

The Parish of Ryde

Age Friendly Communities Report

Autumn 2017





As the older population on the Isle of Wight increases, Age UK IW's Age Friendly Island project funded by the Big Lottery is seeking to ensure that the Isle of Wight is an age friendly place to live, work and grow old. This report reviews the age friendliness of Ryde Town Council and is based on the World Health Organisation's¹ eight Age Friendly Communities domains of housing, outdoor spaces and building, transport and mobility, civic participation and employment, community support and health services, communication and information and respect and social inclusion, social participation.



The Town on the Beach Ryde

Ryde is the gateway to the Isle of Wight and Ryde Town Council serves a population of approximately 26,000 residents and up to 100,000 visitors. Within the Wards of Ryde East, North East, North West and South the population of people over 50 year is 6878 (census 2011)² and increasing.

Many older people benefit from the vibrant town with a range of shops and services, entertainment venues and popular events such as parades, carnivals and the Ryde slide enjoyed by all ages.

The report also assesses Ryde Town Council's age friendliness against the Ageing Better Programme 'Age Friendly Island' four outcomes of:

1. Older people will feel they have improved connections within their local community and reduced isolation.
2. Older people will feel empowered to co-produce local policies and services which become more responsive to their needs, now and in the future.
3. Older people will feel the Island is age friendly; those under 50 years will see older people as an asset, recognising their contribution to the community.
4. Older people will feel an increased sense of health, well-being and quality of life.

Much of Ryde rises steeply to above 200 feet above sea level which means that much of the built areas are on steep slopes making walking up hill difficult for many older people. Buses operate on set routes and do not serve many of the residential areas.

There is a variety of housing in Ryde much of which is flats and apartments in converted Victorian buildings with an increasing number of bungalows in outlying areas. Ryde Town Council has appointed three Age Friendly Champions.

Executive Overview Recommendations



- Work with the Ryde My Life a Full Life coordinator to develop improved coordination of older adult activity, with a network using the young people model as good practice.
- Look at how to improve accessibility to existing community facilities. Commissioning an accessibility survey.
- Identify suitable locations for resident and visitor Information boards.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

This domain is important because:

- Around 50% of people aged 65 and over **face problems getting outdoors**.
- People living in care homes or sheltered accommodation are **more than 3 times less likely to get outdoors for more than 5 hours a week** than people living in their own homes.
- Those living within 10 minutes' walk of a local open space are **twice as likely to be satisfied with life** compared with those whose open space is further away
- Access to natural environments and, particularly, green spaces, **directly correlates with improved sense of well-being and quality of life**.
- Uneven road and pavement surfaces can inhibit access for older people, particularly those who use wheelchairs, and can **contribute to falls, fear of falls and social isolation**³

Access to natural environments for older people is available as Ryde is bordered by the coast on the northern side with a wide flat promenade running along much of the sea front from east to west, which is partly wheelchair friendly and has places for older people to sit with access to cafés for refreshments.

However Councillors have also expressed concerns that people in wheelchairs lack suitable access to the expanse of Ryde sands and to the sea if they wish to swim.

Much of Ryde is built on hills, which can make moving about for some older people difficult and increases the risks of slips, trips and falls particularly in colder weather and can lead to older people not going out and the possibility of social isolation.

Although there are a number of pedestrian road crossings around Ryde in the form of zebra crossing and crossings controlled by traffic lights, which can help older people cross-busy roads, there are busy roads with no crossings. The pedestrianisation of parts of the High Street provides a safe shopping environment away from traffic for older people.

Consultation by Ryde Town Council is taking place to extend the pedestrianisation further. However the existing pedestrianisation is misleading as the walkway is still a road and is uneven. Residents have expressed concerns regarding the condition of roads and pavements around the town. The Town council brings these concerns to the attention of Island roads, but there is a need for a town wide accessibility survey.

Outdoor Spaces - Outdoor Safety

Ryde Town Council and local residents have worked hard to ensure communal outdoor spaces are safe, clean, tidy, well-presented and welcoming. Ryde Town Council facilitates the annual Ryde in Bloom competition in which all residents are encouraged to enter. The Town Council actively keeps the beaches clean and a safe environment for people of all ages. Older people enjoying the beaches, benefit from safety features such as lifeguards and the Ryde Inshore rescue boat.

Outdoor Spaces - Community Assets and Buildings

Threatened by closure due to funding cuts local community assets have been saved. The availability (or lack) of public toilets can affect older residents' willingness to leave their homes. In Ryde public toilets are now funded and maintained by Ryde Town Council.

Case Study

Following the closure by the Isle of Wight Council, the Waterside pool was saved by volunteers and is run as a community enterprise receiving an annual grant from the Town Council to provide a range of services. Ninety percent of the trustees are over the age of 50 years. To ensure the pool's facilities are age friendly they offer accessible changing rooms and steps into the pool, which are easy to use. For those that need it there is a hoist with detachable chair.

Particularly popular with older people is the water workout. Regular attendees not only gain valuable exercise but also have formed friendships which has led to other social activities.

Adult lessons are available which are well received with the oldest learner being in her late 70s.

Under water hockey is also popular with older gentlemen. Older volunteers also contribute to the running of the centre, staffing the tuck shop for example.



Outdoor Spaces - Shops and Services

Case Study

The Cooperative has taken over local post offices such as that in Somerset Road, Ryde East that has proven to be a real lifeline to local people.

Somerset Road Cooperative mini supermarket is a very well used shop and post office, which serves Ryde East. Staff are extremely age friendly and give time to frail elderly that cannot manage large supermarkets.

The town centre of Ryde contains a range of independent and national chain shops, post offices and banks. However with recent bank closures access to banks and post offices is becoming increasingly more difficult for older residents who live outside of the centre of the town and either cannot or choose not to do online banking.

Older people benefit from a range of cafés, pubs and restaurants in the centre of Ryde. Some of which have pleasant views to the mainland.

Older people can access a number of chemists and pharmacies in and around Ryde. Some older people benefit from a pharmacy within or next door to their doctors surgery.

Transportation and Mobility

This domain is important because:

- As people grow older, **their reliance on both walking and public transport increases.**
- Older people find their **mobility, and the regular distances they travel from their home, decreases** with age.
- **Two thirds of all trips** made by older people **are restricted to the local neighbourhood.**
- Older people are at **greater risk of serious and fatal injury** from traffic than any other generational group.
- **Fear of falling** is a major barrier preventing older people from getting outdoors.
- **Social participation** is in many situations dependent on access to appropriate transport³.

However, concern has been expressed by the Ryde working group that the lack of accessible transport for older frail people living in Wards on the outskirts of Ryde can lead to social isolation and poor health if medical services cannot be accessed easily. Therefore, the group aims to seek to investigate other options around access to transport for older people living away from central Ryde and main bus and rail routes to enable older people to access social and medical appointments.

Older people mention that they find accessing transport to get to events at Aspire for example difficult as there are no direct bus routes and no parking for blue badge holders. Ryde based Community Enterprise Isle Access has been established to provide help and advice to local businesses and to people particularly with disabilities to ensure local services are accessible. Isle Access is working closely with ferry providers to ensure ferries are accessible for people with disabilities. Isle Access are undertaking an accessibility study on Ryde starting with the Town Centre.

The centre of Ryde is well served by regular public transport which includes:

- Regular public buses with links to Newport and other Island towns and villages on main routes
- Trains to the south of the Island (Bay area)
- Regular foot passenger ferries and hovercrafts to the mainland leaving from the Esplanade/Pier area of Ryde with access to national train, bus and coach routes and ferries to the continent.

Older people have also been consulted at Age Friendly Island Transport public forums. Frailty is a significant issue in relation to public transport for older people. Pleasingly, feedback from local public forums confirms that local bus drivers are age friendly: 'Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the kerb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off'.

People of a pensionable age are able to use their Islander cards to travel free on Southern Vectis buses after 9.30am. There is free travel on Island Line Trains with certain travel cards including for those with disabilities.

At least 70% of the population of Ryde have access to their own vehicle – however this information is not broken down by age and we know that as people grow older, they are less likely to drive. Older people report they are particularly uncomfortable driving in the dark. Chargeable car parking is available to older people throughout the town and along the seafront. With free Blue Badge Parking (disabled) in the Town. In residential areas there is some free on road parking and residential permit parking, however this is often busy and older people may have to park some-way from their home. In the development of local cycle ways there is a need to consider the needs of older people in that regard.

Housing

This domain is important because:

- **Time spent at home indoors increases in older age:** 80% of a day for those 65 and over and 90% for those aged 85 and over.
- Older people are more likely than any other age group **to live in homes that are in a poor state of repair**, that lack reasonable bathroom and/or kitchen facilities, that are not sufficiently warm in winter, and that pose a significant risk to health.
- **Risk of falls and winter deaths** are closely related to poor housing³.

There is a range of social housing where independent older people can live although rented bungalows are a premium. The census of 2011 found Ryde has one of the highest social housing stock. Sovereign Housing Association is the largest provider with approximately 1000 units (third of all island stock).

There is a variety of housing in Ryde suitable for older people, but there is a waiting list. For those requiring extra

support Housing Associations along with the Abbeyfield Society provide sheltered and supported housing in a number of locations. Maintenance of Social Housing varies from good to poor.

In addition there are a number of residential care homes and nursing homes providing a range of care and support. Ryde is a target area for housing developments of affordable housing and this includes housing for older adults. Ryde Town Council and local residents are concerned about the need for proper infrastructure to support older people e.g. sufficient transport and community support facilities.

Older people who wish to remain in their own homes are able to access home modification assistance, and the supply of minor aids and equipment such as grab rails through the Age UK IW Care Navigator.

To assist older people as well as other residents, remain warm in their homes, Ryde Town Council has provided the Footprint Trust with funding so it can visit some 50 homes this year and give residents tailored guidance on ways in which to reduce utility bills and gain discounts and grants.



Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion

This domain is important because:

- The number and variety of **social interactions tends to decline** with advancing age, even as the need for social support and participation increases.
- Social isolation is associated with a **higher risk of death** among older people.
- **Negative attitudes** towards older people are still widespread, overlooked and accepted.
- Structural inequalities (poverty, deprivation, material disadvantage) put older people at a heightened risk **of social marginalisation and exclusion** – more so than for any other age group.³

There are a wide range of social activities in Ryde which older people can access including sport, coffee mornings and tea dances. However access to social events can be an issue for some older people due to Ryde's topography.

Ryde working group has sought to improve access to social inclusion and participation particularly for older people living on the outskirts of Ryde.

A meeting which brought together 20 groups and organisations to explore whether there were ways activities and resources including transport could be shared and coordinated.

Local churches offer a range of social activities and facilities available to older people such as the Time Out Café at St John's Church run by older active adults.

Case Study

Aspire

The former Holy Trinity Church in Ryde was saved from being pulled down and has been turned into a thriving community centre by local people and named Aspire. Aspire now holds many clubs events and activities aimed at people of all ages with some activities specifically aimed at older people.

Aspire says, "Dozens and dozens of activities take place every week aimed at older people which include 'Men in Sheds', tea dances, lunch clubs etc".

The lunch club provides a lifeline for many and has been life changing. Twenty-four older Ryde residents attend weekly for a hot lunch and desert. Meals are delivered to those who are unable to attend ensuring that they receive a healthy meal. From this club friendships have been formed, lives have been changed particularly for those who are lonely.

Aspire has hosted Age Friendly Island Public forums which enables older people to have their voice heard on a range of topics. Aspire like many other venues in Ryde has accessibility issues due to being on a hill and lack of available car parking spaces.



Civic Participation and Employment

This domain is important because:

- By 2021, **close to 32% of the working-age population will be aged 50-65.**
- Older people experience **discriminatory attitudes** in the workplace which makes work difficult for them.
- Volunteering in older age supports both **physical and mental health and well-being.**
- Over time, the **more volunteering** older people do, the greater the likelihood of improved well-being.
- **58% of people aged over 65 volunteer** in some way each year – this compares to 37% of the whole adult population³.

Older people in Ryde who are in employment work within a range of sectors including retail, hotel & catering, health & social work, education and manufacturing. Some older people commute to the mainland from the passenger ferry at Ryde Pier head and hovercraft to Southsea, whilst others run their own businesses and an active business network 'All Things Networking' is coordinated from Ryde by an older person.

Active older people promote and participate in Ryde's thriving carnivals and parades. People of all ages take part in workshops to design costumes, perform in the parades and support the carnival and parades including Pride by volunteering their time to ensure the events are well organized. Many other older people support these events through watching the spectacle.

The majority of the Governors at Ryde Primary and senior School are aged over 50, along with 80% of the Town Councillors. Decision-making bodies encourage and facilitate the participation of older people; however there is a gender imbalance whereby only 5 of Councillors are female. Women - including older women - should therefore be encouraged and supported to consider standing for civic office to improve representation and enhance the balance of views.

There is a good record of volunteering. Older residents are essential in the running of community organisations and undertake roles to secure services which otherwise would be lost due to budget cuts at the Isle of Wight Council. For example one active older resident ensures the war memorial in Lind Street is kept clean and tidy.

Through the churches together in Ryde older people volunteer and support others for example at the George Street centre, serving in the café, the Men's Big Breakfast, Street Pastors and St John's Church.

The age profile of Ryde means that many older people have time to participate in volunteering, however with the changes to state retirement age many will continue to work in employment whilst others will choose to become self-employed. There will be a need to support older people to continue work and ensure that local businesses are Age Friendly employers.



Communication and Information

This domain is important because:

- Good quality information and communication provides older people with the necessary resources to **make informed decisions, secure rights, and act in their own best interests.**
- Communication by **word of mouth is among the most effective** forms of communicating and generating opportunities for certain kinds of activities in older age.
- Access to good quality information leads to **specific gains in health and well-being.**
- Failure to access information and advice when it is needed can increase the risk of long-term, multiple problems, increasing the risk of **social exclusion**³.

For many older people in Ryde word of mouth – information is available from trusted individuals such as local volunteers at Aspire, the Local Area Coordinator, local councillors community leaders and via the Care Navigator based at the medical centres and other professionals.



Information is also accessed by older people through:

- Articles and press releases in local newspapers and magazines including the widely read Isle of Wight County Press, The Beacon Magazine, Ryde Magazine and local Parish Magazines.
- Noticeboards around the Town however within individual communities there is a lack of notice boards and ways to provide these are being explored.

Internet and social media. Ryde Town Council has a website where news and information can be shared along with Town Council meeting minutes and events. Facebook is used to contact organisations such as Aspire.

- Posters are displayed around the Town where local people go for example in the library, community halls, churches and local stores.

- The Town Council and other community group meetings. Residents are welcome to attend the Town Council meetings and ask questions. The Town Clerk's offices are open to the public Monday to Friday 9am-4pm.

Some individual Councillor publish newsletters in their Wards which residents say gives them a sense of community.

- Age Friendly Island public forums have taken place at Aspire, Ryde with further planned at All Saint's Church. These forums are predominately aimed at older people offer the opportunity to gain information and share concerns and ideas on issues of interest to older people for example proposed changes to health services and on employment for older people, scams and transport.

However a care issue is that although there are a range of activities and support for older adults in Ryde, there is the lack of a central point of information and a lack of coordination between groups.

Community Support and Health Services

This domain is important because:

- Over the next ten years there is likely to be a **significant increase in the number of people** aged 65 years and older. (IW Council joint strategic needs assessment).
- **People are living longer** which brings other challenges around social isolation, the need for care, medical services and community support.

Community Support

The mapping exercise undertaken by the Ryde Working group has shown that there is much support in the community available to older people. As well as statutory services there are a range of community and voluntary organisations including churches providing a range of community support. For example, good neighbour schemes and Ageing Better projects such as the Alzheimer's Café.

Older people living in sheltered housing within Ryde receive support as required from in house staff and staff from local housing associations and charities. Care Navigators based in Doctor's surgeries support older people, access social activities, medical and care support enabling older people to remain in their homes.

The Local Area Coordinator in Ryde provides support to older residents on a one to one basis.

An example of community support is of a local older adult resident who experienced a burglary. She had health needs and became very isolated. The local Councillor worked with the Local Area Coordinator and Age UK IW to get her a new fence and coordinated support.

Medical Facilities including Doctors Surgeries

The doctors' surgeries are situated close to the centre of Ryde which can make access for older people living on the outskirts of Ryde without transport difficult.

The Tower House surgery, Link Road, Ryde has developed in conjunction with Age Friendly Island and Age UK IW the first age friendly surgery and has appointed an Age Friendly Champion to ensure that the needs of older people attending the surgery are met. The Age Friendly Surgeries tool-kit is now being shared with other surgeries.

Community Emergency Planning

As the hospital is over 7 miles away defibrillators are situated at various locations around Ryde. Older people living in areas of Ryde prone to flooding are alerted by the Environment Agency.

References

1. http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf
2. <https://www.iwight.com/Council/OtherServices/Isle-of-Wight-Facts-and-Figures-Ward-Area-Data/Ry>
3. S Handler A Research and Evaluation Framework for Age-Friendly Cities (2014) reproduced with kind permission of Age Friendly Manchester, Manchester City council

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