
How-to guide: Creating an Ageing Well Ambassadors programme

Many Age-friendly Communities in the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities are supporting networks of older people in their place to be ambassadors for age-friendly work. ‘Age-friendly’ or ‘Ageing Well’ Ambassadors, seek to both communicate key messages around ageing well with peers, and to help shape activities, services and strategies in their place.

Read the full case study on [Sunderland’s Ageing Well Ambassadors on Ageing Better’s website](#)

1. Identify and engage with existing forums, groups and assemblies

Start by identifying and having conversations with any existing groups and organisations such as older people’s forums, groups and assemblies as well as local faith and community groups to better understand past and present ways older people are shaping their local offer. Work together with a diverse range of older adults to understand current challenges and opportunities which an ambassador programme may support, and aim to establish a small group of stakeholders to form a core team to shape the offer.

2. Get support for an Ageing Well Ambassador programme

Demonstrate the positive potential impact of having an Ambassador programme through presentations to decision-makers in your area. This is also a great opportunity to begin to identify pots of funding which can bolster the work, i.e. to help with recruitment – however this intervention does not need a lot of budget to get started. To help “make the case” you may point to the following benefits:

- Helps to communicate key messaging across the community, including with underrepresented groups with some of the worst health outcomes
- Indicates a move towards co-production, ensuring services are more appropriate and better serve diverse range of older people
- This is a no to low-cost initiative which can help to make savings across health and social care through prevention
- This is an intervention which has had great success in other areas (see [Sunderland’s Ageing Well Ambassador case study](#))

3. Scope and shape the ambassador role

To attract a diverse range of people to the network, it's important to keep the role of ambassador flexible, allowing individuals to be as involved as they prefer. Create clear, straightforward information about what the ambassador role entails and what an ambassador could be involved with. Also specify who can sign up to be an ambassador i.e. is the role open to all or over a certain age only.

Work alongside your core team of older people to shape the offer and ensure that the description is attractive and easy to understand.

Sunderland example:

Acting as a volunteer, the Ageing Well Ambassador's role is a flexible one, both in terms of time commitment and types of activities undertaken. Ambassadors could contribute on a regular basis, by promoting and supporting age-friendly initiatives, or may wish to find ways to link their role in with the work they already do. The role will suit anyone who is willing to connect with others and is passionate about having their say on issues affecting older people.

Additionally, establish a central system to track interested and signed-up volunteers, including their contact details and preferred methods of communication. Here you may also wish to note additional information such as council area, disability status and gender.

4. Co-create your name and branding

Work with your core group to decide on a name and branding that you will use to unify your ambassadors. It is important to be informed by what people want to be called, as well as the local context. For example, if there are other 'champions' in the area which are well recognised, there may be an added advantage with adopting this term. At the same time, try to steer away from colours and branding that may make the initiative feel 'council-led' as this may present a barrier to involvement to some prospective ambassadors.

This decision-making can be done at an in-person meeting where you might discuss the local context and share other examples and logos, to help you reach a consensus. Some examples in the UK Network include Ageing Well Ambassadors, Age-friendly Ambassadors and Older People's Champions.



Inspiration or logos themselves can be adapted or adopted from [Ageing Better's icon library](#).

5. Promote the opportunity to become an ambassador

Whilst websites and e-newsletters are great for helping get the word out about ambassador programmes to older people in your place, word of mouth and events are best. As a coordinator, try to visit a range of spaces and places and identify opportunities for ambassadors themselves to let others know about the role.

Your best ambassadors for the scheme will be the ambassadors themselves, so ensure those that would like to have printed information to hand out are equipped with what they need and listen to feedback about anything additional which could be supportive to help them spread the word.

6. Targeted recruitment

After the initial recruitment drive, review the network of signed up ambassadors and consider where your gaps in representation might be: Think about geography, experiences and characteristics. Work through existing networks and partners to invite more people to join. This may also look like holding place-based pop-ups in the underrepresented areas of your community.



This [workbook](#) can help guide you in identifying and supporting seldom heard communities in your neighbourhood.

7. Formally launch the programme

Take a moment in the year to formally launch the programme, inviting key stakeholders and ambassadors to come together and hear more about the opportunities to work together. This will form a great opportunity to let partners know that there is a growing network of experts by experience that they can work with help shape their activities, services, programmes and strategies.

For example, if you were working with your Falls Prevention service, ambassadors could help identify suitable locations for activities or improve appeal and accessibility of comms outputs. You may point to the impact of ambassadors in other Age-friendly Communities at this meeting (see case study).

As part of your invitation list, you may want to engage transport providers, different council departments, local businesses and health service providers.

8. Agree on your means of communication, regularity and type of get togethers

To keep your ambassadors engaged, send out regular newsletters (both by email and post if possible) with relevant information that you would like them to help disseminate with their peers, as well as opportunities they may wish to be involved with. Keep the newsletters short and engaging and consider the full range of accessibility needs. Work with your ambassadors to understand any other modes of communication that would work for them, which may include Facebook or WhatsApp.

You may also wish to forward the newsletters to partners to remind them of the opportunity to have their news items shared, and as a space which can help to promote consultations, surveys and coproduction opportunities.

9. Identify wider opportunities for Ambassador involvement

Once you have established your network, continue to broker the relationship between even more partners in your place and the ambassadors. If there is a new project on the horizon (whether it's a new strategy, programme, or proposed redevelopment), reach out to prospective collaborators and help them to understand how working with a group of older residents can help them to improve their offer. To strengthen your profile, over time, you may want to include logos or testimonials on your webpage of those who have benefited from ambassador expertise.

As well as responding to local opportunities, be on the lookout for inspiration from other members of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities which may help improve your reach, and provide inspiration for new ways your ambassadors could make positive change locally.

Sunderland example: [We'ar Shining the Light](#)

Taking inspiration from Greater Manchester's Talking About My Generation, Sunderland launched a city-wide news platform to shine a light on what it means to grow older in the city. Led by older people for older people, the We'ar Shining the Light news team – made up of community reporters aged 50 and above from across Sunderland – capture stories that break ageing stereotypes and gather positive stories of later life.



If you are interested in starting an older people's led news team in your place, [Yellow Jigsaw](#) have lots of resources and offers of support available.

10. Recognise, celebrate and create new opportunities for the ambassadors

If funding permits, organise a 'thank-you' or 'celebration' event to strengthen the network and celebrate your successes. You could use this event to present back some of the highlights from the recent period and invite a leader from your place to use the opportunity to thank the ambassadors for their work.

For example, Sunderland held an Ageing Well Celebration event aligning with International Day of Older People, where places could come together in person and enjoy a light lunch and celebrate their successes. As with all age-friendly events, work with a diverse group of older people to understand what would work best, and ensure everyone gets a [Warm Welcome](#) as they arrive.

As your programme develops consider how you might promote your successes further in the community, like through an [annual impact report](#), a case study or through nominating ambassadors for a city or community-wide award.