



Ards and North Down's
Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan
2023 - 2027
A great place to live and grow older

An initiative of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down



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Foreword from the Mayor of Ards and North Down



Ards and North Down's second Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2027) is a commitment to people, of all ages, that this area should be 'A Great Place to Live and Grow Older'.

Our ageing population brings with it both opportunities and challenges and it is essential that all organisations, making decisions on behalf of the public, ensure that environments are created that allow people to flourish as they age. We all want to live healthy, active and engaged lives.

The experiences of our older population should be celebrated, and it is important that we recognise the contribution people of all ages make.

Significant progress towards being Age Friendly was made during the span of the first strategy. An Over 50s Council has been established, walkability audits have been piloted, a Big Guide to Age Friendly Services and Support has been published and numerous Age Friendly roads shows and activities have taken place.

Ards and North Down's Over 50s Council has had an important role to play in the creation of this second strategy, and in particular the actions that members of the Age Friendly Alliance have committed to undertake. 'Nothing for us without us' is a mantra by which this strategy and action plan has been created.

We are grateful that funding from the Public Health Agency and Ards and North Down Borough Council has allowed us to continue working towards being Age Friendly.

I look forward to seeing how this strategy and action plan, through increased collaboration, enables us to make all communities across Ards and North Down Age Friendly.

Councillor Jennifer Gilmour
Mayor of Ards and North Down

October 2023

Age Friendly and the Big Plan for Ards and North Down

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down was published on 30 March 2017 as part of a process known as community planning.

The purpose of community planning is to improve how public agencies work together, with local people, to plan and delivery better services. The plan, called the BIG Plan, is aspirational and describes the positive outcomes for everyone we will work in partnership to achieve.



Due to Ards and North Down's ageing population, becoming Age Friendly was the first workstream agreed as part of the community planning process. It is essential that public services and infrastructure, designed and implemented today, will still be relevant to the Borough's population in future years.

Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership agreed to work towards the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Status, and in doing so established an Age Friendly Alliance. The Age Friendly Alliance is a partnership of organisations who deliver public services (including health, education, libraries, housing, transport) as well as community and voluntary organisations who deliver important programmes for people who live in Ards and North Down.



Becoming Age Friendly is a priority of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down.

Ards and North Down's Age Friendly Strategy provides a framework to help make our Borough a great place to grow older and an area in which everyone, regardless of age, is valued and respected.

The action plan sets out commitments from the Age Friendly Alliance and identifies actions its members will undertake over the next four years.

Becoming Age Friendly in Ards and North Down

What does being 'Age Friendly' mean?

An Age Friendly community, or area, is one in which people of all ages can live healthy and active lives and where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age. As we live longer, there are huge opportunities to create vibrant communities. Our Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan focuses on how to make Ards and North Down 'A Great Place to Live and Grow Older'.

How we are delivering Age Friendly in Ards and North Down

In 2016, Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Strategic Community Planning Partnership, recognised that having an ageing population is a significant issue for this area. It was agreed to follow the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance on how to become Age Friendly. WHO divides Age Friendly into eight separate themes (domains). Our strategy and action plan is built around these.

Following the establishment of an Age Friendly Alliance, the first Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan was published in 2019. There was enthusiasm and commitment from the partner organisations to deliver these actions, but unfortunately a lot of the work was delayed by the Covid-19 global health pandemic.

The structure of age friendly is represented in figure 1

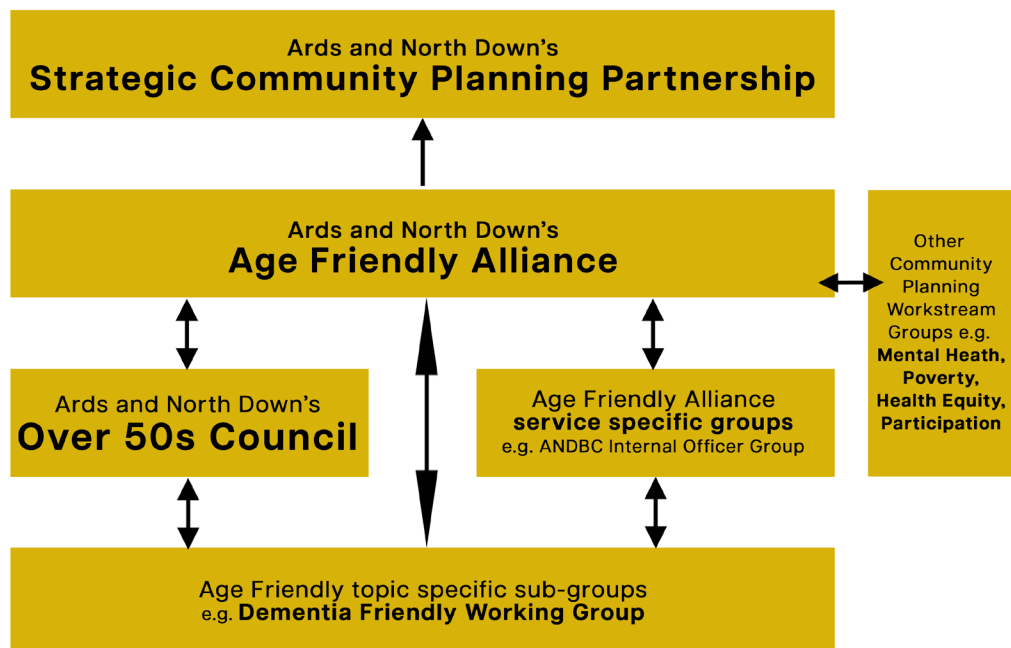


Figure 1: AND Age Friendly Structure

Review of Ards and North Down's Age Friendly Strategy & Action Plan 2019-2022

Ards and North Down's first Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan was published in 2019. The actions included were identified via a public engagement initiative known as the Big Conversation. Actions were also put forward by members of the Age Friendly Alliance.

The Strategy and Action Plan were initially delivered by a part-time Age Friendly Co-ordinator. In 2022, following enhanced funding from the Public Health Agency a full-time Age Friendly Co-ordinator was appointed.

Highlights from Age Friendly activities are shown in figure 2.



Figure 2: Age Friendly Highlights

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic delayed many of the planned activities set out in the first Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan. Age Friendly Alliance members activities shifted to help ensure that older people were supported as they isolated in their homes. Organisations worked together to reduce social isolation, loneliness and provide practical support.



Big Conversation Panel of 3 surveys to gather feedback on priority issues for all people in Ards and North Down

Work started to gather information to include in a **guide to services** (action as a result of information gathered during survey of older people in 2020)

Continued to work with partners to provide Covid-19 Support via a **Community Support Steering Group**.

2021

Funding from PHA for full time Age Friendly Co-ordinator

Recruited members for Ards and North Down's **Over 50s Council**

Three **walkability audits** of Ward Park undertaken

Three **Positive Ageing Events** took place in Comber, Bangor and Kircubbin

The BIG Guide to Age Friendly published and hard copies distributed

Established a council **internal Age Friendly officer group**



2022



One Age Friendly **Tea Dance**

Two **Coronation Tea Dances**

Six meetings of **Over 50s Council**

Launch of the **Herbert Protocol** to help people and their families living with Dementia

Review of Age Friendly Strategy and Action plan with AF Alliance and Over 50s Council

Two **Positive Ageing Roadshows** in Kircubbin and Newtownards

New Strategy & Action Plan agreed

2023

The Eight Age Friendly Themes

The World Health Organisation identified eight separate themes that an area should consider when developing actions that will help in its aspiration to be Age Friendly.



Respect and inclusion

Being age friendly considers how to ensure that older people feel respected and included within society. The level of respect and inclusion a person can feel rather depends on culture, gender, health status and economic status. The extent to which older people participate in the social, civic and economic life of where they live is closely linked to their experience of inclusion.



Social Participation

Being age friendly considers the connection between social participation and social support to good health and wellbeing throughout a person's life. Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community, as well as with the family, allows older people to continue to exercise their independence, to enjoy respect and esteem.



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Being age friendly considers how the outside environment and public buildings impact on the mobility, independence, and quality of life of people throughout all ages. The ability of a person to "age in place" is important. Recurring issues to consider under this theme are quality of life, and access and safety of spaces and buildings.



Communication and Information

Being age friendly considers how to ensure that communities have relevant information that is readily accessible to older people with varying capacities and resources. Staying connected with events and people and getting timely, practical information to manage life and meet personal needs is vital for active and positive ageing.



Community and Health

Being age friendly considers the availability of health and support services to maintain the health of people and their independence in their own homes and within the community. It is important to age well and to understand and promote how people can, in many circumstances, take control of their own well being to feel healthy and well for as long as possible.



Civic Participation

Being age friendly considers how a person continues to contribute to their communities after they have retired from formal work. Many continue to provide unpaid and voluntary work for their families and communities. Age Friendly provides options for older people to continue to contribute to their communities through paid employment or voluntary work, if they so choose, and be engaged in the political process.



Housing

Being age friendly considers how housing is essential to safety and wellbeing. There is a link between appropriate housing and access to community and social services that influences the independence and quality of life of older people. Housing and support that allow older people to age comfortably and safely within their community are universally valued.



Transport

Being age friendly considers how transportation, including accessibility and affordable public transport, is a key factor influencing active ageing. Being able to move about an area (urban, rural and connections between areas) determines social and civic participation as well as access to community and health services and public spaces.

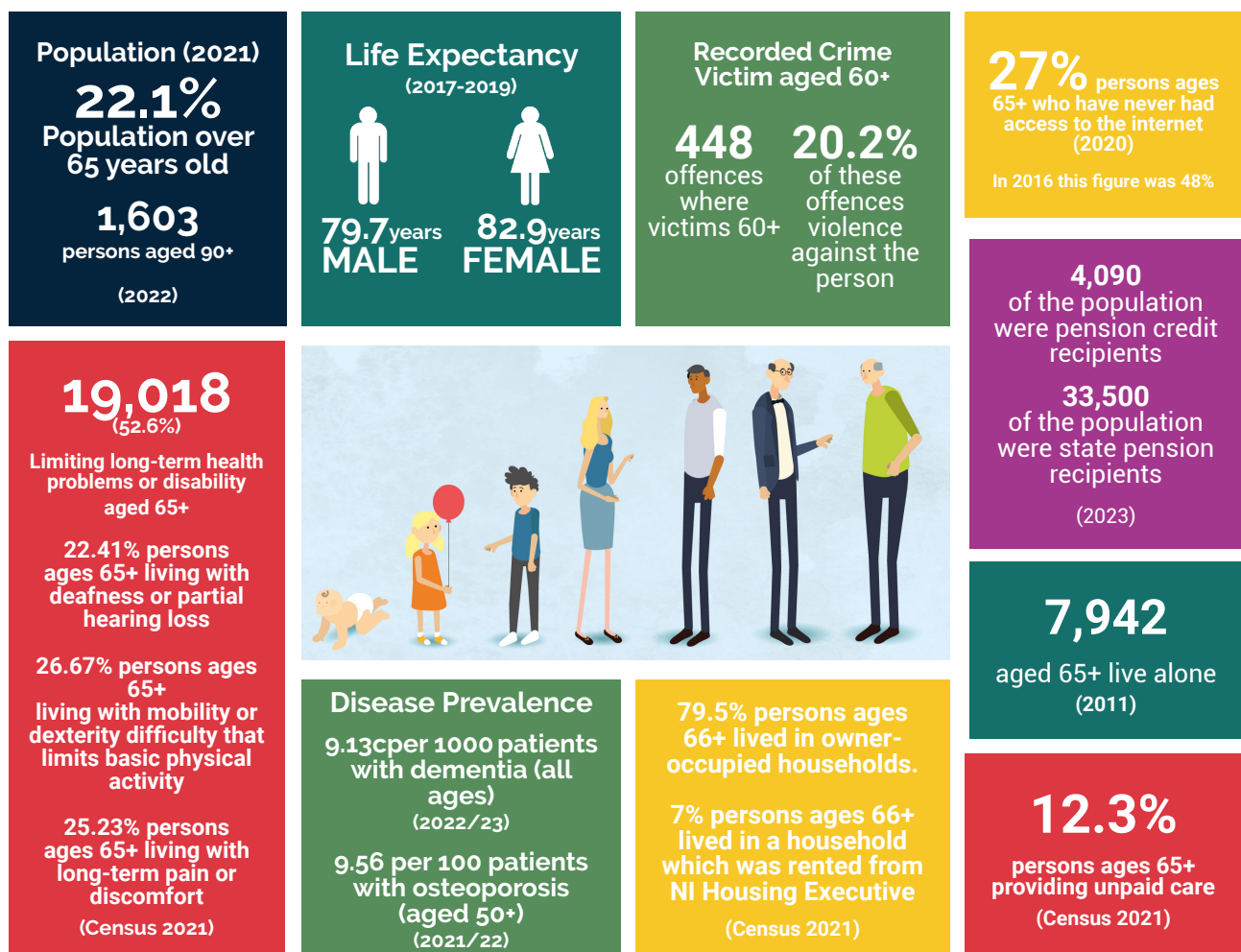
An Age Friendly Profile for Ards and North Down

An Age Friendly profile for Ards and North Down has been created using a range of statistics that show the experiences of older people across different Age Friendly themes.

We use statistical data to help understand if Ards and North Down is a great place to live and grow older. Statistics show the challenges people live with and we can use this information to try to design more appropriate services and infrastructure and measure the difference made.

In Ards and North Down, the number of people aged over 65 rose from 27,692 (17.7% of our total population) in 2011, to 36,226 (22.1%) in 2021. This shows that the population of Ards and North Down is getting older.

Figure 3. AND Statistical Baseline (Source: NISRA)



Feedback from a survey of people aged over 50 years (January 2020)

In January 2020, a survey was undertaken to identify issues of concern for people over 50. This has been used to inform the development and implementation of Age Friendly actions across Ards and North Down. The Big Guide to Age Friendly Services was developed because of the feedback in this survey.

68%

Satisfaction Score for

Outdoor spaces & buildings

83%

Satisfaction Score for

Public spaces feel safe

66%

Satisfaction Score for

Cleanliness of public spaces

Negative feedback about dog fouling & neglected spaces

Less than half (**46%**) of the respondents feel valued in their community

14% either rarely or never receive as much help as they need in order to stay where they are living in a safe and healthy way

71% feel they have good access to information on local services

For most respondents their preferred methods of communication are leaflets and magazines. Their least preferred methods are text messages and eZines

It was suggested that a communication strategy specific to older people is needed

47% feel they are not asked for their views and **25%** don't have enough information to make informed decisions about local issues

50% of respondents would like more involvement in decision-making by the council and others

92% have home internet connection

52% of respondents who have no internet connection don't want to have an internet connection in their home because of concerns about the risk of fraud/scam through using the internet

27%

have concerns about staying safe on the internet



Age Friendly Action Plan 2023-2027

The Age Friendly Action Plan 2023-2027 contains actions that will enable Age Friendly Alliance members, and the Over 50s Council, to work towards the commitments made in this strategy. The actions are constantly under review and will be updated and added to as necessary.

This document provides a summary of the actions that will be undertaken over the next four years.



Three themes have been prioritised within the Age Friendly Action Plan. These are:

Respect and Inclusion

Social Participation

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

An **Extended Action Plan**, assigning actions to Alliance members, and containing specific targets and timescales is available by contacting Ards and North Down Borough Council Age Friendly Coordinator.

Website: ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Telephone: Age Friendly 0300 013 3333

Email: agefriendly@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

EXAMPLE of a more detailed action within the Extended Action Plan

Action: Audit outdoor spaces using age friendly methodology (seating, toilets, lighting, accessible parking, kerbs and pavements)

MEASURABLE Target: Undertaken one 'walkability' audit per year involving residents (Over 50s Council, Youth Voice and other consultative /interest groups) alongside decision makers/design teams to produce a report documenting potential improvements

Lead Partner: Ards and North Down Borough Council

Support Partners: Land owning Age Friendly Alliance Members e.g. Translink and NIHE





Respect and Inclusion

The Age Friendly Alliance will:
Promote a positive image of people ageing well

Involve Ards and North Down's Over 50's Council members in the development or review of relevant events, policies, and programmes

Increase awareness of JAM cards (and other similar cards) by promoting them to users, organisations and businesses

**This theme is about how people are planned for, treated and made to feel.
We will:**

1. Participate in Positive Ageing Month and advertise activities and events as widely as possible (**linked to social participation**)
2. Support and promote the work of AND Intergenerational Network to increase capacity and raise awareness of the benefits of intergenerational practice.
 - a. Create a local intergenerational day to celebrate older people (led by Over 50s Council)
3. Establish a Dementia Friendly sub-group to develop and implement an all-ages Dementia Friendly Action Plan
 - a. Work to increase the number of places and organisations with a commitment to work towards becoming dementia friendly and other age-related conditions
4. Identify areas where anti-social behaviour takes place and run campaigns that encourage people to respect where they live, respect others and respect themselves
5. Develop initiatives that protect vulnerable people and make them feel safe by reducing anti-social behaviour, crime, fear of crime, domestic violence abuse and coercive control
6. Develop and use Age Friendly criteria to review services delivered by Age Friendly Alliance Members



Social Participation



The Age Friendly Alliance will:
Promote participation by sharing positive stories and increasing opportunities for people to get involved

Share information on courses and opportunities for people to keep learning together across all age groups

This theme is about involvement and opportunities to be included in activities. We will:

1. Develop events/activities that appeal to a diverse age group and collate information on the number of events/activities that could be considered Age Friendly e.g. arts, sports and science programmes
 - a. Support and encourage older people to be active by providing more suitable opportunities e.g. active ageing programme (**linked to community and health**)
 - b. Review accessibility of buildings used for events/activities and increase the use of buildings that could be considered Age Friendly (**linked to outdoor spaces and buildings**)
2. Develop and agree a mechanism to promote and signpost events and activities that are Age Friendly



- a. Increase access to affordable activities that are age appropriate with convenient times and locations
- b. Map existing directories and current methods used to share information on social activities and events (**linked to communication and information**)



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The Age Friendly Alliance will:
Promote access to age friendly spaces

Promote anti-littering programmes including education, awareness raising and enforcement

Promote improved accessibility along pavements and roads by raising awareness of good practice via signage and publicity

This is about the suitability of public spaces and buildings. We will:

1. Audit outdoor public spaces using age friendly methodology

- Review provision and location of public seating
- Review provision and accessibility of public toilets
- Review provision of lighting in public areas
- Review provision of disability/accessible parking
- Identify concerns about pavement surface and kerbs

2. Increase opportunities for people of all-ages to access quality outdoor spaces

- a. Improve signage and develop walking trails of varying lengths
- b. Create safe cycle routes and provision of safe outdoor shelters
- c. Install more chatty benches

3. Audit public buildings using age-friendly methodology

- Review signage
- Review physical accessibility ([link to social participation](#))



Communication and Information



The Age Friendly Alliance will:

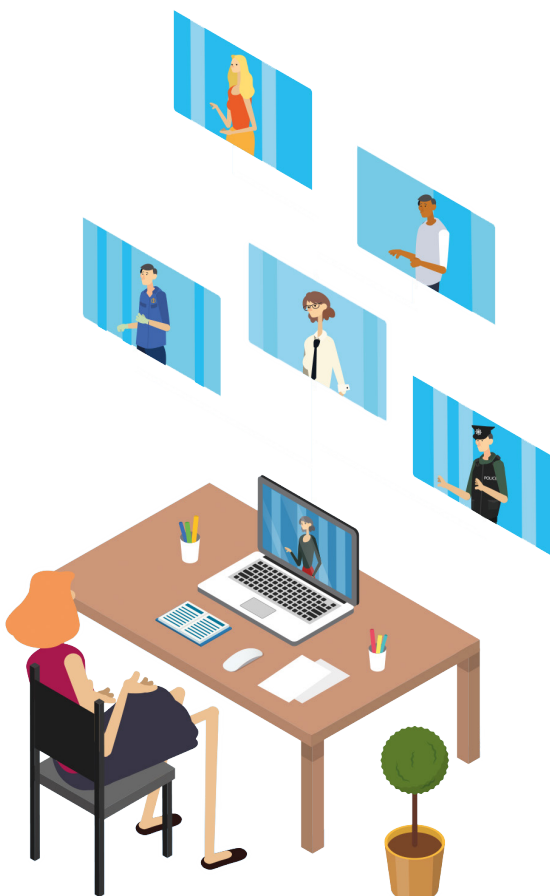
Write in plain English and make documents available in various formats such as easy read, audible, alternative languages and host information on websites with accessible features enabled such as browse aloud

Promote communication platforms with easy instructions on how to 'sign up' to receive appropriate communication

Promote opportunities for people to freely access digital technology

This theme is about how people receive and share information. We will:

1. Circulate the Ards and North Down Big Guide to Age Friendly and regularly update an online digital version
2. Identify existing communication platforms and develop a consistent message explaining how people can pro actively find out about what is happening in their area
3. Identify options that could be used to share information about what activities are available (**linked to social participation**)
4. Run digital training and digital inclusion programmes to help people increase their knowledge on how to access information and use digital technology





Community and Health

- The Age Friendly Alliance will:
- Establish links with health service providers and voluntary agencies**
 - Work with health service providers to ensure older people are prepared for emergency events**
 - Promote the importance of ICE (In Case of Emergency) details on mobile phones**
 - Promote uptake and participation in Active Ageing Programmes**
 - Promote the Here2Help and What3Words apps**

This theme is about people being healthy and active. We will:

1. Develop initiatives to support people to make better health choices
 - a. Create promotional material to increase awareness of the Chief Medical Officers 2019 physical activity guidelines
 - b. Signpost and promote existing physical activity programmes
2. Re-establish the network of community lifesavers to strengthen the chain of survival
 - a. Develop a campaign to encourage households to prominently display house numbers for emergency services to be able to find them
 - b. Provide CPR training to local organisation
 - c. Develop an Ards and North Down protocol for the location and maintenance of AEDs (defibrillators)
3. Relaunch the Message in Bottle campaign to ensure important medical and contact information is readily available
4. Engage with the Frailty Network to improve outcomes for those living with frailty.
5. Work with Ards and North Down's Poverty Forum, and other service providers, to deliver practical help to older people experiencing poverty (food, fuel and income)



Civic Participation



The Age Friendly Alliance will:
Promote opportunities for people to get involved in volunteering programmes

Encourage local communities to take ownership of local areas

Support older people to work and take part in civic life

This theme is about taking part in things that ‘give back’ to communities. We will:

1. Collate information on volunteering opportunities and share this through agreed communication platform (**linked to communication and information**)
2. Continue to run the Over 50s Council and Youth Council (Youth Voice) to ensure that feedback and participation is used to improve the delivery of public services and to identify important issues
3. Review representation on civic participation forums to make sure people of all-ages are represented
4. Explore the potential to introduce an Age Friendly Employers Pledge for businesses to encourage workplaces to be age-friendly



**The Age Friendly Alliance will:
Promote information and support available for older people to remain in
their own home for as long as is practicable**

**Promote information on energy efficiency and how to reduce the cost of
heating during the winter**

**This theme is about ensuring that people are safe and well cared for within
their living environment. We will:**

1. Provide and support services which enable people to live safely and independently within their own homes.
2. Provide a Home Safety Service to reduce the potential for accidents in the home for those who are most at risk
3. Provide a Home Safety Fire Check Service for people who are over 50 years, have a disability, impaired mobility, or a health condition that may impact a person's ability to acknowledge and respond to an emergency in the home
4. Increase energy efficiency within the local housing stock and lower costs to householders and help reduce fuel poverty



Transport

The Age Friendly Alliance will:
Lobby to ensure that transport is accessible, affordable, and helps address social and physical isolation



This theme is about improving the experiences of older people as they travel throughout Ards and North Down. We will:

1. Develop safe travel infrastructure that considers the needs of older people and increases integration of active travel and public transport network
2. Improve the experiences on public transport for disabled and older passengers through improvement to fleet, infrastructure, ticketing, and staff training

Measuring the Impact of Our Age Friendly Action Plan

The Extended Action Plan contains targets and identifies a lead partner from the Age Friendly Alliance. Information will be collected from lead partners to measure the impact that actions have had and an annual report published. This will be shared with Ards and North Down's Strategic Age Friendly Alliance (including PHA our funding partner), Ards and North Down Borough Council and Ards and North Down's Over 50s Council. A copy of the report will also be shared online and hard copies placed in public buildings across Ards and North Down.

Every six months Age Friendly Alliance members will review the Age Friendly Action Plan and update it as necessary. This may include amending actions.

During 2027, the Age Friendly Alliance and the Over 50s Council will review the Strategy and Action Plan. This will inform the development of the next Strategy and Action Plan in 2028.

Ongoing consultation and feedback

Lots of people, including the Over 50s Council, will be offered opportunities to provide feedback and practical engagement on individual actions within the plan. All residents are encouraged to provide feedback.

Feedback can be provided to agefriendly@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or by telephoning 0300 013 3333 and speaking to the Age Friendly Coordinator.

Join Ards and North Down's Over 50s Council



The role of the Over 50s Council is to provide feedback on issues and experiences of people who are over 50 years of age.

Members of the Age Friendly Alliance are invited to bring information on upcoming service changes, development of new services and policies, or other planned initiatives. These are discussed with Over 50s Council members and feedback is given to decision makers.

For more information Email agefriendly@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or Phone 0300 013 3333 and speak to the Age Friendly Coordinator

Members of the Age Friendly Alliance

AGEnda

Alzheimer's Society

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Co Down Rural Community Network

Dementia NI

Department of Finance

Education Authority (Youth Service)

Guide Dogs NI

Libraries NI

Linking Generations NI

National Trust

North Down and Ards Women's Aid

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Peninsula Healthy Living

Police and Community Safety Partnership

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Public Health Agency

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Sport NI

Translink

U3a (North Down and Ards)

Volunteer Now



Glossary of Terms

Community Planning

The process by which organisations who provide public services, businesses and voluntary groups and local communities work together to improve peoples' lives.

Community Planning Workstreams

Community planning groups used to review the progress of community planning actions and agree reports on progress to be presented to the Strategic Community Planning Partnership.

Strategic Community Planning Partnership

Strategic leaders from public sector organisations who are working together to deliver the Big Plan for Ards and North Down.

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down

Also known as the Big Plan or the Community Plan. A document setting out a 15-year vision for Ards and North Down that all members of the Strategic Community Planning Partnership are working towards achieving.

The Big Conversation

A survey associated with the Big Plan to gather feedback from the public on issues that are important to them.

The Big Conversation Panel

A series of three online surveys to help identify the impacts of Covid-19 on mental health, social isolation and poverty.

Age Friendly Alliance

A group of specialist organisations who are collectively working together to make sure Ards and North Down is a great place to live and grow older.

Age Friendly Themes

Thematic domains agreed by the World Health Organisation that should be considered as part of the application to be designated Age Friendly

Extended Age Friendly Action Plan

A more detailed version of the Age Friendly Action Plan containing measurable targets with Age Friendly Alliance Members named as Lead Partners against actions.

Over 50s Council

A group of people who are over 50 years of age who provide feedback to Age Friendly Alliance Members on improvements to policies and services for older people living in Ards and North Down.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

A specialised agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. The WHO Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide.



Respect and Inclusion

Social Participation



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Communication and Information



Community and Health

Civic Participation



Housing

Transport



The WHO Age Friendly Themes