that better, more affordable individual and community outcomes will be achieved and sustained.

In some ways this approach is nothing new. It is already happening in many settings and sectors. Regardless of what you call it, putting people first and building good relationships is the obvious way to get the best out of each other. Unfortunately, systems, processes and targets often get in the way of these simple interactions based on genuine conversations, and hinder rather than help.

Co-production is not about professionals handing over the services they cannot afford to run, and relying on unpaid volunteers instead. Co-production is about partnerships, equality, and social justice. Both service professionals and citizens are acknowledged as having expertise in different areas. Combining this expertise leads to more effective and relevant services and more engaged and empowered citizens. It means an equal and reciprocal relationship between local and regional authorities, professionals, service users and communities, above and beyond mere consultation. Hundreds of projects, groups and organisations across Wales are already working to these values. The evidence is there to show that it works.

The Welsh Government is endorsing co-production and, more importantly, is beginning to legislate to make it the norm for public services in Wales. In Wales we have an extraordinary opportunity to turn words in to deeds: our *Social Services & Well-being Act* places co-production at its heart and it is a core principle of the *Prudent Healthcare* strategy, strongly championed by our Health Minister Mark Drakeford:

“... one of the most exciting opportunities we have to bring together the knowledge, experience and contributions of those who work in our public services and those who use them... recalibrating power through new relationships based on trust.”

By doing so, older citizens are considered as active agents of change, with the skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of innovative solutions to demographic change, and with the ability to assume a leadership role in decision-making processes.

What are the principles of co-production?

The seven principles that form the basis of the co-production methodology for age-friendly environments⁴ are:

1. Older people are involved in the entire process from beginning to end

2. Older people feel safe to speak and be heard

There are clear agreements about how people can work together and support each other. Ground rules are developed and agreed by the group.

There are a variety of ways for people to get involved and to contribute. In particular participation is not restricted just to verbal contributions. A variety of creative techniques are used to ensure everyone can participate, particularly those who may lack confidence.

At least half of the people in the room are older people. Different stakeholders are invited to participate in the group (policy makers, non-profit organisations, service providers, etc.).

3. Issues relevant to older people are addressed

Older people contribute to setting the agenda and defining the problem to be solved. Their views and understanding of what constitutes an Age-Friendly Environment within their community are central to the process.

4. The decision making process is clear

There is an agreement about how decisions are made and how they are recorded.

5. The skills and experience of older people are central to the process of change

There is a culture of respect and value for the views of older people. People's skills and experiences should be reflected in their role within the group and contribution to meetings. Recognition should be given for the time people give, and facilitation provided ensuring that everyone has an equal voice.

⁴ Adapted from Sanderson & NDTI, 2009 (www.ndti.org.uk and www.helensandersonassociates.org.uk)

6. The meetings, materials and infrastructure are accessible to older people.

All written materials are in plain English and Welsh, avoid jargon and acronyms and meet access guidelines.

A hearing loop system and translation services are made available as needed.

Practical issues are addressed such as ensuring there is transport available for people to attend meetings, and claiming expenses is easy and convenient.

Venues used for meetings are accessible and on major bus routes.

The time of the day and the place works for people (for example starting mid-morning and providing lunch). Breaks are provided to enable people to talk and connect.

7. Progress is evaluated through looking at real changes in the lives of older people and agreeing how this can be measured.

At the heart of the WHO improvement cycle for Age-Friendly Environments is agreeing the actions that should be prioritised, how to implement these actions and how to measure their impact. Underpinning the process of co-production should be the four key questions:

- **What do we want to change?**
- **Why do we want to change it?**
- **How will we make this change?**
- **How will we demonstrate what has changed?**

Further Reading

To find out more about co-production with older people we recommend:

- Older People and Co-Production: Helen Bown, www.otbds.org.
- Co-production involving and led by older people. An Evidence and Practice Review. Helen Bown and Tom Raines www.ndti.org.uk.
- A guide to co-production and older people – don't just do it – co-produce it and live it. www.ndti.org.uk and www.helensandersonassociates.org.uk.
- Guidelines for co-producing age friendly environments with older people. D.4.3 Participatory method to involve end-users (older people): in co-production of AFE solutions by LRAs and older people, to be used for the future Covenant http://afeinnovnet.eu/sites/default/files/AFE-INNOVNET_D4.3_FINAL.pdf



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