

Age-friendly South Gloucestershire:

A strategy for living and ageing well



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Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Adults and Housing, I'm proud to present South Gloucestershire's new Age-friendly Strategy.

Our older residents make a vital contribution to our communities; through volunteering, care, experience, and civic participation. But too often, ageing is seen as a challenge rather than an opportunity. This strategy aims to change that. It aims to address the barriers that can prevent older people living their lives to the full, so that all members of our community of all ages benefit.

Becoming an Age-friendly Community means making South Gloucestershire a better place to grow older, and, in turn, a better place for everyone. It means creating neighbourhoods that are inclusive and accessible, where people can stay healthy, connected, and involved throughout their lives.

This strategy has been developed in close collaboration with older people, community organisations, and partners across the district. Their voices, experiences, and ideas have shaped its priorities and actions. I want to thank everyone who contributed to this work, your insights have been invaluable.

The strategy also complements the Council's emerging Local Plan, which recognises the importance of planning for an ageing population. Our vision for Age-friendly communities aligns closely with broader ambitions to deliver inclusive neighbourhoods, affordable and adaptable housing, improved transport, and access to green space and services.

We know that the work doesn't stop here. This strategy is just the beginning. Achieving its ambitions will take collaboration and shared ownership. I encourage local groups, services, businesses and residents to play a part in making South Gloucestershire truly Age-friendly.

Together, we can ensure that people of all ages are valued, supported, and able to thrive.

Cllr John O'Neill

Cabinet Member for Adults and Housing
South Gloucestershire Council





Our age-friendly vision

As the World Health Organisation explains:

“ Creating age-friendly environments enables all people to age well in a place that is right for them, continue to develop personally, be included, and contribute to their communities while enabling their independence and health.”

Our strategy is shaped by WHO Age-friendly Communities framework. This means we’re following global best practice while being shaped by local voices and priorities.

**Our shared overarching Age-friendly Vision is
“In South Gloucestershire, People, Communities, and all
Agencies work together to address Barriers and ensure
older People are enabled to live their Lives to the full.”**

Our strategy takes a whole-community approach to ageing. It recognises the important role older people play in our communities; their contributions are recognised and celebrated, and older people are empowered to have a voice and shape their community. Our vision highlights the need for everyone to work together addressing barriers, to create an inclusive, accessible, and supportive environment for everyone as they age.

Our strategy to achieve the vision is a shared commitment across public sector, voluntary and community organisations, housing associations, local business and residents to make South Gloucestershire more age-friendly. This vision also supports the broader goals set out in [South Gloucestershire Council’s Plan](#), such as:

- Supporting wellbeing and independence in our communities.
- Building better places with secure, affordable housing and good sustainable transport links.
- These priorities closely reflect the core values of an Age-friendly Community.

Cross-cutting themes

As this Age-friendly Strategy has developed, a number of important themes have emerged that cut across all eight of the World Health Organization's Age-friendly domains. These themes reflect the values and principles that will guide how we work together to deliver this strategy in South Gloucestershire.



Ageism and inclusion

This strategy is about addressing barriers and challenging ageism in a changing context. Many older people lead active lives including paid employment, community involvement and/ or family responsibilities. We want to promote these positive role models whilst ensuring that all older people have an opportunity to live varied independent lives, addressing the barriers to this. This strategy commits to reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion—ensuring that people from all backgrounds, including those from minority ethnic communities, disabled people, people who are LGBTQ+ , with caring responsibilities or in different personal circumstances, and those facing financial challenges, benefit from Age-friendly initiatives.



Prevention and early help

Some older people may face further issues as they age. Working together we aim to make a difference —before challenges become more complex. This includes working alongside people, understanding their lives and encouraging physical activity, reducing social isolation, helping people stay safe and independent at home, and improving access to transport. This approach aligns with the South Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Tackling Inequalities Action Plan (2024–28).



Partnership and collaboration

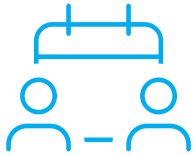
Creating an Age-friendly South Gloucestershire is a shared responsibility. We will continue working with older people themselves, voluntary and community groups, local businesses , Town and Parish Councils, , housing associations, health and care services. .



Voice and participation

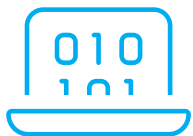
Older people want to be involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives, and to have the lives that match their aspirations. This strategy places co-production at its heart, ensuring that older people are central to designing, delivering and monitoring the work that follows. Age-friendly approaches benefit everyone in a community, and our work will seek to engage with all.

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL



Flexibility and learning

Older people are constantly adapting—whether through learning new skills, embracing digital tools, or joining intergenerational initiatives. We will take the same approach: learning from experience, listening to feedback, and adapting our ways of working to improve our Age-friendly approach.



Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion means that everyone has access to and can use digital technology, regardless of their background or circumstances. This is a core aspect now of how society works... digital inclusion is central to our strategy, identifying how best to enable people who find this challenging, whilst recognising the ability of many older people. We want support to be available to residents who need help to access digital services, so they can take advantage of technology and the benefits of being online. Digital inclusion becomes an enabler, it is not the solution, but provides a front door to accessing information and support.

No single organisation can deliver an Age-friendly area alone. We must work together including:

- Council services
- Town and Parish Councils
- NHS and health providers
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations
- Local businesses and employers
- All our Residents

We will adopt a shared model of leadership and collective action. Each organisation and group will take responsibility for relevant actions within the Age-friendly Action Plan. Progress will be overseen through an active partnership.

What does Age-friendly mean and why does this matter in South Gloucestershire?

In 2021, nearly **111,000** people were aged over 50, that's **38.2%** of the population. Around **55,000** of those were aged 65 or over. This age group has been growing quickly, doubling in size over the last 20 years, and it's set to keep growing. By 2041, the number of people aged 50 and over is expected to rise by **17.9%**. Those aged 75 and over are predicted to make up **11.4%** of the population, compared to **9.3%** in 2021.

The Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) further points out that of the expected 10% increase in the South Gloucestershire population between 2026 and 2041, 46% of that overall increase in population will be in the 65+age group.

As more of us live longer, it's vital that we plan and adapt now to make sure people can stay healthy, independent, and connected later in life. That means making our communities more accessible, our services more responsive, and our social opportunities more inclusive. The composition of our communities are changing, as well as the views and aspirations of older people generally, and the age at which people consider themselves to be older. We need to ensure that we offer the right choices and options for people now and into the future, and recognise their economic and social contribution.

The South Gloucestershire approach: things we need to consider across all of our areas of work

Our approach is based on but not limited to the WHO approach. The South Gloucestershire approach to Age-friendly has also added some aspects to be considered in all the areas of commitment. We want to ensure that in working together we all keep in mind some key issues that affect all our communities. If we don't take them into account, then many people may miss out on benefitting from Age-friendly approaches, or our progress may be undermined by the impact of climate change.

Reflecting climate change

South Gloucestershire is already experiencing the effects of a changing climate, with more frequent extreme weather events, hotter summers, and wetter winters. These changes pose particular risks to older residents, who may be more vulnerable to heat stress, cold-related illnesses, and the disruption of essential services. Many older people live alone, have limited mobility, or rely on health and social care systems that can be strained during climate-related emergencies. Older people are often less able to take adaptive actions to increase their resilience to the impacts of a changing climate, such as providing mechanical cooling, flood protection measures or securing insurance cover as risks of flooding or fire increase.

Opportunities for adaptation and resilience

There are significant opportunities to enhance resilience among our older people through targeted adaptation measures. These include:

- **Retrofitting homes** with better insulation and shading to keep extreme heat out, ventilation, and flood protection.
- **Creating cool spaces** in community centres and public buildings for use during heatwaves.
- **Promoting green infrastructure**, such as tree planting and shaded walkways, to reduce urban heat islands.
- **Supporting active travel and accessible transport**, which can reduce emissions while improving mobility and social connection.
- **Developing intergenerational programmes** that foster community cohesion and shared climate action.

Tackling broader inequalities

Our Age-friendly Strategy is very much focused on ensuring we address barriers and recognise and support the contribution of older people in our communities. Many older people face additional barriers due to other issues that may lead to discrimination or impact access to support and services, for example:

- People who also have a lifelong physical impairment, or have a learning disability, or autism, may have different experiences and face additional barriers as they age.
- Our population is becoming more diverse and more people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are enriching the life of our community. They may also face additional barriers and racism and as a result have poorer life outcomes at all stages of life including old age.
- People from LGBTQ+ communities play important roles in all aspects of life in South Gloucestershire and we need to ensure that different lifestyles and family models are reflecting in our approaches.
- Difference in expectations of women and men still persist, in particular within some families, and perhaps some areas of public life.

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

For each of our Domains, the Strategy sets out brief details of where we are now, and a vision. Further information on the feedback and other intelligence that is based on can be found [here](#).



DOMAIN: **Social Participation**



Our shared vision: “Older people are actively provided opportunities to connect, contribute and enjoy life in South Gloucestershire.”

Where are we now?

South Gloucestershire has a vibrant voluntary and community sector offering a range of social groups, activities, and volunteering opportunities. However, access to these opportunities is uneven across the district, and many older people still face barriers to joining in social life.

Common barriers include transport, cost, health, and a lack of accessible information. These factors can limit older residents' ability to connect with their community.

Participation rates and perceptions of social inclusion vary.

From engagement work with our communities

Perceived strengths

- Active voluntary sector with established groups supporting older people.
- Some strong examples of neighbourhood-based initiatives.
- Recognition of the importance of social participation in other local strategies.

Perceived gaps

- Lack of clear, accessible information about available activities.
- Transport barriers preventing attendance.
- Not enough outreach to isolated older people.
- Cost of activities is a barrier for some on low income

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

- Improve communication and promotion of existing groups and activities.
- Develop outreach programmes to engage isolated older people.
- Support the VCSE sector to expand and sustain local activities.
- Encourage the development of inclusive, intergenerational opportunities.
- Explore transport and affordability solutions to reduce participation barriers.

Spotlight examples

Yate Town Council Ageing Better

Yate Town Council has, for many years, been committed to supporting all age groups within our community and is particularly aware of how older generations can sometimes become isolated, forgotten or overlooked.

“We are especially proud of our flagship annual event, the Yate Ageing Better Festival, which began in 2021. The festival was created as a way of signposting and showcasing the many local groups, activities, facilities, and support services available within our community. Now held at the local shopping centre, the event includes entertainment, demonstrations, information stalls, and activities throughout the day. It attracts hundreds of visitors and reaches people who may not otherwise engage with local services. The overall aim is to encourage those aged 50+ to lead healthy, active, and happy lifestyles, and to reduce loneliness and isolation.

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

The festival is a relatively new initiative whilst , supporting older residents has long been part of the Town Council's work. This has included:

- Over 30 years ago, we opened the **Pop Inn Café** – a relaxed and welcoming meeting place run by volunteers with officer support.
- **The Armadillo**, Senior Cinema and Coffee Morning. By making use of an existing venue, we created a welcoming social space where people can come together to enjoy a free film and reasonably priced refreshments.
- **Volunteering and Friends Groups** – providing opportunities for residents to support Town Council venues such as the Pop Inn Café, Heritage Centre, The Armadillo, and YOSC, alongside a variety of community Friends Groups.

Age UK South Gloucestershire walking groups

Deliver a series of locally based walking groups designed to support older people who may be isolated, housebound, or recovering from illness or surgery. The groups provide a gentle and accessible way for people to improve their physical health while building social connections.

Many participants initially receive one-to-one walking support before progressing into group walks, helping them build confidence at their own pace. Each walk ends with time to socialise over tea or coffee in a local café or pub, reinforcing relationships beyond the activity itself.

For many participants, the walking groups have become a vital source of companionship and routine, improving wellbeing and reducing loneliness while supporting people to remain active within their communities.



DOMAIN: **Transport**



Our shared Vision: People are able to access what they need within local communities, through local safe, affordable options, and there are improved, age friendly transport links across South Gloucestershire and other key facilities in adjoining areas.

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Where are we now?

South Gloucestershire's transport network includes local buses, community transport, and active travel routes such as walking and cycling paths. In 2022/23, there were 7.4 million bus journeys: a **23%** rise on the previous year, but still only **74%** of pre-COVID numbers.

Some urban areas are well-connected and easy to get around on foot. However, many people, particularly those in rural areas, face poor transport links and struggle to reach the places they need to go.

The South Gloucestershire Council Transport Strategy and the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) aim to improve access, especially for older people and those with limited mobility. Despite these plans, many residents still find it difficult to get to essential services such as healthcare, shops, or social activities.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- Some neighbourhoods are well-connected and easy to walk around.
- Older people value their bus passes and local community transport schemes.
- Active travel routes are growing in some areas.

Gaps

- Not enough regular, reliable public transport, especially to healthcare services.
- Poor walking environments, such as broken pavements or unsafe routes.
- Rural areas often lack suitable transport options.

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

This area links closely with the **South Gloucestershire Council Transport Strategy**, **Joint Local Transport Plan 4** (JLTP4), and the **South Gloucestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan** (BSIP). These strategies focus on making public transport more accessible, reliable, and affordable; a clear priority echoed in our Age-friendly engagement.

Working together with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and local community transport providers will be key to making meaningful improvements. We will aim to:

- Improve how often buses run and make them easier to access, especially in areas that are currently underserved.
- Invest in safer walking routes and repair damaged footpaths.
- Expand community transport and flexible, on-demand services.
- Design transport systems that work for everyone, and offer training to drivers on how to support older passengers.
- Build stronger partnerships with transport providers to promote age-friendly travel options.

Spotlight example

Four Towns and Vale Link Community Transport

They provide accessible community transport services across South Gloucestershire, enabling residents to attend medical appointments, go shopping, and take part in social activities.

The service supports Diamond Travel Card holders with essential journeys funded by South Gloucestershire Council, while also offering paid membership options for wider use. By providing door-to-door, accessible transport with trained and supportive drivers, the service helps people maintain independence and remain connected to their communities, particularly in areas where public transport options are limited.



DOMAIN: **Housing**



Our shared Vision for Housing People will have access to affordable, adaptable and safe homes that support independent living at all stages of life in South Gloucestershire.

Where are we now?

Housing affordability, quality, and accessibility are major concerns for older people in South Gloucestershire. As of 2025, the median house price in the area was £340,000. This is the 7th highest out of the Local Authorities in the Southwest. With average monthly private rental prices at £1,449 in December 2025. This is the 3rd highest out of the Local Authorities in the South West.

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In 2024 / 25, 617 affordable homes were built; **69%** of these were for social rent.

South Gloucestershire has a mix of different communities:

- **63%** of people live in urban areas
- **17%** live in market towns
- **20%** live in villages or rural areas

This mix brings a range of housing challenges and opportunities, depending on where people live.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- Many older people are satisfied with their current homes
- Some recent delivery of affordable housing
- Existing schemes to support home adaptations

Gaps

- Not enough smaller, accessible homes that allow people to age in place
- A shortage of affordable housing for older people on low incomes
- Too few supported or extra-care housing options
- Concerns about the cost and complexity of adapting current homes

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

- Our Local Plan seeks to promote and shape our places so that they are “Age-friendly” in ways that benefit the whole community
- Housing priorities in this strategy are closely linked with the South Gloucestershire Local Plan, the Housing Strategy, and the Better Care Fund Plan. All of these highlight the need for more accessible and affordable housing for older residents.
- Draft Local Plan objective is to achieve a step-change : by 2040 there will be a choice of age-friendly homes to meet the aspirations of older people and any specialist housing need, including with care where appropriate.
- The market will be expected to provide mainstream homes that are suitable for and attractive to older people as part of a range of housing on new developments, and there is a specific Plan target to provide 1,646 homes that meet the need for housing with support and/or care.
- Housing with Care (or Extra Care Housing) is a relatively new housing option that has developed in response to the changing housing landscape and the need for a greatly-improved offer for older people. It promotes independent living in self-contained housing where people can easily access high quality, flexible support and care services and benefit from a wide range of communal facilities being available to them.
- A good supply of Housing with Care provides an ideal solution for many people wishing to live independently in their own home while enjoying the sense of community, safety and security it offers. Our vision for these developments will benefit the whole community by offering community venues and activity and outreach support for other people who don't live on the site.

Housing affordability, quality, and accessibility are major concerns for older people in South Gloucestershire. As of 2025, the median house price in the area was £340,000. This is the 7th highest out of the Local Authorities in the Southwest. With average monthly private rental prices at £1,449 in December 2025. This is the 3rd highest out of the Local Authorities in the South West.

Spotlight examples

South Gloucestershire Council: the Housing Adaptation Team

- **Background:** An older couple moved into what they saw as their “forever home,” but mobility issues began to threaten their independence.
- **Challenges:** Navigating a narrow, turning staircase, Inaccessible bathroom with a traditional bath, Frequent falls at the front door
- **Intervention:** Following an occupational therapy assessment, Compact stairlift to safely navigate the tight staircase Level access shower replacing the bath
- **Outcomes:** Improved safety and reduced fall risk, Restored independence in daily routines, Peace of mind and long-term security
- **Resident Quote:** “I can be independent now forever because I’ve got easy access... Everything is in place now, really, to enable us to stay here—forever. That’s the idea.”

South Gloucestershire Council: Revising our model of Age-friendly Housing with Care (ECH)

Social Care, Housing and Planning colleagues are working together with both Registered Providers (landlords) and care providers who work in these provisions to ensure we deliver schemes which are:

- A 'Home for Life'- a place where people can grow older with confidence, knowing they will be supported through every stage of life, including if their physical or mental health needs become more complex. Age-friendly Housing with Care will offer dedicated, 24/7 care and support, helping to prevent unnecessary hospital or residential care admissions wherever possible.
- A vibrant community hub, reaching out to people, of all ages, living in the wider community enabling them to benefit from the facilities, thus reducing social isolation and promoting active health and wellbeing through outreach and in-reach support.

We have put new contracts in place for the care providers who deliver on our schemes. As an example, one of the new providers Agincare, are planning drop in sessions for people who live the scheme to encourage them to participate in activities, providing a support group for local carers, and setting up a Be Healthy, Stay Well" hub with local speakers.



DOMAIN: Civic Participation and Employment



Our shared vision for Civic Participation and Employment: **The wealth of expertise and experience held by older people is valued and reflected in work and volunteer opportunities across South Gloucestershire.**

Where are we now?

Older people in South Gloucestershire continue to play vital roles in their communities — through volunteering, informal support, and paid work. However, many face barriers when trying to stay involved or when they want or need to keep paid employment.

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According to the West of England Combined Authority's Labour Market Intelligence Pack (June 2021), the employment rate for residents aged 50 and over in South Gloucestershire was **44.8%**. This is slightly above the national average (**42.5%**) and close to the regional average (**44.6%**). This means nearly half of local over-50s are in work, showing that South Gloucestershire has a relatively strong employment environment for older adults.

Despite this, older workers may still face issues such as age discrimination, health problems, and caring responsibilities. While there are local schemes to support volunteering and employment, feedback shows more needs to be done.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- Active volunteer centres in the local area.
- Increasing awareness of the valuable contribution older people make in both the workplace and through volunteering.
- Some existing schemes promoting age-friendly workplaces and inclusive volunteering.

Gaps

- Many older people aren't aware of volunteering or work opportunities.
- Digital exclusion is a barrier to applying for roles.
- Not enough flexible opportunities for those with health conditions or caring duties.
- Ongoing experiences of ageism in recruitment and the workplace.

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

- This area links with the South Gloucestershire Volunteering Principles and the Economic Development Strategy and also supports work being done through the Tackling Inequalities Plan and local Equality Policy and Plans.
- Working across the VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) sector, Jobcentre Plus, and local employers will be key to addressing the issues raised.
- Increase promotion and visibility of volunteering and job opportunities for older people.
- Work with employers and volunteer organisations to reduce ageism and offer more flexible roles.
- Help those who don't have them get the digital access and skills they need to apply for roles.
- Reach out to those not currently involved in work or volunteering but who may be interested.
- Encourage co-production, making sure older people are involved in shaping local services and decision-making.

Spotlight example

Age-friendly Employer: South Gloucestershire Council

South Gloucestershire Council has signed the **Age-friendly Employer Pledge**, recognising the experience and contribution of older workers and demonstrating our commitment to supporting colleagues in their 50s 60s and beyond. By joining this national programme, we are actively strengthening our approach to age inclusion and ensuring that staff at **every stage** of their career can thrive as part of our multigenerational workforce.

As part of the pledge, we have appointed a senior sponsor to lead our work on age inclusion and have explicitly referenced age within our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies. Each year, we are committed to taking meaningful action to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers over 50. Our focus areas include fostering an age-friendly culture, ensuring age positive recruitment practices, offering flexible working options, supporting career development at all ages, and strengthening health and wellbeing support. These actions will support all of our workforce at all ages. We will continue to report annually on our progress and achievements. We hope this will encourage other local employers to take this step and work with us. -positive recruitment practices, offering flexible working options, supporting career development at all ages, and strengthening health and wellbeing support. We will continue to report annually on our progress and achievements

Age-friendly Employer, Yate Town Council

“ A recent commitment that reflects our pride in maintaining a workforce with a broad cross-section of ages and experience”.



DOMAIN: **Respect and Social Inclusion**



Our Shared Vision for Respect and Social Inclusion:
"Older People's contributions are valued, respected and visible. Older people are included in all aspects of community life."

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

Where are we now?

South Gloucestershire is a diverse and growing area. According to the 2021 Census:

- **8.8%** of the population identified as Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME)
- **10.6%** were born outside the UK

Both figures are lower than the national averages. We know that since 2021 we have seen an increase in resettlement from international areas of conflict, including from Ukraine and Hong Kong, who are contributing positively to the cultural diversity in some of our communities.

In the 2022 Quality of Life survey:

- **77%** of residents said they were **satisfied** with their local area as a place to live
- **72%** agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together
- **85%** said that people being disrespectful to others was either **not a problem** or only a **small problem** in their area

However, how included and respected older people feel can vary depending on where they live, who they are, and their life experiences.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- High levels of neighbourhood satisfaction across the district
- Good examples of successful community events and intergenerational activities
- A strong voluntary sector helping people to stay involved

Gaps

- A large number of older people feel **only moderately included** or **not included at all**
- Ageism and exclusion still happen, especially around jobs and volunteering
- Feelings of safety and belonging vary from place to place

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

This area supports the goals of the Tackling Inequalities Plan, the Community Safety Plan, and the Council Plan; all of which aim to promote inclusion, community connections, and safer neighbourhoods.

Working closely with Town and Parish Councils, local voluntary groups, and neighbourhood policing teams will be key to improving inclusion and respect for older residents.

We will:

- Tackle ageism and encourage more positive views of ageing in all areas of life
- Promote activities that bring different generations together
- Work in partnership to create safer, more welcoming neighbourhoods
- Provide more chances for older people to help shape local decisions
- Improve engagement with under-represented and minority older groups

Spotlight example

Vintage Pride

Vintage Pride is an initiative delivered by The Diversity Trust that provides a welcoming and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ people aged 50 and over.

Recognising that some older LGBTQ+ people may have experienced discrimination, loss, or later-life coming out, Vintage Pride offers a relaxed alternative to large Pride events. The initiative supports people to express their identities openly, build new friendships, and feel safe and valued within their community.

The programme demonstrates how targeted, inclusive approaches can strengthen belonging and visibility for older people from under-represented groups.



DOMAIN: Communication and Information



Our shared vision for Communication and Information: "Information and methods of communication are varied, accessible, clear, and inclusive so everyone can stay informed, connected, and empowered in South Gloucestershire."

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

Where are we now?

Clear, timely, and accessible information is essential for older people to stay connected to services, social activities, and their communities. While digital platforms are increasingly used for communication, some residents still face barriers due to digital exclusion. The Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS) (2025) provides a framework helping consider what different households, including those with older people, need to be digitally included in society. Broadly, digital inclusion can be achieved by ensuring access to

- Digital goods and services
 - Including suitable devices and internet speeds and/or data
- Functional knowledge and skills
 - Setting up device's suitability, doing tasks and activities online
- Critical knowledge and skills
 - Managing online security, safety and wellbeing, evaluating information seen and evaluation information to share

According to the West of England Combined Authority Digital Plan (2023), about **5%** of adults (around **44,000** people) in the region were non-internet users in 2020, lower than the UK average of **8%**. This shows a relatively high level of digital use in the area. However, digital exclusion is still more common among certain groups, especially older people.

The 2021 Census showed that about **92%** of households in South Gloucestershire had internet access, slightly above the national average. However, feedback from older residents made it clear that having access doesn't always mean having confidence when using digital tools.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- High levels of internet access and infrastructure across South Gloucestershire
- Some good examples of local information sharing through community hubs, libraries, and newsletters
- Growth in local social media groups helping people stay informed

Gaps

- No consistent, central place to find information about local services
- Whilst many older people are proficient digitally, digital exclusion continues to affect some older residents
- Too much reliance on digital-only communication, with not enough offline options
- Less efficient non-digital ways for older people to communicate back to services or report concerns

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

- This area supports the Tackling Inequalities Plan and the Council's Local Plan, which both include commitments to better communication and reducing digital exclusion.
- Promote digital inclusion through training sessions, equipment loan schemes, and drop-in support.
- Support older people to increase their digital confidence, knowledge and skills by expanding the community digital champion programme to more areas, working in partnership with VCSE organisations
- Improve how local service and activity information is coordinated and shared
- Increase the use of printed materials, when appropriate, for those who aren't online
- Make it easier for older people to give feedback and report local issues
- Promote the National Databank to support older people who face digital poverty and cannot afford to stay online
- Work with partners to ensure communication is age-friendly; using plain English and offering alternative formats when needed

Spotlight Example

Community digital champions

South Gloucestershire Council facilitates a long-standing community digital champion programme through several libraries across the region. Residents can have one-to-one appointments with a volunteer, helping them to gain confidence and skills or to troubleshoot digital issues that are causing barriers to participating fully online. Many volunteers themselves are older people who have retired, looking to stay connected in the community, providing positive role models to improve people's confidence.

"I started volunteering for slightly selfish reasons — after retiring, I wanted something purposeful to fill a few hours each week. I enjoy sharing my experience and helping people feel more confident in a world that increasingly expects us all to be digital. Seeing someone do something for the first time, like sending an email or text, is hugely rewarding for me too." Richard (70)

'I am nearly eighty years young and have been doing this role for about twelve years. I have met various people over this time and I have enjoyed seeing customers walk out with smiles on their faces. Sometimes, I have to disappoint them, sometimes, I have refused to help them. I have helped people find jobs when they needed help form filling. People go away in the knowledge that they can now email friends and family. I have assisted people with office applications such as, Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. I also help people with their knowledge of languages (limited German, limited Polish, and mainly French. I have a lady who comes in regularly learning French). There is much satisfaction in helping people and it's nice to get a thank you.'

Digital inclusion

Age UK South Gloucestershire delivers a digital inclusion programme aimed at helping older residents who lack confidence to develop skills in using technology.

Through digital cafés held in community venues such as libraries, cafés, supermarkets, and supported living schemes, older people receive practical, informal support from volunteers. Participants learn to use devices to stay in touch with family, access health services, and pursue hobbies and interests.

The programme also offers tablet loan schemes, allowing people to practise at home. Alongside improving digital skills, the sessions help reduce loneliness and support social connection.



DOMAIN: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



Our Shared Vision for Outdoor spaces and Buildings
“Our public spaces in South Gloucestershire are safe, clean, accessible and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities.”

Where are we now?

South Gloucestershire is rich in green space, with over **40%** of the land designated as green belt and a relatively low population density (584 residents per km² in 2021). As a result, many people live close to open countryside, parks, and green areas. The district also has a range of public buildings, libraries, and community centres; important spaces that older people often rely on.

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

However, accessibility varies. While some older residents feel well supported by their local environment, others face challenges such as poor paths, limited seating or shelter, and a lack of public toilets. Feedback from surveys and focus groups consistently showed that small improvements to infrastructure could make a big difference to the daily lives of older people.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- A wide range of green and open spaces across the district
- Strong community ties to local parks and libraries
- Some good examples of accessible public buildings in town centres

Gaps

- Not enough benches, toilets, and sheltered spots in key locations
- Poor-quality or inaccessible paths in some areas
- A lack of inclusive design in certain public buildings and spaces

Spotlight examples

Yate Town Council

As part of their local Age-friendly Approach Yate Town Council have also considered Parks and open spaces — including outdoor gyms, dementia-friendly parks, signage and markings, bowling facilities, tennis, and activities at Yate Outdoor Sports Complex such as walking football, helping to promote sport and activity for all ages.

SGC Community Spaces Improvement Team

The team manages projects including accessibility and amenity improvement on Council public open spaces:

Page Park Renovations

Page Park has undergone significant improvements shaped by community feedback, resulting in a more accessible and welcoming environment for people of all ages.

Key developments include improved footpaths, enhanced accessibility across the historic park, restoration of key features such as the clock tower, and the creation of an accessible café and community hub. The park also hosts inclusive activities such as “Walks for Health,” supporting gentle physical activity and social interaction.

Further access improvements on public open spaces includes access improvements on a number of our open spaces including Magpie bottom, Conham River Park, gorse covert and Cock Road Ridge (subject to funding). Major work is planned for Kingswood Park, including improved access

These changes demonstrate how thoughtful investment in public spaces can support active ageing, social connection, and community wellbeing.

The team are now looking into other improvements, including improving access for people living with dementia, eg through colour coding. Older people, and other community members will be included in planning of provisions.

How we will work together to make the vision a reality

Improving how accessible and user-friendly public spaces are fits closely with South Gloucestershire's Local Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy, and Built Environment policies. It also supports wider goals in the Council Plan, such as promoting independence and wellbeing.

To achieve this, we'll work with Planning, Public Health, and Town & Parish Councils to make sure future projects follow age-friendly and inclusive design principles.

- Apply age-friendly design standards to all new public space projects
- Focus on improving busy areas by adding more benches, toilets, and sheltered spots
- Review and repair footpaths to tackle accessibility issues
- Work with local communities to co-design changes that matter most to older residents



DOMAIN: **Community Support & Health Services**



Our shared Vision for Community Support & Health Services "Health and care services work together, are easy to access, person-centred, and support people to live well for longer in South Gloucestershire."

Where are we now?

Residents in South Gloucestershire have a relatively high life expectancy, 83 years on average (82 for men and 84 for women), which is two years above the national figure.

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

Older adults in South Gloucestershire are generally healthy compared to national averages. However, there is variation in how long people live in good health across the area. People in more deprived areas of South Gloucestershire are living a larger proportion of their lives in worse health than those in more affluent areas.

The top five causes of years lived with disability in South Gloucestershire are low backpain, diabetes, age-related hearing loss, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Falls. With increasing age, other conditions such as dementia become more common and impactful. Many people live with multiple long term conditions. The most common conditions have risk factors which can be modified through early intervention and prevention.

Reference: [Adult Social Care & Ageing Well](#)

The greatest inequalities in long term conditions are seen with painful conditions, where an adult from the most deprived areas of South Gloucestershire is twice as likely to have a painful condition than those in the least deprived areas. Painful conditions and their management are an area of local focus.

Additionally, men in South Gloucestershire are twice as likely as women to die from preventable causes. Cardiovascular disease and cancer are the biggest cause of preventable death.

Challenges remain. Accessing GPs, hospitals, and care services can be tough, especially in rural areas. The move towards digital health services has also created barriers for some older people.

Public Health have undertaken a rapid oral health needs assessment and are progressing towards publication of this, alongside an action plan. This would include improving oral care in care homes.

As part of the drug and alcohol needs assessment we are exploring the needs and experiences of older adults who have unmet needs around drugs and alcohol. In particular we know and want to understand more about harmful levels of alcohol use where there are also experiences of isolation, poor physical & mental health and struggles around self-care.

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- Higher-than-average life expectancy
- Strong take-up of self-directed care support
- Positive feedback from those who can access care easily

Gaps

- Concerns about long waiting times and difficulty booking GP appointments
- Poor public transport links to key health services
- Digital exclusion makes it harder for some to get the care they need
- Many are unaware of the social care support available to them
- Recognise the need for workforce development to ensure those struggling with drugs and alcohol are identified and supported to access support

How We Will Work Together to Make the Vision a Reality

This area links directly to the South Gloucestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the One South Gloucestershire Health and Care Partnership, and the Tackling Inequalities Action Plan 2024–28, The South Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Health and wellbeing Plan. These strategies all focus on improving access to care, preventing poor health, and tackling inequalities, especially for older people.

Working with the NHS, Social Care, and voluntary sector partners is vital to delivering change. This work is already well under way through our Health and Wellbeing Board and our Locality Partnership. To move work on this domain forward, through our Locality Partnership we have created a shared South Gloucestershire Age-friendly Steering Group. This brings together into one set of meetings and plans the wellbeing and social care work focused on older people commissioned via the council, and the Aging Well NHS health agenda led on by the Locality Partnership. There are subgroups focusing on some key areas for us, including avoiding / responding to falls and people who fall, and on Dementia. We are looking at how neighbourhood working across health and social care will better support people, and jointly funding/ investing in our community sector.

With the development of Neighbourhood Health and more integration there are further opportunities for us to plan and deliver together across the traditional lines that separate different health services , social care and VCSE.

We will:

- Improve access to primary and community health services across South Gloucestershire
- Work to increase digital inclusion whilst also providing non-digital and inclusive ways for older people to access care
- Boost outreach and awareness around what social care support is available
- Work with transport providers to improve access to healthcare
- Focus more on prevention and early support services

Spotlight example

4PCN Anticipatory Care Service

Staffed by Care Coordinators, this service supports patients registered with the 4PCN Practices - Kingswood Health Centre, Cadbury Heath Healthcare, Hanham Health and Close Farm Surgery – to live well at home. Care Coordinators carry out home visits, where they take health-related observations (height and weight, blood pressure, etc.) and provide advice on a healthy lifestyle, but also take into consideration any socio-economic issues impacting the patient and their ability to manage well at home. Where required they help coordinate referrals to social prescribing, occupational therapy, or escalate any concerns up to the patient's usual GP for medical review. The Coordinators also link in with other statutory and voluntary organisations, such as Avon Fire & Rescue to enable fire risk assessments to be carried out on the patient's property, local groups to help reduce social isolation and community transport organisations to support patients to attend appointments and activities.



SUB DOMAIN: **Dementia**



We wanted a specific focus on Dementia, within our broader Health and Social Support focus.

Our shared vision for Dementia “Everyone living with dementia in South Gloucestershire can continue to live well in an Age-friendly community with access to the best-practice support.”

A STRATEGY FOR **LIVING** AND **AGEING** WELL

Where are we now?

Dementia is a growing public health issue in South Gloucestershire, affecting individuals, families, and the health and care system. As of March 2023, around **3,587** people aged 65 and over were estimated to be living with dementia locally. However, only **2,183** people (**60.9%**) had received a formal diagnosis; meaning nearly two in five may be living without one.

By 2025, that number is expected to rise to **4,571**, a **57%** increase on earlier estimates.

Women are more likely to be affected. Among those aged 75 and over, **7.8%** of women have a recorded diagnosis, compared to **5.7%** of men.

Dementia also has a significant economic impact. Unpaid carers in South Gloucestershire provide an estimated £103 million worth of support each year.

What older people said

- that the right to be recognised is essential
- that the right to continue with day to day and family life without discrimination is imperative
- that everyone deserves a right to early and accurate diagnosis no matter where you live in South Gloucestershire

From engagement work with our communities

Strengths

- Strong partnership working between health and social care services to improve dementia support.
- Local community groups and voluntary organisations offering activities and assistance.
- A commitment to building dementia-friendly communities across the district.

Gaps

- Diagnosis rates are below the national target of **66.7%**, showing a need for earlier and more accurate detection.
- Support services can be hard to find or are not widely known by those who need them.
- Some frontline staff lack the training and resources needed to confidently support people with dementia.

Spotlight examples

Dementia training

Health, community and social care staff in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) are being offered the chance to do a new training programme designed to improve dementia care outcomes across the region.

The new [6D Dementia Training](#), funded by the BNSSG Locality Partnerships, will focus on helping staff write specialist care plans for people with dementia that clearly explain what their needs are and how best to meet those needs.

Attendees will also be given techniques needed to effectively communicate and support people with dementia to ensure they feel safe and secure.

The free training, which will be rolled out throughout 2025 and 2026, will consist of online and face-to-face sessions and will take around two full days to complete. It includes online elements initially and progresses to in-person.

It will be available to all health and social care staff working in specialist dementia teams and to those working in the community to support those living with dementia. Roll-out will be phased.

GP practices recognised as “Gold Status”

Kingswood Health Centre is one of the primary care settings recognised by Alzheimers Society for their support to carers and for people with dementia.

How to make the vision a reality

This section supports the goals of the **South Gloucestershire Dementia Strategy**, which prioritises early diagnosis, joined-up care, and support for carers. It also aligns with the **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy** and the **Tackling Inequalities Action Plan 2024–28**, which focus on addressing health inequalities and improving local support systems.

- Increase awareness and early diagnosis of dementia.
- Improve access to local support for people living with dementia and their carers.
- Expand dementia training for frontline staff across all services.
- Strengthen dementia-friendly community initiatives in partnership with local groups and volunteers.

We invite you to get involved

We all have a part to play in making South Gloucestershire a great place to grow older.

Whether you're part of a local organisation, a business, a health or care provider, a parish council—or an older person or community member—your voice, ideas and actions matter.

- Help shape and deliver the Age-friendly Action Plan
- Share ideas and feedback to help us improve
- Work with others to support older people in your community
- Celebrate and build on what's already working well
- Together, we can create a South Gloucestershire where people of all ages can live well, age well, and feel valued every step of the way.

The Strategy will be delivered through an Action Plan which will continually be updated.