

1. Purpose and Background

The AFRN is an informal peer network for voluntary and community groups and organisations that support over 55s in Rother. The network is coordinated by Rother Voluntary Action on behalf of Rother District Council who are leading the wider Age Friendly Rother programme. This is supported by funding from East Sussex County Council Public Health department. The network began in April 2026 and is scheduled to run until March 2028.

The Network exists to promote age-friendly principles across Rother, ensuring that the district is a place where residents can age with dignity, independence, and active participation in their community, regardless of their age, physical ability, gender, cultural background or any other protected characteristic.

2. Aims and Objectives

The Network aims to:

- Provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration between voluntary sector organisations, community groups, public sector and the wider community.
- Ensure this dialogue is informed by in-community conversations with older Rother residents
- Promote understanding and awareness of the specific challenges and opportunities facing an ageing population in Rother
- Influence policy and service delivery to ensure they support the independence, health, and social connectivity of older residents
- Share best practice and learning regarding age-friendly environments, digital inclusion, and social support
- Amplify the voices of older residents and those who care for them, particularly those who are isolated or underrepresented
- Support the development of Rother's age-friendly strategies and community initiatives
- Champion and celebrate organisations who are supporting with older residents.

3. Scope

The Network will explore issues relating to the various dimensions of age-friendliness, including but not limited to:

- Transport and mobility
- Housing and home environments
- Access to health & community support (inc frailty)
- Outdoor spaces and buildings (accessibility and safety)
- Social participation and community engagement
- Civic participation and employment opportunities
- Communication and information (inc digital inclusion)
- Respect and social inclusion

4. Membership

Core Members:

- Representatives from local voluntary and community sector organisations focused on older people
- Older resident representatives/champions reflecting the diverse demographic of Rother
- Representatives from Rother District Council (officers and elected members)
- Representatives from Rother Voluntary Action
- Representatives from key partner organisations (e.g. NHS, Sussex Police, East Sussex County Council, local transport providers)

Membership Principles:

- Membership should reflect the diversity of Rother's older population, including different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities
- Members should have a genuine interest in and commitment to advancing age-friendly practices
- Organisations may nominate substitutes to attend when the primary representative is unavailable
- Membership will be reviewed annually to ensure appropriate representation

5. Chairing Arrangements

The Network will be chaired by Rother Voluntary Action.

The chair will work with attendees to set agendas, facilitate meetings, and represent the Network externally.

6. Meetings

- The Network will meet four times per year
- There will also be informal monthly online catch-up meetings
- Additional meetings may be called as required
- Meetings will be held at accessible venues with appropriate facilities
- A quorum will consist of at least six attendees, and one chair (in-person meetings): four attendees, one chair (online meetings)
- Meetings will be conducted in an inclusive manner, welcoming all voices
- Agendas and papers will be circulated at least one week in advance
- Notes will be taken and circulated within four weeks of each meeting

7. Decision Making

The Network operates as an advisory and influencing body rather than a decision-making authority. Decisions and recommendations will be made by consensus wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be reached, the chair will facilitate further discussion to find common ground.

8. Working Groups

The Network may establish working groups to represent geographical areas (e.g. Bexhill, Battle, Rye, rural Rother) or related themes (e.g. digital inclusion, transport and mobility, social isolation, healthy ageing). These working groups will:

- Drive their own collaborative work and goals aligned with the Network's overall objectives
- Identify and address age-friendly issues specific to their area or theme
- Consider / develop local or theme-specific initiatives and solutions
- Report back to the main Network on their activities and progress
- Co-opt additional expertise and community representatives as needed
- Operate with flexibility to respond to emerging needs within their geographical area or theme
- Provide own administration, note taking etc.

9. Communication and Reporting

- The Network will maintain clear communication channels with its members and wider stakeholders
- Annual reports will be produced summarising the Network's activities, achievements, and recommendations
- Key findings and recommendations will be presented to Rother District Council and partner organisations
- The Network will maintain a presence through appropriate channels to engage with residents

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Chair:

- Set agendas in consultation with members
- Facilitate meetings ensuring all voices are heard
- Represent the Network externally
- Ensure the Network remains focused on its objectives

Members:

- Attend meetings regularly or send appropriate substitutes
- Contribute constructively to discussions and activities
- Act as ambassadors for age-friendly practice
- Share information and learning with their own organisations and networks
- Represent the views of their communities or organisations
- Raise agenda items

Rother District Council:

- Provide some administrative support and resources
- Consider Network recommendations in policy and service development
- Report on progress against age-friendly objectives

Rother Voluntary Action:

- Facilitate engagement with voluntary and community sector organisations
- Support community representation on the Network
- Assist with communication and outreach

11. Review and Amendments

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and may be amended with the agreement of Network members. Any proposed changes should be circulated in advance and discussed at a Network meeting.

12. Code of Conduct

All Network members are expected to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Listen actively and value diverse perspectives
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Act in the best interests of Rother's communities
- Challenge ageism and promote age-inclusive practice
- Declare any conflicts of interest

Approved by: [To be completed]

Date of Approval: [To be completed]

Review Date: [To be completed]