

# The Parish of Gurnard

## Age Friendly Communities Report

Spring 2018



## 2. The Parish of Gurnard Age Friendly Communities Report



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 the Parish of Gurnard and is based on the World Health Organisation's<sup>1</sup> 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 report also assesses the Parish of Gurnard'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, wellbeing and quality of life.



### The Parish of Gurnard

The Parish of Gurnard is situated on the north-west coast of the Island, near the famous sailing town of Cowes. Gurnard has a population of approximately 1100 households.

Gurnard has an established community of long-term residents with strong family and friendship networks.

Housing within the parish is a mix of residential and some holiday homes, with the view across

the Solent highly valued leading to a coastal fringe of premium dwellings.<sup>4</sup>

Over 50% of the population of Gurnard are over 50 years old. Gurnard Parish Council has appointed an Age Friendly Champion to promote the needs of older people.

## Executive Overview Recommendations



This report recommends that Gurnard Parish Council:

- work with neighbouring Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders to review road safety in light of new developments;
- work with other stakeholders to increase the frequency of community bus transportation;
- review the availability of downsize housing opportunities (one or two bed properties) within the Parish for older people.

## 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**<sup>3</sup>

There are pavements in the centre of the village but walking around parts of the parish can be unsafe for older people as in some areas there are no pavements and no pedestrian crossings and speed limits are not always adhered to.

The availability of street lighting is important as it enables older people to feel safe to go out in the dark to access services and social activities. There is street lighting in the main residential areas of Gurnard.

A cold-calling zone is in place to deter cold-callers and rogue traders, which helps older residents feel safe in their homes. Gurnard is clean, tidy and welcoming. The Parish Council manages the 'Open Spaces project'<sup>2</sup>, working closely with mainly older Green Gym volunteers who have worked hard to clear vegetation from Cockleton Meadow to help make the area accessible to all.

Gurnard enters the annual 'Best Kept Village' competition and older volunteers work hard to ensure the outdoor spaces in and around Gurnard bloom.

There are benches around the village where older people can rest; some of these benches are in need of maintenance.



### Outdoor Spaces - Outdoor Safety

Gurnard is surrounded by countryside and coastal walks and the beach, which give older people access to open spaces and the natural environment that can improve the sense of wellbeing. Older people are attracted to Gurnard as a safe place to live. Feeling safe encourages older people to go out, stay independent and participate socially. The Parish Council receives regular reports from the police. There are low levels of crime.<sup>2</sup>

## Outdoor Spaces - Community Assets and Buildings

Public toilets are essential to older residents, and visitors to the parish, particularly those with medical conditions who require regular access to a toilet. The Parish Council has secured the future of the toilets on the waterfront which allows older people time to enjoy the beach and local activities and events. This includes the use of popular beach huts, some of which are used and owned by older people to spend their summer days.

The Village Hall is leased by the Parish Council from the Women's Institute, is centrally situated, and is used by many older people for activities, celebrations and meetings. It is accessible with accessible toilets and some parking.

### Case Study

*Older people benefit from the flexible use of the church buildings at All Saints Parish Church which are well used for a range of social activities. Within the grounds is the Garden Room which includes a disabled toilet. The Garden Room is also available for hire.*

*The church also organises social activities in local pubs. These activities not only benefit older people but help sustain public houses of which Gurnard has two which, in contrast to other villages, have remained open and recognised as an asset to the community. The pubs also offer a range of entertainment and social activities, which are attended by local people of all ages, as well as visitors.*

## Outdoor Spaces - Shops and Services

### Case Study

*The local newsagent Gurnard Press has been developed to include a popular café in the centre of the village. It now offers not only traditional newsagent services but also an informal accessible environment in which to meet friends and socialise over coffee and is regularly used by older people.*

*Older people, particularly in the summer, can enjoy pubs, cafes and restaurants along the shoreline, some of which have outdoor seating areas from where the views, stunning sunsets and events in the Solent can be enjoyed.*

There are few shops and services in Gurnard, but the small local NISA supermarket stocks essential provisions. While there are no banks or post office in Gurnard, the NISA shop has a LINK cash machine, where older people can access some banking services. The nearest bank branches are now in Newport and the Cowes Post Office has recently moved out of the town centre, making access difficult (though a community bus service runs several times a day).

For older people living in the west of Gurnard there is a Spar shop at the former Gurnard Pines (now Fitness at Gurnard holiday and leisure resort). However, for a wider choice the nearest supermarket is in Cowes, which without transport makes access difficult.

There is no library in Gurnard; however, the village is serviced bi-weekly by the Isle of Wight Council mobile library, which is much valued by older people.

## 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 transport<sup>3</sup>.

Good access to transport is key to social participation, health and wellbeing, employment and volunteering.

Many older people drive but we know that as people grow older, they are less likely to drive and report not wanting to drive in the dark.

However, the rural nature of Gurnard means that transport for older people who do not have access to a private vehicle can be an issue, impacting negatively on social participation, health and wellbeing.

Public transport is free for older people who have reached pensionable age, who can use their Islander card to travel on local buses after 9.30am weekdays and any time at weekends.

A limited community bus service links Gurnard and Cowes, subsidised by Southern Vectis bus company and run by volunteers. This service stops at the medical centre in Cowes and also the relocated post office, but its timetable is limited.

The Community Bus Partnership is working actively with Southern Vectis to try to improve and extend the days and times the local bus operates.

There is a regular bus service from Cowes to Newport, which stops at the hospital; however older residents may have to walk some distance to catch the bus or change buses in Cowes, limiting access for many.

Older villagers can also access both Age UK's Good Neighbour Scheme and Community Action IW's Optio Voluntary Car Service, which offer an alternative to public transport for older people (with the exception of those who use wheelchairs). The Optio Voluntary Car Service welcomes new members who would benefit from the service.

For older residents who drive there are no public car parks in Gurnard; however there is free on-road parking available near the shops and along the Esplanade which also has disabled parking spaces.



### 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 housing<sup>3</sup>.

There is a range of housing types suitable for older people in Gurnard, which are generally well maintained. It has been recognized that amongst the population there is a high proportion of households comprising one or two people, who are more likely to be owner-occupiers<sup>4</sup>.

However, the Housing Need Assessment 2013<sup>4</sup> found that there was a need for small homes in order for older people to downsize and remain in the village. More recently a snapshot from Rightmove.co.uk found a limited choice of smaller properties for those wishing to downsize.

Gurnard benefits from sheltered housing accommodation for those over 50 supplied by Southern Housing. These one- and two-bedroom flats in the heart of the village are within easy reach of the village shops and the waterfront pubs and cafes.

There are no residential care facilities within Gurnard but they are available in nearby Cowes.

To reduce the risk of falls, home modification options and supply of minor aids and equipment such as grab rails are available through the Age UK IW Care Navigator which exists to enable older people to stay in their homes as long as possible. Older people should be made aware of this service.

Adaptations for older people and those with disabilities are considered in planning applications that come before the Parish Council and reviewed against age friendly features.

The Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service offers free home safety checks to older people. This includes identifying the victims of scams.

**“Gurnard Village Hall is the activities hub of the Parish and is widely used for social events by older people.”**



## 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.<sup>3</sup>

Gurnard has been described by a local resident as a 'retired person's paradise'. There are many formal and informal social participation opportunities within the parish which can alleviate social isolation.

The parish church of All Saints' reach into the community is impressive. Their work was recognised with a first prize in the Local Communities category at the Community Action Awards for a number of activities: the Coffee and Chat mornings (with the strapline, 'It's that easy not to be lonely'), the Blokes' Beer and Banter at the Portland Inn and the Prayer and a Pint at the Woodvale Inn, as well as the Christian Conversations and 'Women Who Lunch' groups which also meet at the Woodvale.

The Elephant memory club which is held at All Saints' church once a month is a free friendly club providing music and memories for older people and has been supported through a grant from the Parish Council.

### Case Study

#### **Active Lifestyle**

*An active lifestyle is enjoyed by many older people in Gurnard. Active older people who enjoy sailing join Gurnard Sailing Club which provides both sailing opportunities and social activities for people of all ages. Older people also belong to the sailing clubs in nearby Cowes.*

*Horse riding is enjoyed by some older people and facilities are available in the village. Older people enjoy playing golf at the nearby golf club and actively support the local football club.*

*For those who enjoy swimming and other sports active older people can join Fitness at Gurnard.*

*A short walk from Gurnard is located the Isle of Wight Community Club, where a range of activities are available such as bowling, line dancing, and crib, bridge and bingo. For those unable to walk, other residents give lifts or a taxi is available daily except Sundays.*

*The activities hub of the parish is the Village Hall with a wide range of activities attended and run by older people. These include yoga, art groups, quilters, dance, creative writing, singing, gardening and a film society. The Cyber café funded by the village hall committee is well attended and older people bring their own ICT equipment to learn new skills.*

*CAMEO social group ('Come and Meet Each Other') meets regularly and provides companionship for older people. There is an active Women's Institute which offers friendship and a wide range of activities including walks, picnics and trips.*

### 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 population<sup>3</sup>.



There are limited employment opportunities for older people within Gurnard. However, older people who are in employment often commute to towns across the Island and to the mainland with the passenger ferry from Cowes relatively accessible. There are local employment opportunities within a few miles of Gurnard including for those with specialist engineering and marine/boat building skills, education, health and social work and retail<sup>5</sup>.

Within Gurnard and its immediate vicinity there are also businesses in catering and hospitality, leisure and tourism, agriculture and animal care either run by or offering paid employment to people over 50 years of age.

Many older people retire to Gurnard and voluntarily contribute a great deal to Parish life, supporting each other and younger people.

Older people actively participate in civic duties; 4 out of 6 Parish Councillors are over 50.

A group of local volunteers manages the village hall and its website. They work together for the benefit of all the residents of Gurnard.

Intergenerational activities are important in Gurnard. A wide range of clubs and social activities aimed at both older and younger people are organised by those over 50. These include the May Queen event and the Harvest Festival.

Older people play a very active role in the Island's Scouts Association and the Gurnard Scout and Guide groups and maintain the 1st Gurnard Scout and Guide hall.

Younger people are actively supported in the local school by older people who listen to the children read.

Older people form the committee of the Friends' of Cockleton Meadow, a local green open space which is maintained for the benefit of all ages and enables children to learn about nature.

Fund raising by older people for local and national charities, for example the Children's Society, regularly takes place within the parish.



## 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**<sup>3</sup>.

Communication between the Parish Council, community groups and residents is good and takes a variety of forms; for example: articles and press releases in local newspapers and magazines, including the widely read Isle of Wight County Press and the Beacon Magazine.

The parish magazine 'Gurnard News' is financially supported by the Parish Council and is delivered to every home (with the exception of Gurnard Pines, where they are left at the reception).

At Parish Council and other community group meetings, residents are welcome to attend and ask questions.

Information is also gained from:

- noticeboards including the Parish Council's at Worsley Road, Gurnard, the Village Hall Association's at Westbrook Lane and a board at All Saints' Church
- posters displayed around the parish; for example in the village halls, churches and local stores
- Internet and social media. The Parish Council has a website where news and information can be shared along with Parish Council meeting minutes. Internet connectivity enables easy communication with friends and family that can alleviate the loneliness of physical isolation (Age UK 2012).

Regular surgeries with the local County Councillor are held in Gurnard to discuss any matters of concern and older people have actively participated in consultations over planning applications.



In a close-knit community, informal word of mouth is important for older people who may not meet people in other social settings. This informal community exchange often takes place in local shops and services and is a vital part of village life.

Information is also available from trusted individuals such as local volunteers.



## 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

Support is offered by members of the community who visit isolated and sick older people.

Older people with dementia can access weekly support, including the dementia club at Northwood Cricket Club, although there is a charge which makes it less accessible for those on low incomes. The monthly Alzheimer's Café in Cowes is free and welcomes residents from Gurnard, as is The Elephant club in Gurnard which is accessible for local residents and free.

There is limited support from some external agencies, for example the Local Area Coordinators, who in other areas provide advice, information, and support to individuals of all ages and their carers but do not offer the service in Gurnard.

Older people in Gurnard benefit hugely from a caring and flexible approach to bringing the community together, reducing isolation and creating a strong local support network.

### Medical facilities (including doctors' surgeries)

To access medical services older residents must travel to Cowes. Older residents complain that they have difficulty getting a doctor's appointment and for some who are less mobile, access by public transport to the surgery may be an issue. Older people also report that they are unhappy to travel to later appointments in the dark in the winter. For those with access to transport, medical appointments at St Mary's Hospital in Newport can be easily reached.

### Community Emergency Planning

Gurnard has a Community Emergency Plan which is kept under review, and Southern and Scottish Energy has provided a grant for a shed and emergency equipment to support it. It includes plans to deal with alerting older residents at risk of flooding, as well as the provision of defibrillators in the centre of the village (supported by the Parish Council and provided by the British Heart Foundation), near the waterfront and in the Village Hall for use by hall users when the hall is open.

### References

- 1 [http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)
- 2 <http://www.gurnardpc.co.uk/>
- 3 S Handler A Research and Evaluation Framework for Age-Friendly Cities (2014) reproduced with kind permission of Age Friendly Manchester, Manchester City Council
- 4 Gurnard Parish Housing Needs Assessment September 2013
- 5 (<https://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/ward-pack-education-skills-employment-cowes-west-gurnard.pdf>)

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