



The Challenge of Creating Age-Friendly Communities

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AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Why build age-friendly communities?**
- **What are the challenges for building age-friendly communities?**
- **If we could do five things to develop age-friendly communities.....**

Why build age-friendly communities (AFCs)?

- Importance of AFCs for promoting **health & well-being** (Greenfield et al., 2015)
- Importance of AFCs as a vehicle for **building social connections** (Thorley, 2018)
- Importance of AFCs as a means of strengthening **'ageing in place'** (Buffel et al., 2018)
- Importance of AFCs for increasing **participation** (WHO, 2007)

**Table 1: Belonging to the neighbourhood: 50-plus (%)
(strongly agree I feel I belong to this neighbourhood)**

UK	All	Men	Women
50-54	69	68	70
55-59	73	73	74
60-64	76	75	76
65-69	80	79	81
70-74	84	83	86
75-79	85	84	85
80 and over	84	84	84
All aged 16 and over	66	64	68
UKHLS 2009/2010			

Table 2: Attitudes towards the neighbourhood: proportion of older people agreeing or disagreeing with statements relating to neighbourhood (N=600) (%)

Statement	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
I believe my neighbours would help me in an emergency	78	10	12
I frequently stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood	71	11	18
I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighbourhood	69	12	19
I feel I can trust the people in my neighbourhood	58	21	21
This neighbourhood is a good place to grow old in	52	17	31
During the last two years my neighbourhood has got better as a place to live in	30	27	43

Key tasks for building age-friendly communities

- Promote cultural, economic & social **connections** across different ethnic groups, communities and generations
- Develop **partnerships** which can tackle deep-rooted poverty and isolation within communities
- Strengthen '**social infrastructure**' within communities
- Developing **co-research** with older people
- Encouraging innovations in **community-based support**

Challenges & responses

Challenge of **evaluating** neighbourhood projects

Challenge of **diverse** neighbourhoods

Challenge of **strengthening** neighbourhoods

And **five** responses

Challenge of 'evaluation'

- How do we build an evidence base which demonstrates the **impact of our work** on different groups of older people?
- What 'counts' as data? Use of mixed methods? How do we use the **stories** which people tell us about their experiences of urban change?
- What are we trying to **measure in doing age-friendly work**? What are we trying to **change**? What counts as **success**?
- How can we build **co-production** and the **participation** of older people into the evaluation of age-friendly communities?

Challenge of 'diverse' neighbourhoods

- Planning for **greater diversity** in ethnic identities in old age will be a significant issue for realising an age-friendly GM: 2011 Census **87,302** 50-plus in GM
- Developing targeted programmes which tackle **social isolation** amongst older people from minority ethnic groups (Lewis & Cotterell, 2018)
- Responding to advantages & disadvantages of **gentrifying** neighbourhoods (Buffel & Phillipson, forthcoming)
- More **complex** kinship and friendship ties (e.g. rise in divorce in older age groups)
- Increase in **single-person households** in all LA areas: people may be '*isolated*' but not '*lonely*' but may need more varied mix of community support

Challenge of 'strengthening' neighbourhoods

- Older people in deprived neighbourhoods may have **greater reliance** on their locality for social activity and support (because of poor health, limited resources etc) but.....
- Attachments may be **weakened** through high population *turnover* & perception of lack of *control* over the environment (Livingstone et al., 2010)
- Perception of the neighbourhood as 'unfriendly' likely to **weaken** levels of volunteering & participation (Bowling & Stafford, 2007)

If we could do five things.....

- 1. Embedding an equalities approach within age-friendly work** is a priority (*Anti-discrimination*)
- 2. Linking AFCs with community planning** & stronger links with statutory & NFP orgs (*Infrastructure*)
- 3. Secure sustainable forms of finance** for self-organised community groups (*Budgets*)
- 4. Housing interventions:** assistance with adaptations and insulation, review of housing options, help with jobs in the home, assistance with home safety (*Security*)
- 5. Environmental interventions: promotion of green spaces,** age-friendly shops, improving transportation (*Community*)

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