

Connecting People, Connecting Wales

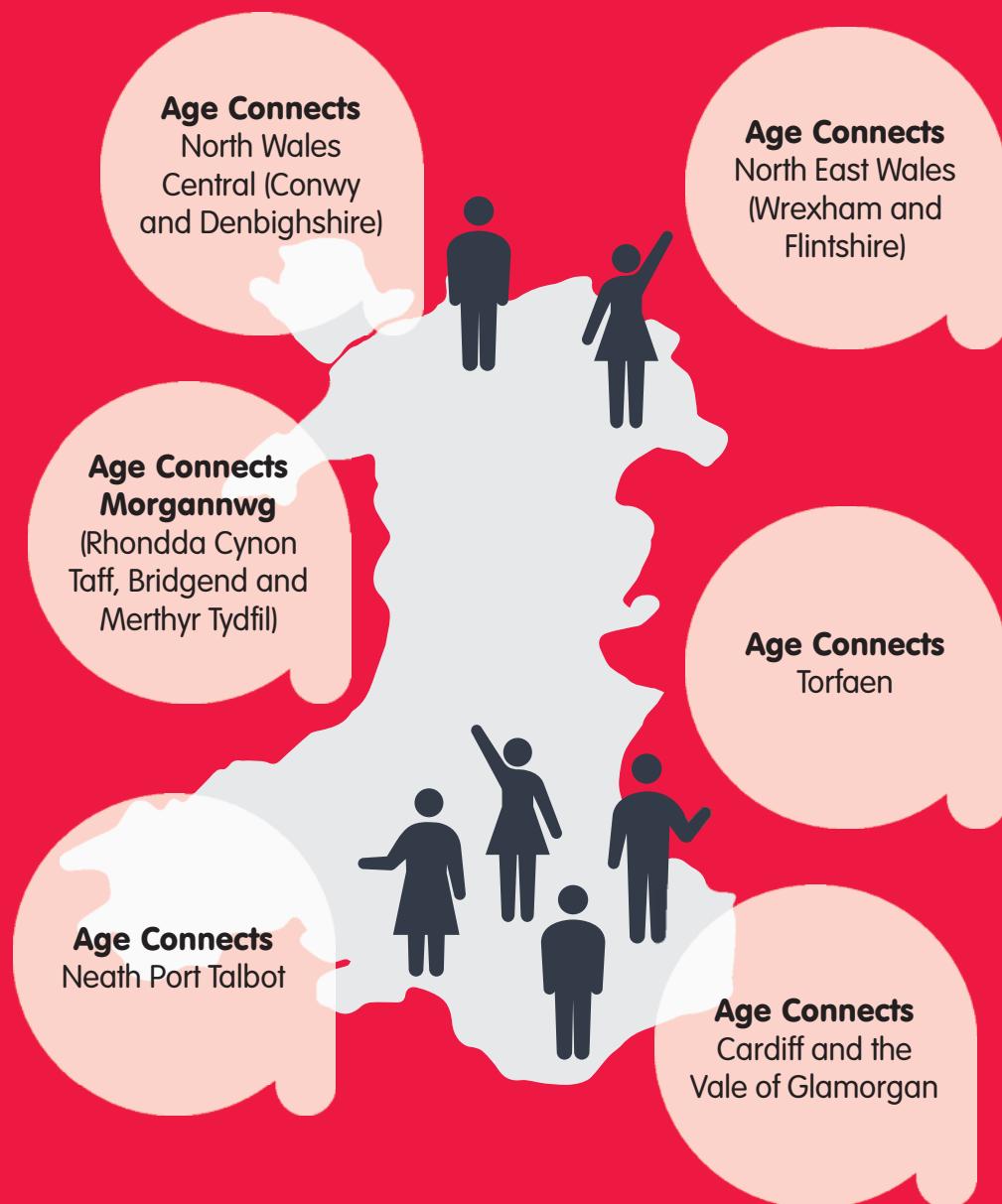


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Introduction

Age Connects Wales is a social enterprise made up of six local, independent Age Connects organisations with over 40 years' experience supporting older people and their carers in Wales. Together, our member organisations support around 45,000 clients within 11 of the 22 local authority areas in Wales.

The six organisations and their operating areas are:



“My husband and I have had a very bad six months...one by one things were sorted out. I can't tell you how grateful we are, it has made our life so much more comfortable. My husband is so much better and we now look forward to the future.”



“Volunteering has helped me gain valuable experience and changed my career.”

“I enjoy the time that I’m out with the service users. Hearing their stories and life experiences is fantastic and learning about their lives enriches mine.”

We operate in some of the most socially and economically deprived areas in Wales. Therefore, it is crucial that what we say and do reflects the challenges of those in greatest need. **We’re engaged in local communities, delivering services, with a long history and expertise in working with older people to understand the challenges they face.**

Our aim is to provide people in Wales aged 50 plus with the assistance, support and services they need to live a healthier, more active and independent life. Age Connects Wales has committed to work together to help change society’s view on age, to one where older age is regarded as a stage in life as valuable and important as any other. **We’re willing to challenge the cultural and organisational attitudes to older people in Wales.**

We’re willing to be robust in arguing positively about the place in our society for older people. Using our collective voice and by coordinating our services to our clients, Age Connects Wales is stronger. We can now proudly deliver a wide array of services that meet the needs of our clients, and importantly stand shoulder to shoulder to speak on behalf of our service users to instigate change for them for the better.

However, it is important to us that each of our six parts remains independent and with community at their core. Each organisation will continue to focus their efforts on delivering outstanding local services for older people in their local area - but together we have the ability to stand as one as we work with government, local authorities, fellow charities and organisations to improve services for older people in Wales. **We are developing an organisation that collaborates with others whilst also supporting volunteering within and outside Age Connects Wales.**

Representation at numerous forums and stakeholder groups ensure that we are well informed and maximise opportunities to improve the lives of older people. Age Connects Wales member’s services are designed with, and for, older people by engaging with carers, volunteers, service commissioners and health and social care professionals. **We’re about developing a role that goes beyond the issue of health and social care, to one that examines how older people access information, what their experiences of services are, and how their lives are affected by organisations.**

So what does Age Connects do?

Independent Information and Advice

This confidential service offers a wide range of information and advice to help people live independently, stay in their own home and maximise their income.

Independent Advocacy

Our staff and volunteers will help with various advocacy matters, including safeguarding issues involving abuse or neglect.

Volunteering

Volunteering is essential to Age Connects Wales members and we can offer a wide range of opportunities. Currently we have over 570 active volunteers throughout Wales and their value cannot be underestimated. Last year alone, Age Connects Wales volunteers dedicated approximately 118,500 hours of support, which carries an in-kind economical value of over £1.6 million.

Befriending

Our befriending services aim to reduce loneliness and isolation for those with little or no social networks. Volunteer led group befriending schemes encourage the formation of friendship groups and offer reciprocal and on-going support. For those unable to participate in community activities, we provide a telephone befriending service.

Nail Cutting

This convenient and chargeable service is available at various outreach locations, with home visits available for those with mobility problems.

Activities

We deliver a range of self-sustaining activities which improve physical and emotional health and well-being. These programmes encompass skill building, volunteering, learning, physical and social activities that keep people connected in their community and help them remain independent. Activities are delivered through a structured programme or allow participants to express their 'Voice and Choice' through service user consultation. Programmes are delivered through a number of channels which include Age Connects Wales Centres, community facilities, day units, evening clubs and residential homes.

Looking ahead

Drastic cost cutting measures throughout the third sector has led to huge reductions in the availability of funding/resources, and comes at a time when demographic trends and statistics indicate a pressing need for better solutions for older people. The number of older people living in Wales has been increasing for the past 25 years and by 2020 there will be almost 700,000 people aged over 65. Age Connects Wales' ability to work across the country with those that share our aims and objectives ensures that we are able to respond to this increasing need for services and support, whilst at the same time taking proactive measures to campaign and influence to improve the lives of all older people in Wales.

"She doesn't treat us like old people - and that's really nice."



For more information on any of our services and/or a list of geographically specific services that are provided by local Age Connects Organisations, please get in touch.

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