



# Age-Friendly Toolkit

# Contents

Page 3 - A message from Social Enterprise Kent

Page 4 - Who is Ageless Thanet?

Page 5 - The Age-Friendly Business Scheme

Page 6 - What does it mean to be Age-Friendly?

Page 8 - Becoming Age-Friendly - things to consider

Page 9 - Respect and Inclusion sheet

Page 10 - Case study from Central Cars

Page 11 - Environment and Accessibility sheet

Page 12 - Case study from Harris + Hoole

Page 13 - Added Value sheet

Page 14 - Case study from The Walpole Bay Hotel

Page 15 - Mini directory of services



# A MESSAGE FROM SOCIAL ENTERPRISE KENT

Ageless Thanet has run the Age-Friendly Business scheme for the last five years, connecting businesses with the 50+ community.

With Ageless Thanet drawing to a close, we wanted to enable the age friendly ethos to continue. This stand alone toolkit has been designed to support businesses and organisations take their first steps towards considering the needs of older people, and become age friendly.

To support those who want to invest in becoming age-friendly, we have worked with other Ageing Better partnerships to develop training, which takes a more in depth look at the issues we may face as we get older. Please contact us for more details.



**REBECCA SMITH**

DEPUTY CEO OF SOCIAL  
ENTERPRISE KENT AND AGELESS  
THANET PROGRAMME MANAGER

**SEK** Social  
Enterprise  
Kent

Social Enterprise Kent, the lead organisation of the Ageless Thanet project, is a Community Interest Company (CIC), registered with, and regulated by, the CIC Regulator. We have been in operation for over 30 years, with the overarching vision of "Improving Lives, Supporting Communities".

Our key aims:

To provide support for people, particularly in areas of deprivation or for those most disadvantaged, to gain skills and employment

To support the creation, organisation and management of social enterprises and small enterprises; and to develop a way of making this sustainable

To support in the regeneration of deprived areas in Kent, by creating jobs and skills

If you would like to find out more about SEK, we would love to hear from you -

[www.sekgroup.org.uk](http://www.sekgroup.org.uk)

[info@sekgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@sekgroup.org.uk)

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# Who is Ageless Thanet?

Ageless Thanet is a National Lottery Community Fund project, part of the Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better programme. In 2015 we were awarded £3 million to reduce loneliness and social isolation in the 50+ community in Thanet.

The partnership focused on 5 areas:

- Wellbeing Activities
- Planning for Later Life
- Active Citizenship (volunteering)
- Ageless Entrepreneurs
- and of course the Age-Friendly Business Scheme



Recognising that Thanet has one of the fastest aging populations in Kent, and also some of the highest levels of deprivation in the county, the project wanted to support older people to enjoy their later lives, and help create a culture of positive ageing in Thanet.

Here are some of our achievements since the project began in 2015:

**65%**

of volunteers said their confidence increased

**4400+**

people have benefitted from attending a Wellbeing activity

**465**

businesses have engaged with the Age-Friendly Business scheme



**Over  
£1.8 million  
in income maximisation!**

This data is from November 2015 until March 2021  
The Life Planners worked with clients to help ensure they were claiming the benefits they were entitled to, which included assisting with applying for backdated payments.

# The Age-Friendly Business Scheme

The Age-Friendly Business scheme is designed to engage local businesses with the 50+ community. Some businesses promote their discounts to our Reward Cardholders, and all businesses make a commitment to work towards becoming age-friendly.

Businesses are listed on our App, website and in our printed directory. We host Facebook groups for our businesses to network with each other, as well as connect directly with cardholders.

Coming soon in 2021 is our Age-Friendly Training which will be free to all of our Age-Friendly Businesses until Christmas 2021.

There are currently 200+ local businesses signed up and over 9000 Reward Cardholders.

## **What are the benefits?**

Participating in a community and feeling a sense of welcome and belonging is key to both our physical and mental health as we grow older.

Local businesses and organisations are a vital component of our community, and are therefore uniquely placed to contribute to the conversation about ageing and loneliness.

"Being part of the scheme shows that you are trusted and that you understand the needs of older people."

# What does it mean to be Age-Friendly?

Age-Friendly communities are places where people of all ages can live healthy and active lives. These places make it possible for people to continue to stay in their homes, participate in the activities that they value, and contribute to their communities, for as long as possible.

Creating age-friendly communities involves older residents, local groups, councils, and businesses working together to improve their community. Key features of an age-friendly community include:



To also help with the Covid recovery it is vitally important that we support people of all ages and demographics to return to our high streets and communities in a supported and safe way.

Becoming age-friendly means that you are committed to making small changes (and some big changes if needed) to make everyone feel more welcome in your premises.

Understanding the issues that face us as we age will also promote a more cohesive and accepting community for us all to live in.

# Half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all.

Age UK, 2016, No-one should have no one

## Why is it important?

Life expectancy has increased significantly and the population of older adults is growing rapidly. There are currently almost 12 million people aged 65 and over in the UK, with 3.2 million aged 80 and over. It's estimated that by 2036, one in four of the population will be over 65. In Thanet this figure is estimated to be closer to 1 in 3.

Ageing doesn't automatically mean that you are going to suffer from loneliness, however research has shown that as you age some people do become more at risk of being acutely lonely. Life events such as divorce, bereavement and retirement can cause a lack of both meaningful and casual connections and lead to individuals feeling lonely, withdrawn and ultimately socially isolated.

According to the Campaign to End Loneliness, the number of over-50s experiencing loneliness is set to reach two million by 2025/6. This compares to around 1.4 million in 2016/7 - a 49% increase in 10 years

Tackling loneliness is everyone's responsibility.

**If you would like to find out more information about our Age-Friendly Training, please get in touch by emailing [info@sekgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@sekgroup.org.uk), or call 01227 469970.**

# Becoming Age-Friendly - things to consider

Do you consider your business or organisation to be age-friendly? Perhaps it isn't something you have even considered. It is important to remember that each business is unique - what you do and what you can offer will not be the same as anyone else. There are however some universal key considerations to think about: the physical environment, communication, inclusion and community outreach. Here are some simple things that you can do to help:

Do you or your staff actively welcome and help older people?

Could you offer any space to community organisations that work with over 50's to meet or hold events?

Do you know what community groups can help older people in your area?

Do you have space in your premises to advertise these groups?

Can you involve volunteers to be Age-Friendly Champions?

This toolkit is designed to be a starting point to help you assess your business, and think about what changes you could make in the short term and in the longer term to become age friendly.

Think about each theme and how your business is currently performing - 1 being low, 5 being high. This isn't a test and there is no right or wrong answer, but knowing your starting point can help you identify where you can improve.



# RESPECT AND INCLUSION

We all know that great customer service has a big impact on how customers view a business and whether they will return, or recommend a business. For many older people the feeling of being 'invisible' increases as they age. Technological advances, changes in societal norms, and also physical changes such as reductions in sight and hearing are key causes of isolation.

## Things for you to consider:

- Do you and your staff actively welcome older people with respect and an understanding of the physical and mental changes that can happen when you age?
- If you offer classes or experiences, are the start times ok for people using free off-peak bus passes? Are they late in the evening when many older people don't like to travel for a variety of reasons?
- Have you or your staff undertaken any specific training about older people's needs?
- If you have marketing material does it present positive images of older people, or contain any older people at all? Has it been designed considering the needs of those with visual impairments, dyslexia or dementia?

What's my business' current score? (1 = low, 5= high)    1    2    3    4    5

Why have I given my business this score?

What actions can I take now to improve my score?

E.G. Could you nominate someone in the business to be an age-friendly champion and help them investigate age-friendly training?

What actions can I take in the next 12 months to improve?

E.G. Review all the signage in your premises to ensure it is easy to read and understand for those with dyslexia, dementia and autism

# "I PERSONALLY THINK THE AGELESS THANET INITIATIVE IS HAVING A WONDERFULLY POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY"



## CENTRAL CARS

Central Cars is a family-run taxi company that has been operating in Thanet for over 20 years. They have been a part of the Age-Friendly Business Scheme since January 2017 and offer a 10% discount to Reward Cardholders on local journeys.

We spoke to business owner, Maria Seager, about her experience of being an Age-Friendly Business.

## WHY DID YOU BECOME AN AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS?

"I thought the scheme was a great idea when I first heard about it, and I realised that being part of it had the potential to bring new customers to the business. We get lots of marketing support from Ageless Thanet, such as the 'logo' stickers which our drivers display on their dashboard, posters and strut cards for on the counter and a listing on the App, website and in the printed directory. The business has also benefitted from the networking groups which also covered interesting subjects such as Social Media and GDPR, attending these also afforded us the opportunity to meet other businesses on the scheme.

We have recently seen an increase in the number of accounts being opened by people who 'care' for somebody living with dementia. Having an account allows the person living with dementia to travel without the stress of dealing with payment at the end of their journey. To help our drives to understand the issues faced by those living with dementia, Ageless Thanet worked with Thanet District Council and the Police to run a dementia awareness session."



# ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

If you have business premises, have you considered how easy it is to get around? Are there spaces between aisles and tables? Is it easy to enter if you have a buggy or wheelchair, or limited mobility? What's the lighting like? Is it noisy?

Some changes to the physical environment might be unrealistic, especially if you have a small space, however there are some simple things that you could think about:

- Is the entrance to your premises free from clutter or signage?
- For people living with dementia, or with some types of visual impairment, patterned flooring can be confusing and large dark coloured mats can look like holes.
- Are you able to install an infrared system or hearing loop? If you are, is it turned on and are there clear instructions on how to connect to it?
- Could you have a space for people to sit/rest, or for a wheelchair near the front entrance?
- Are there any steps in the building? If so, is there a ramp?
- Are there toilets available for use by the public?

What's my business's current score? (1 = low, 5= high)    1    2    3    4    5

Why have I given my business this score?

What actions can I take now to improve my score?

E.G. review the entrance to my premises and remove any unnecessary clutter/rearrange the entrance.

What actions can I take in the next 12 months to improve?

E.G. designate seating for people with limited mobility, investigate training to support those with additional needs.

# "THE AGE FRIENDLY BUSINESS SCHEME ALLOWS BUSINESSES TO MAKE A STATEMENT THAT THEY ARE ACTIVELY CONSIDERING THE NEEDS OF THEIR OLDER CUSTOMERS "



## HARRIS + HOOLE

Harris + Hoole is a coffee shop situated inside the large Tesco Extra at Westwood Cross. In the first 12 months of signing up to become an Age-Friendly Business, they saw in the region of 3000 uses of the Reward Card.

We spoke with Kieron Blindwell who was the branch manager and originally signed up Harris + Hoole to become an Age-Friendly Business.

## HAVE YOU ADAPTED, OR CHANGED THE WAY YOU OPERATE AS A RESULT OF BECOMING AN AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS?

"We have moved tables around to make it easier for people with mobility issues to move around the store. We always offer to carry purchases to the table.

We take time to talk to people, to find out a little about them. A few months ago, Colin, one of our team members discovered that one of our customers (an elderly chap) hadn't spoken to anybody for three days. Whenever this chap comes in now Colin will take time out and go and sit with him and have a chat.

We have all the contact details for Ageless Thanet and leaflets we can give out and we would always promote it to somebody if we felt the circumstances were right and they would benefit from the project."



# ADDED VALUE

Being part of an age-friendly community isn't just about improving the physical environment of your shop or venue. Is there any way that you can use your assets (including yourself) to improve the lives of older people in your community?

## Things to consider:

- Do you have a space you could offer for free to community groups? For example some of our age-friendly businesses hold Coffee Stops where one of our volunteers is available for anyone who wants to chat and find out what's happening on the project. Others allow volunteer-led groups to meet during their quieter times.
- Could you have a local noticeboard to display information about community activities and events?
- Do you have any outside space that could host a 'Little Library'?
- Is there anything you could do to assist local organisations with awareness raising or fundraising activities?
- Could you host an event to engage with older people and understand their needs/views of your business?

What's my business's current score? (1 = low, 5= high)

1 2 3 4 5

Why have I given my business this score?

What actions can I take now to improve my score?

E.G. Talk to Ageless Thanet about hosting an event for older people or contact other local groups you would like to support

What actions can I take in the next 12 months to improve?

E.G. Involve older people in helping you become more age-friendly.

**"WHEN OUR 50+ RESIDENTS SEE THE AGELESS THANET LOGO IT GIVES THEM THE CONFIDENCE TO COME IN, KNOWING THEY WILL BE WELCOMED AND TREATED WITH RESPECT"**

## **THE WALPOLE BAY HOTEL**

The Walpole Bay Hotel has become a landmark destination for both locals and visitors alike. It has also become a hub for many local community clubs and organisations. Sadly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel had to close over the winter months, but they plan to reopen for the summer season once restrictions have eased.

We spoke to owner, Jane Bishop, about her experience of being involved with Ageless Thanet.



## **WHY DID YOU BECOME AN AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS?**

"The Ageless Thanet Age Friendly Business scheme is an excellent concept, bringing the community together and opening up lots of opportunities for people to get out and about in their local community, try new places and new things. The Ageless Thanet 'brand' is now very strong in Thanet and I truly believe, when our 50+ residents see the Ageless Thanet logo it gives them the confidence to come in, knowing they will be welcomed and treated with respect."

## **OTHER BENEFITS**

Other clubs have resulted indirectly by being part of the Age Friendly Business scheme such as 'The Canasta Club' (card game). Jane said many of those attending the free club which takes place every Tuesday morning from 10am - 12noon are members of the Ageless Thanet Feelgood Factory and she believes they chose the hotel because of their connection to the wider project.



# Mini Directory of Services

If you come into contact with an older person who needs support, here are some organisations that may be able to help:

## Financial Support

### Citizens Advice

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

01843 228642 or 0800 144 8848

- Advice and support for benefits, debt and money, and housing issues

### CROP

[www.cropkent.org.uk](http://www.cropkent.org.uk)

01622 851200

- Support for people over 55
- Benefit assessments and support completing forms
- Information and advice in general regarding housing options, financial needs, debt, and benefit changes

## Health and Wellbeing

### Connect Well East Kent

[www.connectwelleastkent.org.uk](http://www.connectwelleastkent.org.uk)

0300 302 0178

- Identifying and planning the support you need
- Information about support in your local community
- Managing your money and your benefits
- Supporting you to live safely in your own home
- Going through an assessment process for social care help

### East Kent Independent Dementia Support (EKIDS)

[www.ekids.org.uk](http://www.ekids.org.uk)

01227 730000

- Supports people with dementia and their carers and families
- Run support groups and work with healthcare professionals

### Live Well Kent

[www.livewellkent.org.uk](http://www.livewellkent.org.uk)

0800 567 7699

- Keeping active and healthy
- Meeting people
- Everyday living

### NHS One You

[www.nhs.uk/oneyou/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/)

- Lifestyle and wellbeing advice
- Support to improve diet, start exercising, and quit smoking

## Loneliness and Social Isolation

### Ageless Thanet - change to Wellbeing contract

[www.agelessthanet.org.uk](http://www.agelessthanet.org.uk)

01843 210 005

- Support for over 50's living in Thanet to reduce social isolation
- Volunteering opportunities
- Regular community activities for people to get involved with
- Digital inclusion support
- Social Prescribing and Life Planning service to offer ongoing support

### Age UK Thanet

[www.ageuk.org.uk/thanet](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/thanet)

01843 223881

- Telephone befriending support
- Information and advice line for support with benefits, allowances, and housing
- Hot meals and support in the home

### Changing Minds Kent

[www.changingmindskent.co.uk](http://www.changingmindskent.co.uk)

- Social inclusion clubs

## Support for Carers

### Carers Support East Kent

[www.carersek.org.uk](http://www.carersek.org.uk)

01304 364637

- Phoneline support for carers needing advice
- Can support with carers needs assessment to identify and access support you need

### Crossroads Care Kent

[www.crossroadskent.org](http://www.crossroadskent.org)

0345 095 6701

- End of life care
- Dementia cafes
-

# USE YOUR REWARD CARD HERE



TO FIND OUT MORE, DOWNLOAD OUR  
**FREE APP** OR TO GET YOUR REWARD  
CARD VISIT

[WWW.AGELESSTHANET.ORG.UK](http://WWW.AGELESSTHANET.ORG.UK)



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