

AGE FRIENDLY CHAMPIONS IN WALES – GUIDANCE

Context

The appointment of Older People's Champions at the political level in each Local Authority has been an important principle and practice over a number of years since the introduction of the Older People's Strategy in 2003. In a number of areas Champions continue to work with/attend their 50+ Forum.

Addressing the needs of an ageing society in Wales is one of the biggest challenges for society and local government and requires strong leadership at the political level.

The launch of the [Strategy for an Ageing Society](#) in October 2021 provides an opportunity to re visit, revitalise and re brand Older People's Champions to ensure they are well placed to support work to make Wales an age friendly nation.

Age Friendly Champions

Age Friendly Champions can be local government councillors with an active interest in creating an age friendly Wales and who will commit to the following:

- Older people to be a priority in the Council's work.
- Ensure that people aged 50+ are at the heart of decision- making processes around the commissioning, planning and delivery of services for older people.
- Act as a 'voice' for the older people in the Council chamber.
- Ensuring the diverse range of older people and the needs they have are understood and communicated.
- Work with local 50+ forums or older people's groups and age friendly networks to support a joined up approach to creating an age friendly Wales.

Other priority areas may differ depending on the needs of local authority areas and the views of older people, however in the past, priorities have included:

- Eradicating age discrimination
- Promote the importance of providing information and advice for older people
- Champion intergenerational practice

Appointment

Rather than the age of the individual, their interest and commitment to the role are more important factors. Best practice would suggest that older people from the County should be involved in the appointment of Champions and Cymru Older Peoples Alliance could support and help facilitate that through local forums.

Whilst important, the role is not just about health and social care and needs to avoid seeing older people in terms of deficit and decline. The wider responsibilities of local

government including transport, education, community facilities etc are just as relevant to the role, as is the economic contribution that older people make.

The Champion should be seen as a strategic role with clarity about what needs to be achieved, with mechanisms for reporting to lead members and others and for hearing feedback from older people. Increasingly Councils are working towards World Health Organisation (WHO) recognition for Age Friendly Communities and Champions can have an influential role in that process.

In selecting an Age Friendly Champion, it is important that sufficient time and support is available for the person to undertake the role effectively, particularly working with communities. The appointment of a senior officer as a Champion also has merit.

An appointment at Cabinet level would be preferable but a Scrutiny Committee member as a Champion or a “backbench” Champion can be successful, if given the necessary officer support, access to information and prominence.

Raising awareness and understanding of the impact of local policies and service delivery on older people is a key leadership role for the Champion. Membership of relevant policy and partnership groups can help ensure a joined-up approach. Working with the local 50+ Forum and similar groups is particularly beneficial.

Further information and advice are available from Welsh Government