Centre for Ageing Better

Moving towards an age-friendly UK

Age-friendly Communities
impact report

February 2025

Executive summary

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, overseen by the Centre for Ageing Better, inspires, connects and supports 91 Age-friendly Communities around the UK to improve the lives of older people.

Over 29 million people in the UK live in Age-friendly Communities, and it is estimated that 4,277 partners are taking action to improve the age-friendliness of their area.

This impact report describes the benefits of the Age-friendly Communities approach for local systems and older people. Over 45 Age-friendly Communities were engaged to develop findings for the report, via a survey, interview, workshops, focus groups, and observation of UK Network weekly peer calls.

Impacts of Age-friendly Communities

Age-friendly Communities create a multitude of positive impacts for the local systems they represent and the older people that live there.

Impacts for local systems

The Age-friendly Communities approach encourages organisations in local areas to work together, changing and adapting their local systems in ways that improve outcomes of older people across a range of areas.

What is the impact?	What does this mean?
Creating partnerships that drive local action and build in efficiencies	Developing and strengthening partnerships to drive action for priority areas, enable efficient use of resources and avoid duplication.
Supporting evidence-informed decision-making	Gathering and considering local context and national learning to allow evidence-based decision-making and prioritisation.
Enabling meaningful co-production in policymaking	Developing strong mechanisms for engagement and co-production to meet the needs of older people.
Changing policies, mindsets and language	Generating understanding of ageing that changes mindsets and language, and encourages integration of ageing in all policies.
Embedding and enabling a preventive way of working	Encouraging activities that directly and indirectly support prevention, in a lifecourse approach.

Impacts for older people

The Age-friendly Communities approach creates and supports a wide range of benefits and impacts for older people and their communities, ensuring everyone can age well.
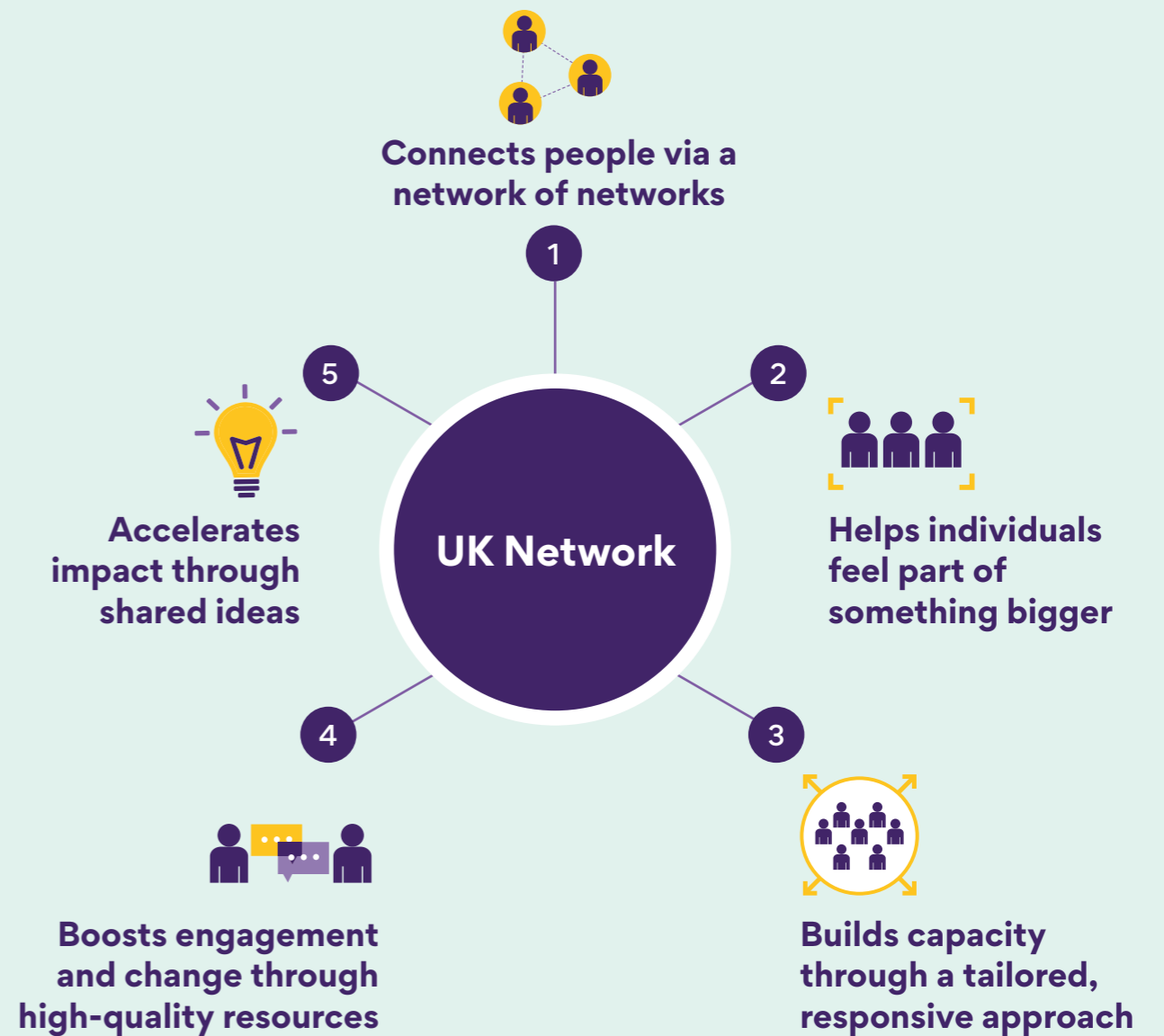
What is the impact?	What does this mean?
Expanding older people's access to and use of local spaces	Making local spaces more accessible and improving independence through access to transport, outdoor spaces and buildings.
Expanding older people's access to support and services	Helping improve design of, and communication around, local services to improve accessibility and better meet older people's needs.
Increasing older people's connections to and inclusion in society	Encouraging activities that improve social participation and inclusion, increasing intergenerational and cross-cultural connections.
Enhancing older people's voice, representation and inclusion in decision-making	Creating mechanisms to enhance representation and inclusion of older people in decision-making to shape public life.
Improving older people's health and wellbeing	Developing opportunities and activities that support the health and wellbeing of older people.

What enables impact?

The Age-friendly Communities approach and the UK Network enable impact.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) approach enables Age-friendly Communities to deliver impact. The Eight Domains in the WHO framework encourages partners across different areas of policy and practice to take action and work together, while the Four-Step Programme Cycle structures what Communities should do, when and how.

The UK Network is a highly valued network that supports its members to achieve the impacts. Five elements were identified as central to creating impacts:

UK Network

1. Connects people via a network of networks
2. Helps individuals feel part of something bigger
3. Builds capacity through a tailored, responsive approach
4. Boosts engagement and change through high-quality resources
5. Accelerates impact through shared ideas

Contents

Case Studies

Introduction to Age-friendly Communities and the UK Network

The Age-friendly Communities framework, developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), creates an overarching sense of direction and purpose to shape global and local action.

Age-friendly Communities are local partnerships of older people, and public, private and third sector organisations. These communities adopt the WHO framework to guide their efforts in becoming more age-friendly.

The Centre for Ageing Better oversees the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, which operationalises the global WHO vision by inspiring, connecting and supporting 91 Age-friendly Communities across the UK.

This report reflects on the impacts of the UK Network on older people and communities, as well as on local systems.

The global development of Age-friendly Communities

Age-friendly Communities enable all people to 'age well in a place that is right for them' and to 'be included and contribute to their communities while enabling their independence and health' (WHO, 2023a).

Since developing the concept in 2007, then launching the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities in 2010, the WHO has led an international, collaborative movement that encourages the development of age-friendly cities, communities and environments. The Global Network now consists of over 1,705 cities and communities across 60 countries as of November 2024.

Age-friendly places 'enable people to stay active; keep connected; and contribute to their community's economic, social, and cultural life' (WHO, nd). This means ensuring that places promote diversity, inclusion and cohesion to allow everyone to age well and maintain access to transport, infrastructure, public services, and social and community life.

The WHO Age-friendly Communities approach guides the creation of inclusive and accessible cities and communities (WHO, 2023a). This approach contains two complementary elements: the Eight-Domain Framework (Figure 1) and the Four-Step Programme Cycle (Figure 2). The Centre for Ageing Better guides localities in the UK on using these frameworks to become more age-friendly.
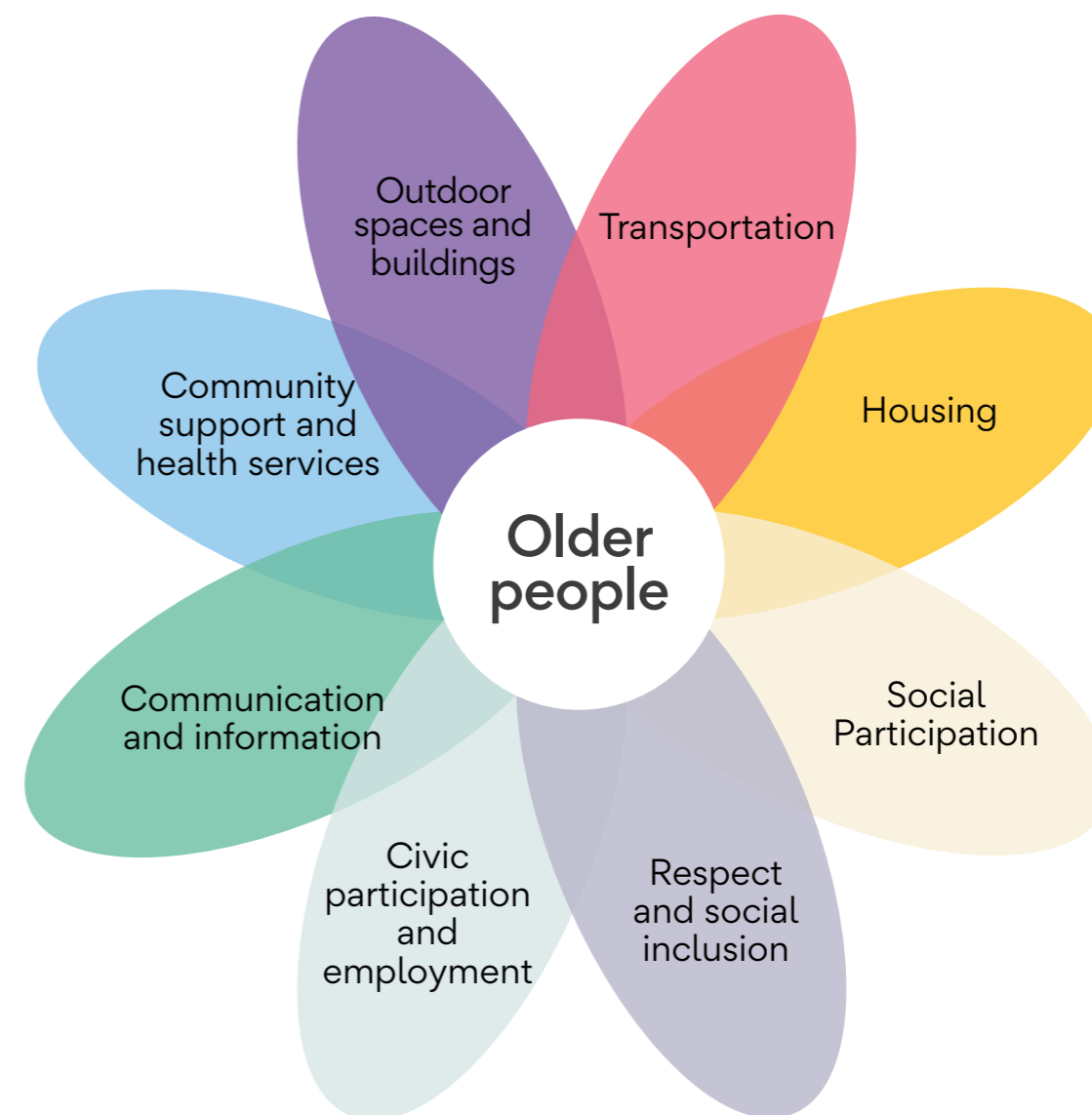
Figure 1: The Eight-Domain Framework (Centre for Ageing Better, 2022).

The Eight Domains developed by the WHO (2007) are the areas of the built and social environment that require focus to address barriers to ageing well. The prioritisation and scale of improvements around these domains is determined by local need and resources.

Age-friendly Communities bring together partners representing each domain area, and older people, to work together and achieve change (Centre for Ageing Better, n.d.).

Figure 2: Four-Step Programme Cycle (WHO, 2016)

The WHO's Four-Step Programme Cycle (WHO, 2016) supports Age-friendly Communities to navigate through the Eight Domains to develop age-friendly policies and practices. The cycle provides a pathway and shows communities that they don't need to do everything at once. The cycle takes an average of five years, but this can vary depending on resourcing and other factors (Centre for Ageing Better, n.d.).

Engage and understand
- Set up a committee/working group
- Perform a participatory assessment
- Create a baseline profile
- Disseminate findings
- Gain political commitment

Plan strategically
- Unite partners behind a common vision
- Analyse strengths and weaknesses
- Develop a comprehensive strategy
- Get approval
- Define responsibilities

Principles for action
- Participation of older people
- Focus on equity
- Intersectoral collaboration
- Life-course approach
- Multilevel governance

Evaluate
- Create partnerships
- Monitor progress
- Make outcome and impact evaluation
- Sustain and improve action
- Exchange (inter)nationally

Act and implement
- Make an action plan
- Consult plans and involve older people
- Secure support and resources
- Implement an operational plan
- Scale up successful action

The UK Age-friendly approach

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities (referred to as the 'UK Network') is a growing network with 91 localities across the UK 'committed to making their community a better place to age in'. Over 29 million people – more than two fifths of the UK population – live in an Age-friendly Community.

In the UK, around 40% of the population are aged over 50 years and 18% are over 65 years. (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023a). Older people can face a series of challenges in their community, from accessing public spaces to their voices being heard in local decision-making. There are also inequalities amongst older people, with people from lower-income and minority groups experiencing shorter lifespans, poorer health and greater financial insecurity than others.

The Centre for Ageing Better – a UK-based independent charity – promotes an age-friendly movement to improve outcomes for current and future older people across the UK. A key part of this work is growing, supporting and overseeing the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities (Figure 3; Table 1).

Table 1: Main areas of support the Centre for Ageing Better offers to UK Network members

Facilitating the network	• Designing and chairing weekly online 'peer calls' • Organising and running online and in-person events including an annual conference • Maintaining network-wide mailing lists and communications • Connecting communities to other UK and global communities • Growing the network
Upskilling and capacity building	• Providing access to the virtual Knowledge Hub with resources, toolkits, templates, and examples of work by other members • Providing one-on-one support to members • Creating and sharing cutting edge research, such as the State of Ageing annual report • Offering training and advice on key topics

Figure 3: UK Age-friendly Communities ecosystem

A local age-friendly community

Age-friendly Communities consist of older people, core members and other partner organisations all working together in a local system.

WIDER NETWORK ORGANISATIONS

Public sector organisations e.g. libraries

Private sector organisations - e.g. businesses, employers

Third sector organisations, e.g. community organisations

KEY PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Public sector organisations, e.g. local authority departments, healthcare, transport

Private sector organisations - e.g. housing providers

Third sector organisations, e.g. charities

LEAD AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

Local authority or voluntary organisation

Older people

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities

These local systems are connected to one another through the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, facilitated by Centre for Ageing Better.

WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities

By all adopting the WHO Age-friendly Communities approach, these communities are part of a global movement for change, facilitated by the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.
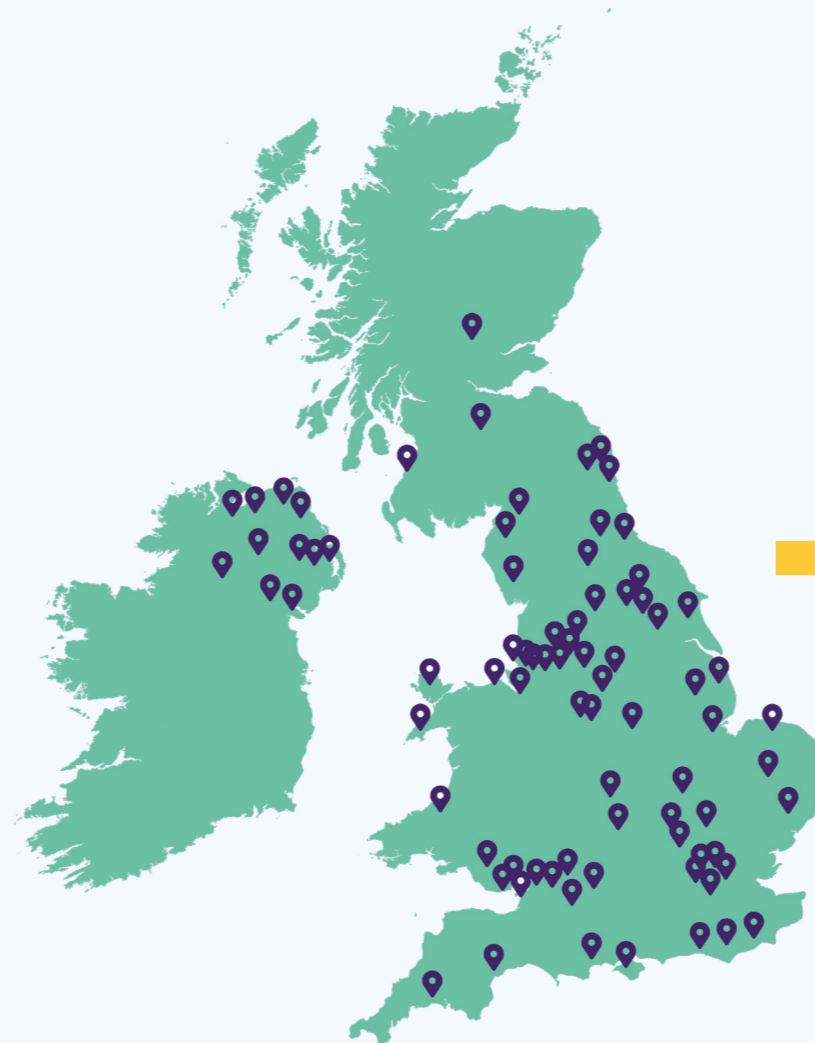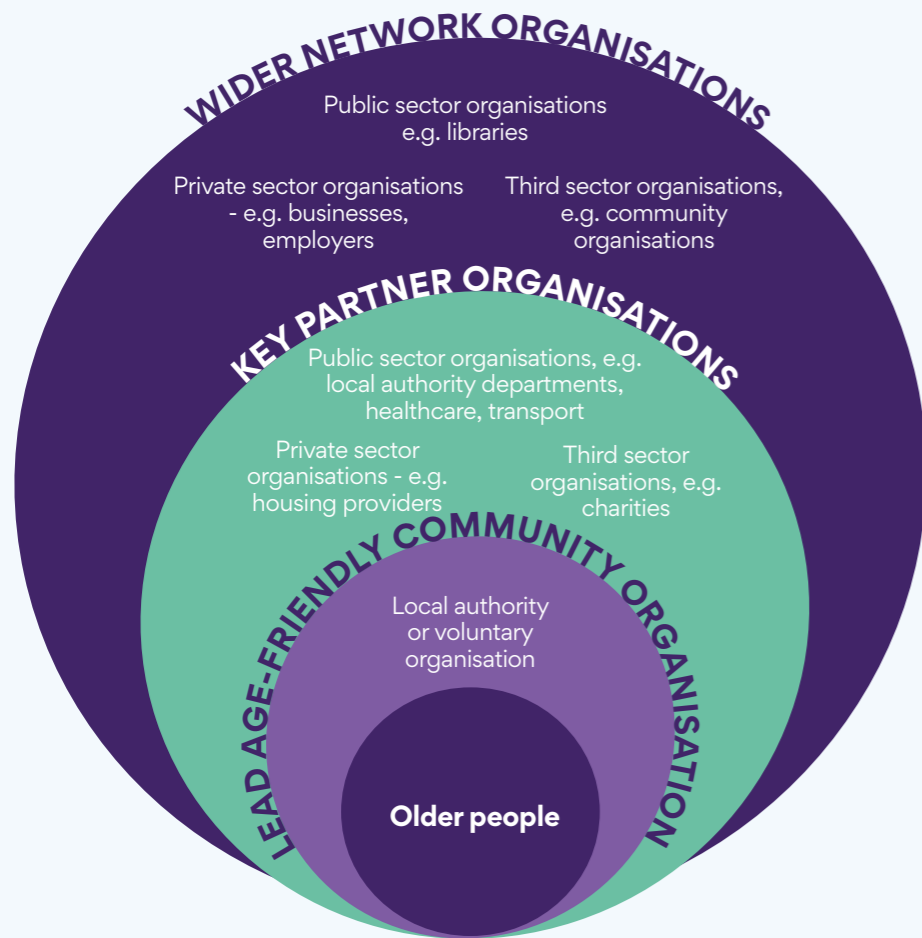
The age-friendly timeline

Figure 4 shows a timeline of significant milestones in global and national efforts to improve the lives of older people.

Figure 4: A timeline of Age-friendly Communities developments

2007

The WHO Global Age-friendly Cities Guide identified core characteristics of an age-friendly city in eight domains of urban life.

2010

The WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) was established.
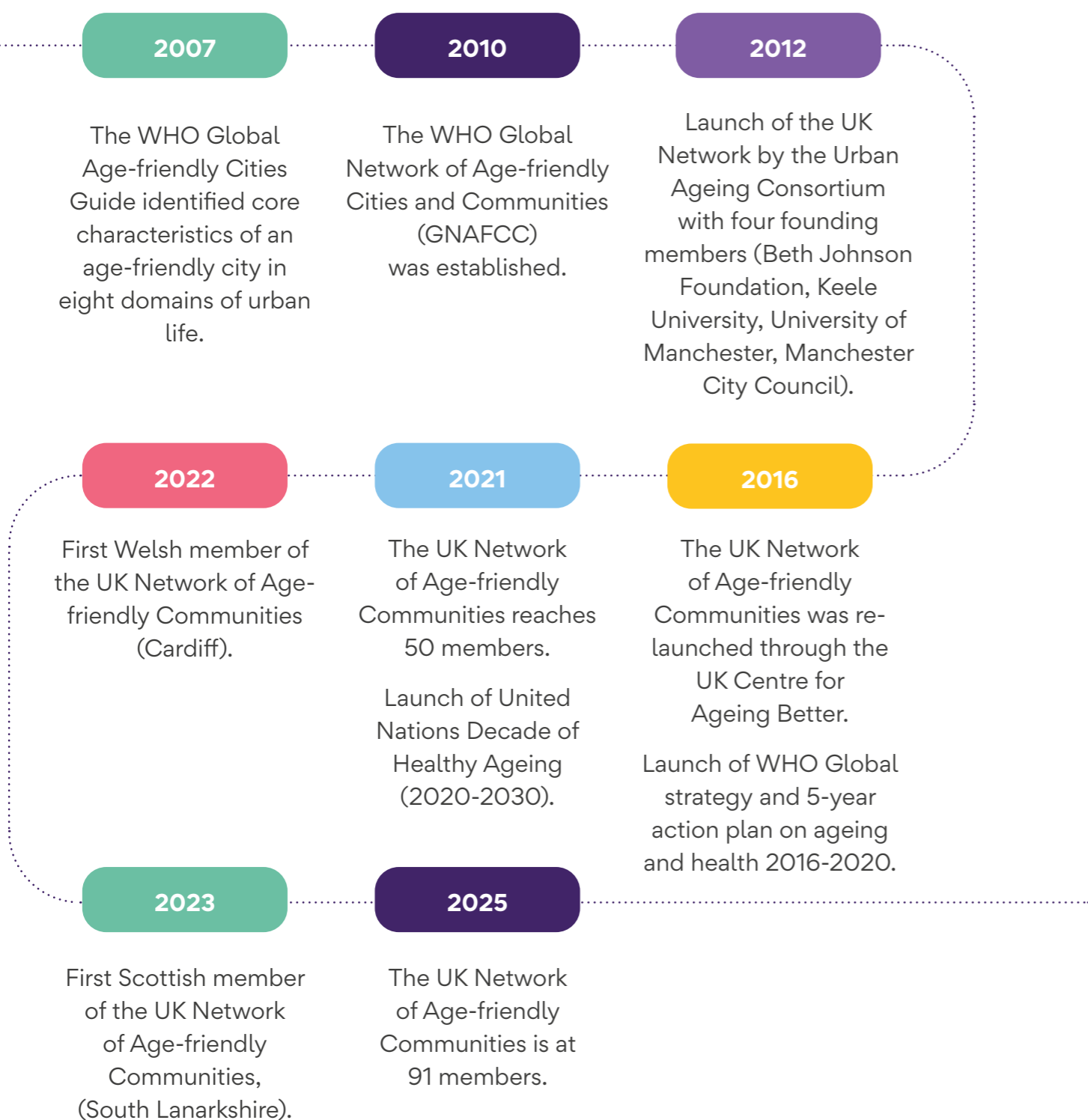
2012

Launch of the UK Network by the Urban Ageing Consortium with four founding members (Beth Johnson Foundation, Keele University, University of Manchester, Manchester City Council).

2022

First Welsh member of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities (Cardiff).

2021

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities reaches 50 members.

Launch of United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030).

2016

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities was re-launched through the UK Centre for Ageing Better.

Launch of WHO Global strategy and 5-year action plan on ageing and health 2016-2020.

2023

First Scottish member of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, (South Lanarkshire).

2025

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities is at 91 members.

Information from: Centre for Ageing Better, 2023b; Remillard-Boilard, 2018; UK Urban Ageing Consortium, 2014

About this report

This impact report describes the impact of the UK Network in terms of:

- **The benefits of taking an Age-friendly Communities approach**
- **The role of the UK Network in realising these benefits**
- **The mechanisms that support and enable change**

Methodology

The Centre for Ageing Better commissioned Urban Foresight to research the impacts of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities. A mixed-methods approach with six research tools – survey, focus groups, interviews, workshop, observation of the UK Network's peer calls, and desk review of existing data – was used to capture qualitative and quantitative insights from over 50% of Age-friendly Communities in the UK Network (Figure 5).

In total, 45 lead coordinators and representatives of UK Network members responded to the survey and 18 of these were engaged in interviews to delve further into impacts. Both recent and longer-term UK Network members responded, and survey respondents were broadly reflective of the UK Network membership in terms of:

- Representation of rural (32%) and urban (68%) areas
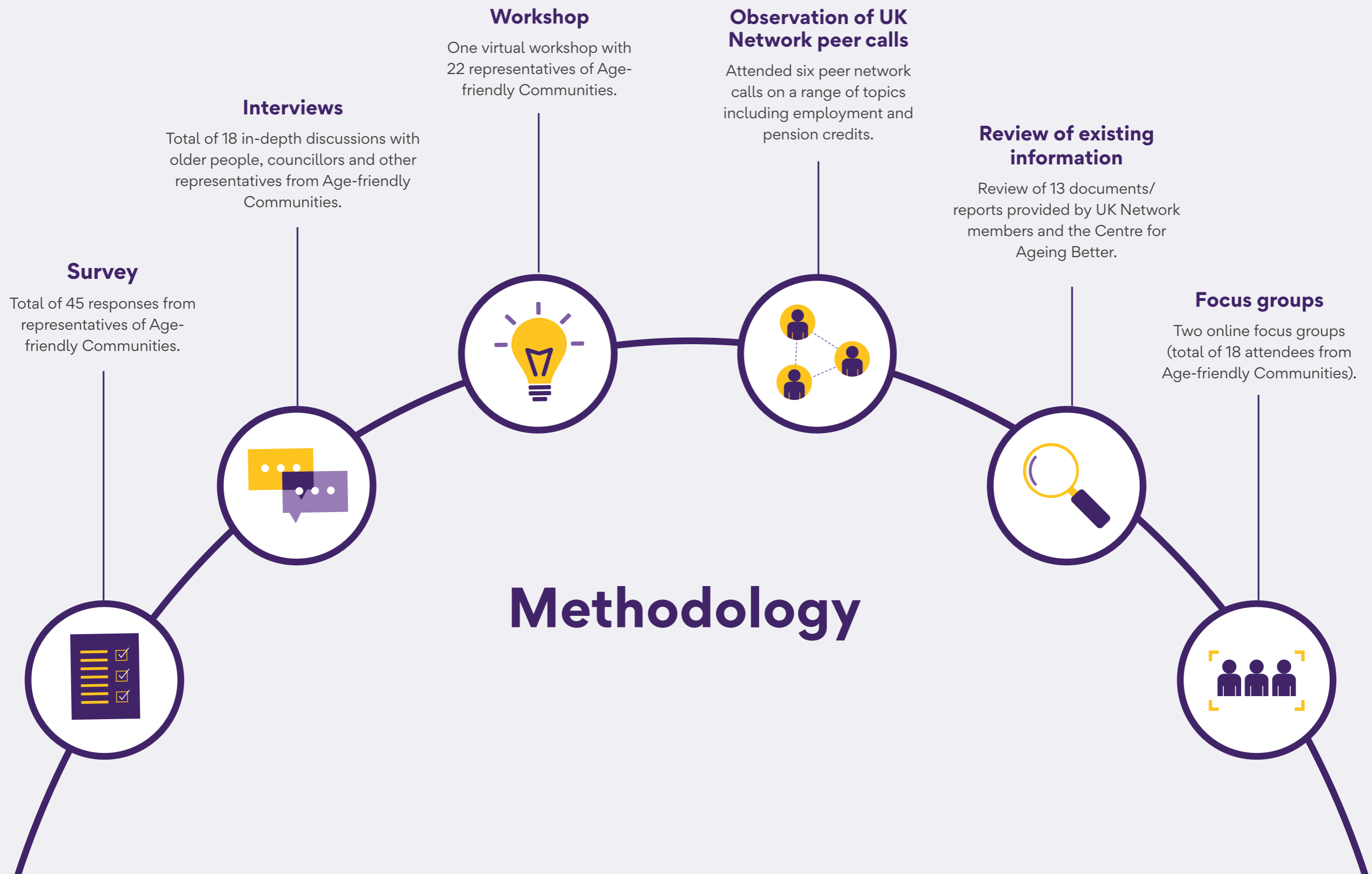- Representation of nations (Scotland: 4%, Wales: 11%, England: 76%, Northern Ireland: 9%).

Quotes provided are from local Age-friendly Coordinators unless otherwise stated.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this research, including representatives from Age-friendly Communities, older people, local councillors and other key stakeholders.

Figure 5: Research methods used to develop this report

Workshop

One virtual workshop with 22 representatives of Age-friendly Communities.

Observation of UK Network peer calls

Attended six peer network calls on a range of topics including employment and pension credits.

Interviews

Total of 18 in-depth discussions with older people, councillors and other representatives from Age-friendly Communities.

Review of existing information

Review of 13 documents/reports provided by UK Network members and the Centre for Ageing Better.

Survey

Total of 45 responses from representatives of Age-friendly Communities.

Focus groups

Two online focus groups (total of 18 attendees from Age-friendly Communities).
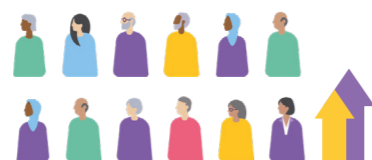
Methodology

Age-friendly Communities at a glance

UK Network numbers

29 million people live in Age-friendly Communities in the UK.

91 members across the UK in January 2025, growing from 50 members in 2021.

Estimated 4,277 partners are taking action to make their communities more age-friendly across the UK.

> "Knowing there are so many resources available to us, and so much support, made the decision to join the network very simple indeed."
>
> (Corsham)

Impact of Age-friendly Communities for older people

100% of members reported one or more impacts for older people.

93% of members reported "improved social connection and participation in activities" for older people.

91% of members reported older people had "improved inclusion and choice in decisions that affect them and their community".

90% of members reported "improved health and healthy behaviours, including reduction in falls" for older people.

> "I found out about Ageing Well through the festival. There was so much to do, I've now joined a group, where I'm making friends and people are listening to me. Honestly, I was beginning to think there was no point, but now, well who knows what I'll be doing next!"
>
> (older person in Brighton)

Impact of Age-friendly Communities for local systems

100% of members reported four or more system-level impacts.

They all believe adopting the Age-friendly Communities approach creates positive change through:

Building new partnerships

Ensuring ageing and older people are considered in local strategies

Ensuring older people's voices are heard by decision-makers

Building awareness and understanding of ageing-related issues

Impact of Age-friendly Communities for older people

Age-friendly Communities undertake a broad range of activities and initiatives to engage and support older people.

Figure 6 highlights important examples. Other examples are discussed across a series of 15 case studies. Table 2 highlights which themes each case study addresses.

Figure 6: Typical age-friendly activities and initiatives being adopted by UK Network members

Intergenerational activities, e.g. skills sharing, micro-grants and sports sessions

Walkability initiatives in town centres and parks

Social activities, e.g. LGBTQ meet-ups and creative workshops

Community transport schemes

Age-friendly and ageism awareness training

Community and health service support, e.g. community helplines

Housing options information and guidance

Health and wellbeing programmes, e.g. strength and balance courses

Accessible and targeted communications, e.g. older people's media and radio

Ambassador and Champion schemes

Civil participation opportunities, e.g. older people's forums and boards

Pension credit uptake campaigns

Table 2: Case studies showing the impacts of the Age-friendly community approach presented in this report across 10 thematic areas.

The themes are: Partnership working; Evidence-informed decisions; Co-production; Strategic change; Preventive work; Accessibility of place; Service improvement; Older people's voice; Inclusion in society; Improved health and wellbeing.

	Case Study	Themes
System-level impacts	Improving the efficiency of community transport in **Bournemouth, Christchurch** and **Poole**	• Partnership working • Service improvement
	Being heard and age equality - acting in partnership with older people in **Manchester**	• Partnership working • Co-production • Strategic change
	Creating, using and sharing evidence to make change in **Greater Manchester**	• Evidence-informed decisions; • Co-production • Strategic change
	Engaging older people to improve the accessibility of **Leeds's** City Train station	• Co-production • Service improvement
	Using culture to change mindsets in **Newcastle**	• Strategic change; • Older people's voice
	Using political leadership to drive action in **East Lindsey**	• Strategic change • Partnership working
	Adopting a prevention-focused way of working in **Torbay**	• Preventive work • Evidence-informed decisions • Co-production

	Case Study	Themes
Impacts for older people and communities	Making pavements more accessible in **Lambeth**	• Accessibility of place • Older people's voice
	Enhancing older people's access to financial wellbeing support in **Newham**	• Service improvement • Improved health and wellbeing
	Diane's Journey: Reconnecting with her community in **Salford**	• Inclusion in society • Improved health and wellbeing
	Raising the voice of older people via ambassador and champion schemes (**Bournemouth, Christchurch** and **Poole, Barnet, Newham, Bolton**)	• Older people's voice • Improved health and wellbeing
	Giving older people a voice in **Ynys Môn / Anglesey**	• Older people's voice • Inclusion • Accessibility of place
	Supporting older people's health and wellbeing in **Mid Ulster**	• Improved health and wellbeing • Inclusion in society • Partnership working
Enabling impact	Creating a regional Age-friendly network in **Northern Ireland**	• Partnership working • Strategic change
	The value of the UK Network: reflections from **Brighton** and **Hove**	• Evidence-informed decisions

Impacts of Age-friendly Communities on local systems

UK Network members report that Age-friendly Communities are changing local systems in ways that improve outcomes of older people across a range of areas (Figure 7).

A local system refers to the multiple organisations, individuals, cultures, and events that exist in a local space. Systems-level change means shifting the relationships between different parts of the system so that it behaves in a new way.
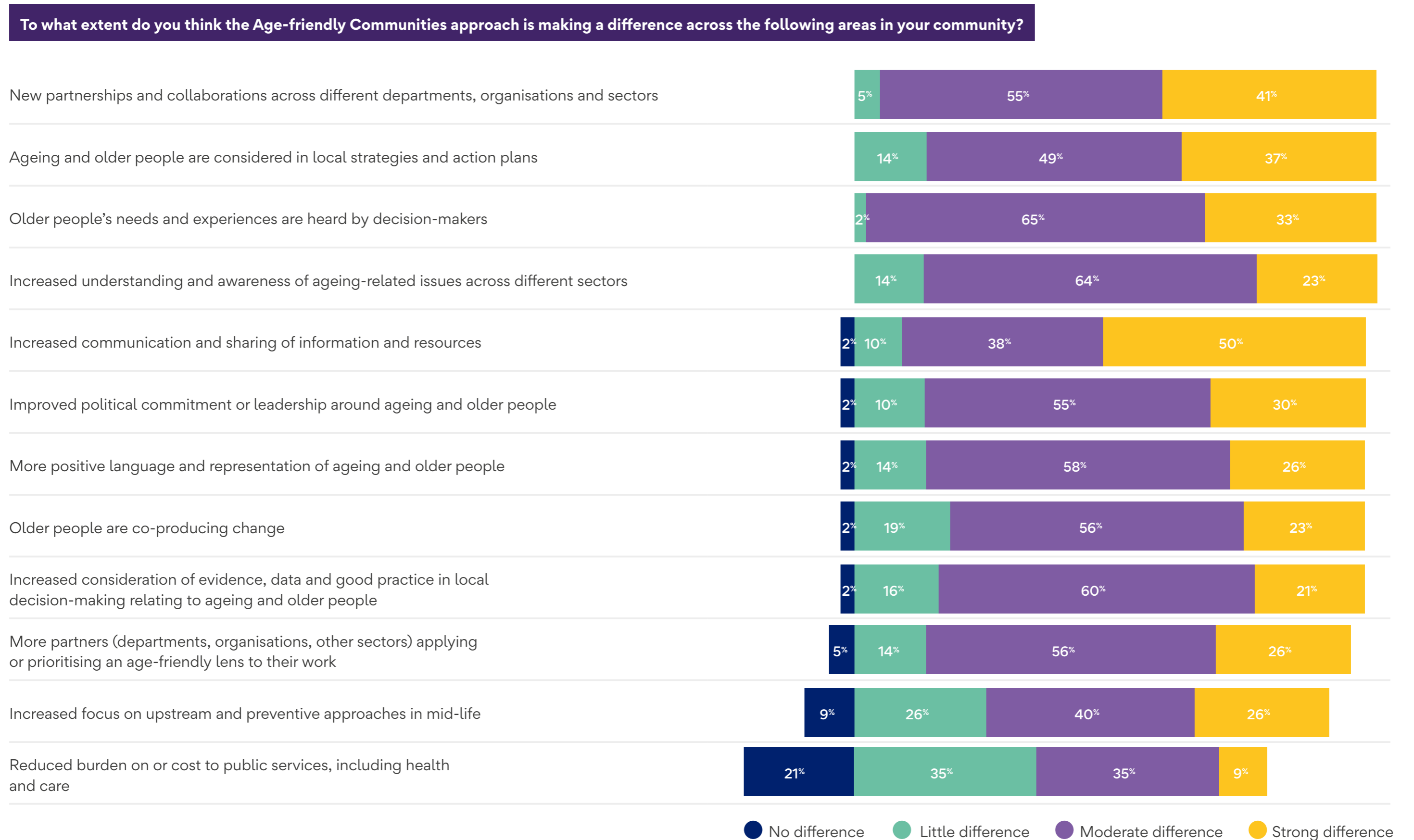
Systems-level change is particularly important when working on complex social issues like ageing, where no single stakeholder can achieve change, or where broader supportive changes in processes and policies are needed.

Five core and cross-cutting systems-level impacts discussed here are:

1		**Creating partnerships that drive local action and build in efficiencies**
2		**Supporting evidence-informed decision-making**
3		**Enabling meaningful co-production in policymaking**
4		**Changing policies, mindsets and language**
5		**Embedding and enabling a preventive way of working**

Figure 7: System-level impacts as reported by Age-friendly Communities in a whole network survey completed by lead coordinators in local areas

To what extent do you think the Age-friendly Communities approach is making a difference across the following areas in your community?

Area	No difference	Little difference	Moderate difference	Strong difference
New partnerships and collaborations across different departments, organisations and sectors		5%	55%	41%
Ageing and older people are considered in local strategies and action plans		14%	49%	37%
Older people's needs and experiences are heard by decision-makers		2%	65%	33%
Increased understanding and awareness of ageing-related issues across different sectors		14%	64%	23%
Increased communication and sharing of information and resources	2%	10%	38%	50%
Improved political commitment or leadership around ageing and older people	2%	10%	55%	30%
More positive language and representation of ageing and older people	2%	14%	58%	26%
Older people are co-producing change	2%	19%	56%	23%
Increased consideration of evidence, data and good practice in local decision-making relating to ageing and older people	2%	16%	60%	21%
More partners (departments, organisations, other sectors) applying or prioritising an age-friendly lens to their work	5%	14%	56%	26%
Increased focus on upstream and preventive approaches in mid-life	9%	26%	40%	26%
Reduced burden on or cost to public services, including health and care	21%	35%	35%	9%

Legend:
- No difference
- Little difference
- Moderate difference
- Strong difference

IMPACT: Creating partnerships that drive local action and build in efficiencies

- The Age-friendly Communities approach prioritises the development of new cross-sector partnerships and collaborations, along with strengthening of existing partnerships.

- Partnerships are driving action for identified priority areas, which enables efficient use of resources through sharing assets and best practice, as well as avoiding duplication.

> **Age-friendly Communities have an average of 47 partners. It is estimated there are over 4,250 partners involved across the entire UK Network.**

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Examples of Age-friendly Communities creating effective partnerships that drive action and build in efficiencies are described in Figure 8.

Caerdydd/ Cardiff	The local Age-friendly forum connects partners including health services, the police and social care. Partners share resources and data, and coordinate decisions and action, for issues like budgets and community engagement.
Fermanagh and Omagh	The local Interagency Forum unites 40 organisations to create a platform for recognising and reducing duplication of services, and for sharing resources and local intelligence to improve existing services for older people.
South Tyneside	Organisations for people with disabilities are connected to planning groups to coordinate action and respond to local challenges. This connection led to walking audits that have informed discussions about how to create inclusive communities.

Figure 8. Examples of partnerships that drive action

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables it

The Eight Domains provide a strategic framework to understand which partners should be engaged, while the Four-Step Programme Cycle encourages the development of steering groups or forums to engage partners. Through this, partners can work together to understand local needs and build in efficiencies in delivery activities.

For example, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) have a number of key partnerships that help to drive forward the age-friendly agenda. This includes:

- Age Friendly Alliance - a high-level partnership chaired by the Chief Executive of FODC with other senior members from health and care, policing, housing and infrastructure.

- Fermanagh and Omagh Interagency Forum – that engages over 40 partners to prevent duplication and drive services for older people

- South West Age Partnership (SWAP) - a network with over 80 members from local groups led by older people.

> "People seem to value its [Age-friendly Newcastle's] existence. People turn up and the rooms are full – senior people in the council, the Chamber of Commerce, universities and others joining up for partnership working. [The value is] having a strategic framework and the backing of a global network."
>
> / Newcastle /

How the UK Network helps

The UK Network provides a variety of resources to help members set up effective partnerships.

Members have access to templates (such as terms of reference for steering groups) as well as tools and resources to help partners understand their relevance to the age-friendly agenda such as an age-friendly business framework.

The UK Network holds online peer calls that offer opportunities for learning, including sharing best practice for effective partnerships. In addition, communities are encouraged to invite local partners to topic-specific calls. Popular recent examples included inviting housing associations to the call "age-friendly housing associations" and social prescribing leads to the call "social prescribing for older people."

"
The network call is a place to share ideas, validate existing work and gain peer support. It allows good practice to be shared which aids working smartly. [...] Others have used our [work] like Brighton and Hove with their Age and Dementia Business scheme.

/ Leeds /
"

CASE STUDY: Improving the efficiency of community transport in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Bringing together local partners across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole into an Age-friendly Community network demonstrated that two organisations, Christchurch Community Partnership and SEDCAT were providing overlapping community transport services. Through discussion and collaboration, the organisations adapted their ways of working to avoid duplication with

CCP transferring its medical trip provision to SEDCAT, allowing it to refocus on getting isolated residents to social and support groups and Lunch Clubs. This resulted in expansion of each service to offer wider support for local older people.

"Our services no longer duplicate support for the residents. This has freed resources for both services meaning that community transport provision has been expanded with one service and transport to support social interaction has been expanded in the other."

CASE STUDY: Being heard and age equality - acting in partnership with older people in Manchester

Manchester have been involved in the age-friendly movement for over 20 years and were the first UK city to join the WHO Network (in 2010). Age-Friendly Manchester have established strong partnerships with organisations across Manchester, and developed mature governance structures and co-production mechanisms that engage older people and leaders at all levels across the system.

The Age-friendly Community approach has led Manchester to move from acknowledging older people's voices to emphasising collaboration together with older people and accountability from decision-makers.

These factors have enabled responses to local and national challenges. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a letter from the Age-friendly Manchester Older People's Board to the council led to virtual meetings with leaders from the council, health services, and care services. Discussions highlighted how negative language around vulnerability and frailty were marginalising older people.

Alongside other discussions with older people, the meetings informed strategic planning and action during and after lockdowns. For example, organising physical activity classes in local parks to provide safe opportunities for activity and social connection.

Once lockdowns ended, older people's feedback via the Older People's Board and Older People's Assembly informed the local Recovery and Investment plan, the new Age Friendly Manchester Strategy: Manchester a city for life, as well as specific actions in the strategy's delivery plan including a range of social connections projects that use local funding to test preventative approaches that support connecting, healthy eating and movement.

Emphasising action on older people's feedback also enhances the city's service standards. Regular citywide and neighbourhood meetings allow older people, front-line practitioners and community organisations to collaborate - sharing experiences, strengthen what is working and avoid duplication.

"[The Age-friendly Manchester] Older People's Board has been meeting every 2 months for over 20 years. Initially, older people's experiences and voice were more acknowledged through the board; this has developed over time through the age-friendly model to became more about accountability across services and the city."

IMPACT: Supporting evidence-informed decision-making

- The Age-friendly Communities approach encourages places to develop understanding of their own local context by gathering data around ageing.
- Access to national evidence and the development of local insight enables local leaders and decision-makers to make evidence-based decisions and prioritise actions.

Over 98% of survey respondents reported 'increased consideration of evidence, data and good practice in local decision-making'

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Age-friendly Communities engage with and use evidence in two main ways:

1. **Improving understanding across their communities,** through carrying out baseline assessments at regular intervals to understand how age-friendly their communities currently are, including understanding the priorities of older people and using this understanding to inform reports.

Six communities created local State of Ageing reports in the last year which allowed them to understand their local data picture at a greater depth. Two communities made ageing well the main theme of their Director of Public Health reports in the last year, with at least two more planned for 2024.

2. **Creating mechanisms so that evidence directly informs strategic priorities and decision-making.**

For example, Sheffield includes an age-friendly section in equality impact assessments that must be completed for all spend and decision-making. Bath & North East Somerset have ensured the 1,400 responses to their Ageing Well Community Baseline Survey are used to inform their strategic planning and actions.

"It also [results from a baseline survey] helped to let our communities know that we are here, and that we want to empower them - and, in fact, based off of our initial data analysis we are already launching an accessible toilets campaign later this year!"

/ Bath and North East Somerset /

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change

The Age-friendly Communities approach prioritises building a robust local evidence-base (step one of the Four-Step Programme Cycle) and evaluating change (step four).

Communities are encouraged to understand local data by creating a baseline assessment and engaging with older people to understand their lived experience.

The global nature of the Age-friendly Communities framework – based on decades of global evidence around health and active ageing – increases the status of age-friendly activities and supports political buy-in.

> "Our work is led by a strong place-based focus. We listen, research and inform." / Hastings /

> "Adopting the WHO's framework for an Age-friendly City has been enormously useful for persuading the Greater London Authority's decision-makers of what needs to be done, when and how. It led to the GLA producing periodic evidence bases of how age-friendly London is." / Greater London /

How the UK Network helps

The UK Network supports communities to understand the national data picture. It shares high-quality, timely and robust evidence, such as the annual State of Ageing Report and evidence updates, through peer calls and via the monthly newsletter.

The Network also provides resources to help communities understand their own local data picture, such as the guide for creating a local State of Ageing report and templates for community surveys.

Members regularly engage with this national evidence base, noting how sharing resources with senior leaders led to less friction and more acceptance of the need to change.

> "We use the data and resources from Centre for Ageing Better to inform various aspects of our work […] The State of Ageing report has been invaluable in highlighting important topics affecting older people with supporting data to evolve a coherent narrative, and partly influenced Trafford's Healthy Ageing report in 2023." / Trafford /

CASE STUDY: Creating, using and sharing evidence to make change in Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester's Age-friendly policies and services are informed by evidence and views from their Older People's Network, which comprises over 500 older people. The city region has launched two age-friendly strategies and action plans, in 2018 and 2024, with a statistical and research report alongside each one.

The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub runs communication projects and campaigns. Their 'Pension Top-Up' campaign, in partnership with housing providers, resulted in around £10million of previously-unclaimed benefits and entitlements being received by residents over state pension age. Other communication examples include printed signposting and wellbeing guides during the pandemic. The Hub also leads pioneering falls prevention work across the region, including a pilot project with Wigan GP surgeries to evaluate preventive interventions for people who are at risk of falling.

Investment in the Ageing in Place Pathfinder is enabling partners and residents in neighbourhoods across Greater Manchester to put older people at the heart of creating communities in which they can age well and learn how to embed best practice across the city-

region. Through the Greener Later Life workstream, the Ageing Hub is developing new approaches to ensuring that voices of older people are heard in climate emergency responses, and that the impact of climate change on older people is understood and addressed.

The Hub has also established a Housing, Planning, and Ageing Group. The group addresses evidence gaps and provides tools to improve understanding of and practice around older people's housing needs.

The 'Rightsizing' project called for UK local authorities, planners and developers to shift emphasis from downsizing to 'rightsizing' when planning housing provision for older people (Hammond, Walsh, & White, 2018). Similarly, the 'Design for Life' pocketbook was published to inspire designers and developers to think differently about ageing and urban design (Hammond & Saunders, 2021). A 2024 project, 'Creating Age-friendly Developments' presents a series of considerations for both new build housing and retrofit projects. Greater Manchester actively communicates and shares their evidence and tools with the UK Network and more broadly, including sending representatives to the UK Network peer calls to share lessons and resources.

IMPACT: Enabling meaningful co-production in policymaking

- The Age-friendly Communities approach prioritises developing stronger connections with older residents to support public consultation and engagement.

- Through developing inclusive and accessible co-production activities, Age-friendly Communities are ensuring that all local policies, strategies, approaches, services and spaces can best meet the needs and experiences of older people.

98% of survey respondents think the Age-friendly Communities approach ensures older people are co-producing change in their area.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Age-friendly Communities are building various mechanisms to ensure that older people are co-producing change (Figure 9).

Rhondda Cynon Taf	Five local 50+ Forums (with approximately 300 members total) provide a mechanism to hear and act on the voice of older residents. Furthermore, approximately 100 groups and organisations for older people are engaged with their local Community Development Team via Neighbourhood Networks.
Manchester	The Older People's Board shaped the content and form of their new strategy. For example, residents wanted a 5-year rather than 10-year strategy so it could be more adaptable in the context of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis.
Kirklees	A community-based accountability approach is being used to engage 135 community groups, ensuring the local strategy and priorities are based on direct engagement with older people. Older people are being upskilled as co-researchers to support meaningful co-production and are increasingly leading ward forums.

Figure 9: Examples of how Age-friendly Communities are co-producing change with older people

"Older people have told us they most want places to gather. To be social, for organising lift sharing and for food sharing. This evidence has led us to form a partnership with University of Manchester to [...] train older people and younger people as co-researchers to establish what places older people most want and value for gathering purposes. [Findings will] support our assets management and partnership development arrangements going forward."

/ Kirklees /

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables it

Enabling older people to be heard is at heart of the approach. The first step of the Four-Step Programme Cycle emphasises engaging older people through mechanisms such as forums, steering groups or ambassador programmes. These mechanisms provide the foundation for strategic planning and action.

How the UK Network helps

To join the UK Network, communities must demonstrate that they have mechanisms to hear the voice of older people, which are assessed by the Centre for Ageing Better and the UK Network's steering group.

In addition, the UK Network regularly holds peer calls to share best practice for co-production, bringing in external expertise, and allowing members to learn from each other.

Recent examples include a session on working effectively with older people's forums and enabling co-production.

We have supported (through our third sector lead) the establishment of 3 Champions Boards of older people who we are working with in terms of delivering change and influencing key people and bodies. From this has emerged an Access Panel that particularly focuses on physical spaces.

/ South Ayrshire /

CASE STUDY: Engaging older people to improve the accessibility of Leeds's City Train station

The Leeds Older People's Forum facilitates their Age Friendly Steering Group that is made up of 26 older residents. The Steering Group is locally recognised as the place to go to co-produce with older people.

Leeds City Council are committed to support the independence of older people by providing accessible transport links throughout the city. Following recent redevelopment work, Network Rail approached the Steering Group to assess the accessibility of Leeds City Train Station for older adults and people with disabilities.

Five Steering Group members helped to audit the station, including walking the nearby access routes. They produced 10 priority actions to make the station more age- and dementia-friendly, including maintaining a physical ticket office and providing staff training (Age Friendly Steering Group, 2023). In response, station employees have begun:

- Delivering Wise Up to Ageism (Leeds Older People's Forum, 2024a) training and Dementia Friends sessions (Leeds Older People's Forum, 2024b) to staff

- Working with the Age-friendly Communities Development

Officer to expand the Age and Dementia Friendly Business scheme (Leeds Older People's Forum, 2024b) with businesses based in the station

- Ensuring that opening hours for the physical ticket office are maintained

- Creating plans to have a First Bus Departure Board in Leeds City Station

- Including the Age Friendly Steering group in the ongoing work, for example Bam Nuttall LTD met with the Steering Group in August 2024 and attended local International Day of Older Person events to inform their upcoming station design work

Leeds shared their approach in UK Network peer calls to inspire other members.

IMPACT: Changing policies, mindsets and language

- The Age-friendly Communities approach promotes a deeper understanding of ageing by showing how ageing is a diverse experience that is everyone's, or every domain's, business.

- This deeper understanding sparks changed mindsets, increased use of age-friendly language, and better integration of ageing across a range of policies.

> **Over 84% of survey respondents said age-friendly approaches were incorporated into at least one local policy and 74% said these principles were adopted in at least two.**

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Age-friendly Communities actively encourage local partners to apply an age-friendly lens to their work. This includes sharing **guidance** on **age-friendly** and **inclusive language**, which encourages organisations to address any ageism in their communications.

Mindset changes are also achieved by engaging partners that do not traditionally consider ageing, showing them how ageing relates to their work and providing resources for becoming more age-friendly.

Changing mindsets across a range of partners leads to tangible impacts on local policies and practices. **Over 84%** of communities that responded to the survey reported at least one local policy has incorporated age-friendly concepts. As Figure 10 shows, this ranges from overall local plans to transport and planning policies.

In **Ynys Môn/Anglesey**, for example, age-friendly concepts are in the Strategic Plan 'Modernising the Adult Service 2024-2029' and there is a dedicated Ageing Well Strategy (Isle of Anglesey City Council, nd).

Figure 10: The types and numbers of local policies that include the age-friendly approach

Which local policies, if any, have included the age-friendly approach? (Multiple responses allowed)

Percentage of respondents
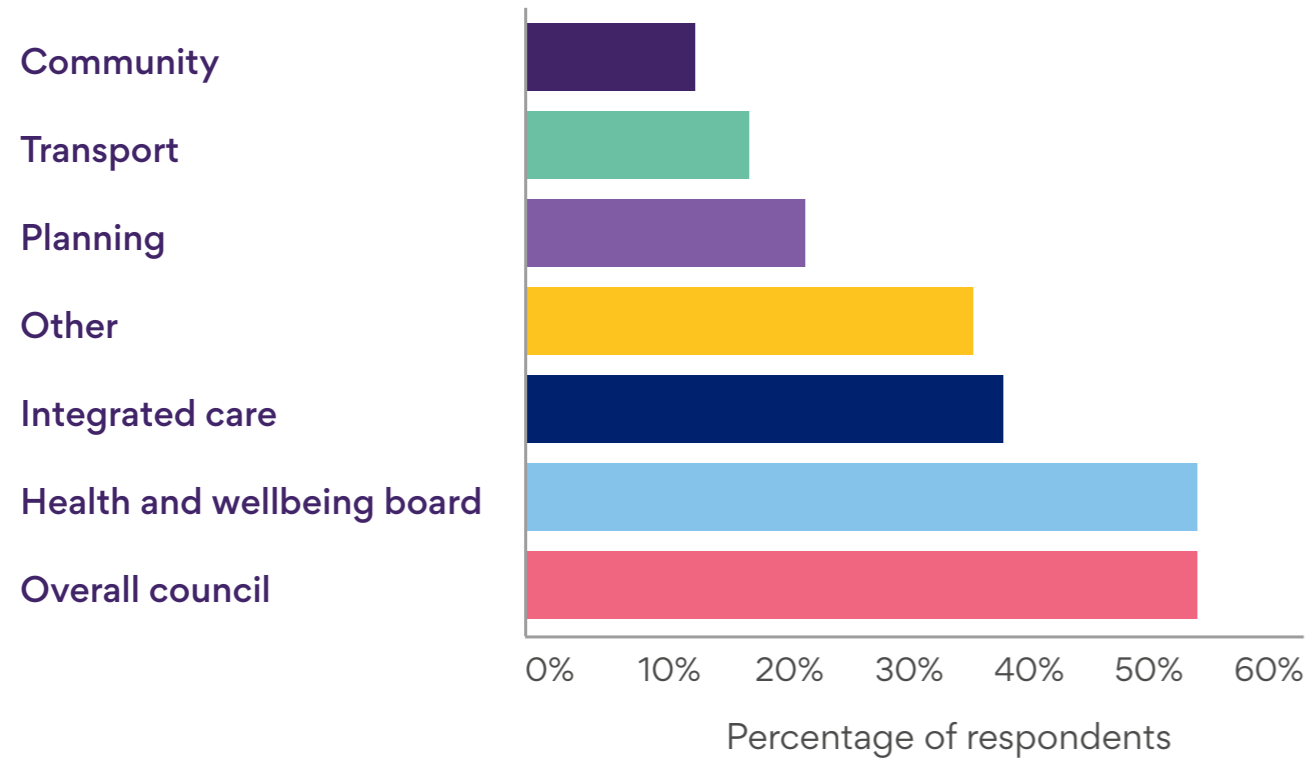
"A mindset change has been seen in people seeing it as their responsibility to help the AFC (Age-friendly Community) movement, from simple steps such as spreading the word on consultations, news, updates with neighbours and fellow older people."

/ Ynys Môn / Anglesey/

"I have been approached by colleagues in the wider council who are updating their strategic documents and who wanted to ensure older people are a priority."

/ Perth and Kinross /

[It changed] the way we talk to and about older people. Council started checking communications. Changing language that would create barriers."

/ Buckinghamshire /

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables it

At the heart of the Age-friendly Communities approach is a commitment to valuing older people – one of the Eight Domains is respect and social inclusion.

The Four-Step Programme Cycle prioritises local political commitment and developing strong multi-level governance structures so that ageing rises up local agendas across the system – creating the conditions for these mindset and policy shifts.

"It [the Age-friendly Communities approach] is influencing the culture, tone and focus of the system-wide strategic groups in Kirklees. We now have a robust framework to enable co-production, upstream approaches, and whole system partnership engagement/involvement."

/ Kirklees/

How the UK Network helps

The UK and Global Network require political approval to sign up as a member, which serves to drive action from decision-makers.

The UK Network targets sessions and resources at local decision-makers to support them to be effective leaders of age-friendly approaches, language and policies.

The UK Network also supports members to access Centre for Ageing Better's resources on challenging ageism, such as the Age Positive Image Library.

Leeds used images in their Wise Up to Ageism training, which helps businesses and organisations to recognise ageism and the importance of age-positive language.

> "The image library has been so useful for us, and we have shared it with partners [...] It has really helped to decrease the negative representation of older people and reduce stereotyping."
>
> / Caerdydd / Cardiff /
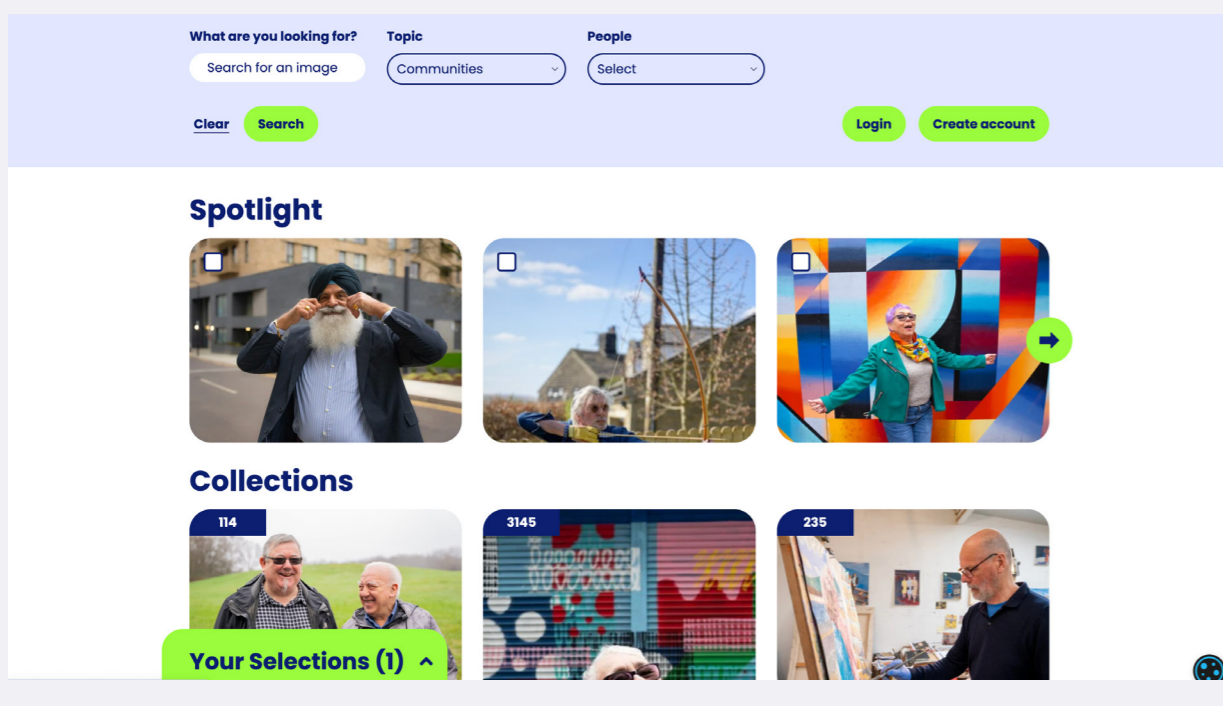
CASE STUDY: Using culture to change mindsets in Newcastle

Newcastle prioritise using creative methods to change mindsets and better represent diverse older communities.

Newcastle developed a series of theatre and performance-based practices and outputs. The idea is twofold. First, creative projects provide different outlets for older people to share their experiences. Second, visual outputs can change perceptions about older people in local communities and to decision-makers.

Examples include:

- Doorbells Dreaming of the Future, a performance based on older people's experiences of housing, was showcased to local leaders and residents, presented at the Edinburgh festival, and recorded for the UK Network.

- Unfolding Theatre partnering with the Elders Council of Newcastle to use a neighborhood-based approach to co-create older people led performances; the 2022 project created a manifesto for Age-friendly Communities that was developed into a performance.

- Working with diverse communities including supporting an artist in residence who works with older people from the Chinese community, and working with an artist to facilitate creative focus groups with Chinese and South Asian residents.

- Jack and Jill and Red Postbox are physical, immersive performances showing women's experiences with dementia and its wider impacts for families and communities.

Newcastle regularly share successes with UK Network members, inspiring others to consider the role of culture and the arts in changing mindsets and engaging older people. They recently jointly facilitated a workshop at a creativity conference to share more about their projects.

> "Culture is one of Newcastle's key areas in AFC (Age-friendly Community) and our partnerships with theatre groups have provided older people with creative outlets and more importantly from an impact point of view they bring older people's stories to a broader audience including policy makers."
>
> (Newcastle's Elders Council representative)

> "It gets people thinking about things, not via a report! There's an immediacy of impact. You can film it, we've taken one to Edinburgh festival, you can take it to new audiences and groups, and use as springboard for different kinds of action."
>
> (Newcastle's Elders Council representative)

CASE STUDY: Using political leadership to drive action in East Lindsey

East Lindsey, a district in Lincolnshire with an ageing population, has long had a keen interest in age-friendly initiatives and approaches. A local Councillor has championed work on ageing since 2000. East Lindsey joined the UK Network in 2019, becoming the first district council in a county authority to sign up.

East Lindsey has adopted 'better ageing' terminology as a way to encourage buy-in from other elected members. As part of their ongoing commitment, the East Lindsey District Council funds a permanent Age-Friendly Officer role. This has enabled dedicated focus on a range of initiatives. For example, encouraging

local organisations to sign the Centre for Ageing Better's Age-Friendly Employer pledge, which aims to improve how employers engage with their older workers.

Early successes are paving the way for East Lindsey to share their approach to support other districts in Lincolnshire to join the network. Where possible, they are pooling resources to ensure longer-term legacies and approaches.

"[Age-friendly is] layered into our structure top-down – age-friendly comes into everything – bin collection, planning."

(Councillor, East Lindsey)

IMPACT: Embedding and enabling a preventive way of working

- The Age-friendly Communities approach encourages prevention-focused activities in health and social care sectors.
- Activities that support older people to develop social connections, improve wellbeing and financial literacy, and access pathways into employability and volunteering, are enabling preventive ways of working, improving longer-term outcomes for older people.

79% of survey respondents believe the age-friendly approach is reducing the longer-term burden on, and costs associated with, public service provision.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Activities of Age-friendly Communities are contributing to reductions in the longer-term burden of services (Table 3).

Table 3. Examples of embedding and enabling preventive ways of working.

Gwynedd	A social prescribing program in Gwynedd is shifting healthcare provision to community-based settings, aiming to create a healthier community with reduced healthcare needs.
South Ayrshire	'Functional fitness MOTs' in South Ayrshire are encouraging residents to take charge of their health and lead healthier lives by emphasising the power of prevention.
Sunderland	Older people in Sunderland can join a multiweek strength and balance programme. Participants are encouraged to stay afterwards to discuss their needs, receive advice on issues and form social connections. Early evidence suggests the programme is reducing falls and leading to decreased hospital admissions.
Trafford	Trafford created a bespoke Public Health role to ensure the needs of older people are promoted in health planning, with an emphasis on preventing ill health.

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables it

A key element of the Age-friendly Communities approach is developing and encouraging preventive approaches and ways of working. The WHO framework promotes actions that support people to maintain physical, mental and social activity as they age. For example through building and maintaining a socially supportive community, equal access to health programmes, and accessible environments.

In the long-term, these efforts and the Eight-Domain focus on 'wider determinants' can contribute to better health and wellbeing outcomes, ultimately reducing long-term health and social care burden (WHO, 2023b) (WHO, 2017). Though Age-friendly Communities are often too early in their journey to have economic evidence of impact, there are signs of positive change.

"The Age-friendly approach has been a helpful and tangible project to promote a prevention-focussed way of working. The approach is being received well by some key teams within the Council and externally (e.g. leisure providers) in the first year of implementation."

/ Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames /

How the UK Network helps

An Age-friendly Community is defined as 'a place that enables people to age well and live a good later life'. This definition includes taking action on key issues earlier in the life course, such as employment, which can greatly impact an individual's financial security in later life.

UK Network members get privileged access to the wider expertise and resources around preventive approaches generated by the Centre for Ageing Better. For example, The Age-friendly Employer Pledge is targeted at supporting workers in their 50s and 60s to remain in good-quality work, which contributes to better financial and social outcomes in later life. Age-friendly Communities have been supporters and early adopters of the pledge.

Furthermore, where appropriate the UK Network provides tailored support for communities facing different population challenges requiring varied approaches to reducing pressure on public services. For example in a programme of action learning sets run for rural communities, participants shared approaches and examples of good practice with one another.

CASE STUDY: Adopting a prevention-focused way of working in Torbay

Torbay is leading the way in creating an inclusive and prevention-focused Age-friendly Community approach. Their work has grown out of the National Lottery-funded Ageing Better programme that ended in 2022.

One of their standout initiatives is the Torbay Community Helpline, run by Torbay Communities, which connects residents to over 800 community volunteers for support with a range of issues and to a network of voluntary community and social enterprise support. Open to all ages, the Helpline reflects Torbay's commitment to promoting a stronger more cohesive community through early support.

The Community Helpline allows real-time monitoring of problems, provides a barometer of current issues and supports older people to access wrap-around support and develop social connections in their community.

Another impactful initiative developed through the Ageing Better programme was the Community Builder team. The team links in with the Helpline and acts as a trusted team that works across Torbay neighbourhoods in an asset-based way to support isolated and vulnerable people to reconnect to their passions and ambitions – and live their best lives.

Torbay are continuing the work from Ageing Better by delivering the national Live Longer Better programme and by supporting Torbay Citizen's Assembly. Live Longer Better helps older residents to improve their health and wellbeing by providing courses on physical activity, nutrition, hydration and on issues relating to ageing and ageism. In the long-term, the programme will contribute to reduced healthcare burden and costs.

"If the community becomes stronger, it supports both older and younger people."

"The work we have done since 2015 has been embodied in the Healthy Ageing Strategy for the Health and Wellbeing Board. There has been an acknowledgement of all the areas of a person's life that can impact on their health. People acknowledge the need for preventative work".

"[The Age-friendly Communities approach means] changing the dynamic, seeing older people as an asset rather than a burden."

(Torbay's Member of Parliament)

Impacts of Age-friendly Communities for older people and communities 48

Impacts of Age-friendly Communities for older people and communities 49

Impacts of Age-friendly Communities for older people and communities

The impacts on local systems create the conditions for Age-friendly Communities to develop and support a wide range of benefits and impacts for older people and their communities, ensuring everyone can age well.

As Figure 11 shows, the Age-friendly Communities approach and UK Network are creating positive impacts for older people and their communities across a broad range of areas. Five core and cross-cutting impacts discussed here are:

Five core and cross-cutting impacts discussed here are:

1. **Expanding older people's access to and use of local spaces**
2. **Expanding older people's access to support and services**
3. **Increasing older people's connections to and inclusion in society**
4. **Enhancing older people's voice, representation and inclusion in decision-making**
5. **Improving older people's health and wellbeing**

Figure 11: Impacts for older people and communities as reported by Age-friendly Communities in a whole network survey completed by lead coordinators in local areas

To what extent do you think the Age-friendly Communities approach is making a difference across the following areas in your community?

Area	No difference	Little difference	Moderate difference	Strong difference
Improved social connection and participation in activities	7%	9%	41%	43%
Improved access to and support with communication, including support for digital and non-digital resources	7%	21%	38%	33%
Improved inclusion and choice in desicions that affect them and their community	9%	23%	38%	26%
Improved access to outdoor spaces and buildings (i.e. accessibility, inclusivity)	9%	35%	42%	14%
Improved meaning and purpose, including wellbeing and volunteering	10%	14%	52%	24%
Improved health and healthy behaviours, including reduction in falls	10%	19%	55%	17%
Improved access to health and community support	12%	12%	62%	14%
Improved community cohesion, including between generations and a sense of belonging	12%	19%	52%	17%
Improved outcomes for people who face deprivation or inequalities specifically	12%	26%	52%	10%
Improved housing options and support, e.g. for making adaptations	12%	32%	51%	5%
Improved transport options or access	13%	48%	30%	10%
Improved employment and volunteering opportunities and support	17%	29%	43%	12%
Improved actual or perceived safety, including crime prevention	17%	49%	29%	5%
Improved economic wellbeing, e.g. financial security and support	21%	19%	48%	12%

Legend: ● No difference ● Little difference ● Moderate difference ● Strong difference

IMPACT: Expanding older people's access to and use of local spaces

- The Age-friendly Communities approach prioritises expanding older people's access to and use of transport, outdoor spaces and buildings.

- By making local spaces more accessible, older people, as well as those with a disability, are empowered to be more independent.

91% of survey respondents think older people's access to buildings and outdoor spaces has improved, and **87%** feel options for and accessibility of transport has improved.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Improving older people's access to local spaces positively impacts older people, helping them to access services, connect to their communities, and ultimately improve their overall wellbeing.

Table 4 provides examples of activities Age-friendly Communities are doing to improve older people's access to and use of transport and local spaces.

Table 4: Activities Age-friendly Communities are doing to expand older people's access to and use of local spaces

Transport	Community transport schemes are a key focus in many Age-friendly Communities, reflecting the importance of transport to help older people to stay connected to and access services. Communities have helped with signposting, raising funding, and developing schemes in places including **Torbay**, **Perth & Kinross**, **Mid Ulster**, **Gwynedd**, **Ynys Môn/Anglesey** and **North Yorkshire.**
	The network are proud to provide a stronger voice for older people by enabling collective regional responses to public consultations. Recently, this included responding to a public consultation on free and discounted fares on public transport for people aged 60+. As well submitting a response on behalf of **Age-friendly Network NI**, each area in the network held consultation events with local older people and promoted the consultation for community members to complete directly. This contributed to consultation receiving over 20,000 responses.
	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole developed awareness campaigns around concessionary travel and applying for bus passes, to ensure that older people are supported to access public transport.
	Caerdydd/Cardiff Council and local bus companies collaborated to improve accessibility. New bus stop build outs and bus cages now help older and disabled passengers board more easily.
Public and private spaces	**Mid Ulster** developed accessibility guidance, including age-friendly and disability guidance, to ensure the council's capital development projects meet high-quality accessibility standards.
	By the end of 2024, **Barnsley** involved older people in planning the placement of 46 installed benches and seats across the community. Meanwhile, **Manchester** have added a number and QR code to all of their 70+ benches installed in the last year, giving older people more confidence to get out and access local spaces; and rest when they need.
	Bolton's recent walk audit led to longer wait times for pedestrian crossings. Walking audits with older people in places like **Lisburn** and **Castlereagh**, and **Knowsley** have also helped identify improvements for parks, open spaces and town centres.
	Derry City and Strabane introduced a scheme encouraging local businesses to open their restrooms to the public, with a map produced to visualise where public toilets are.

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change

The Age-friendly Communities approach creates mechanisms for hearing older people's voices, so that barriers to accessing their community are understood.

The Eight Domains further ensures the involvement of multiple partners, such as developers and transport planners, who have the power to take action to address these identified barriers.

"At the peer calls I can invite people in my local network to share inspiration with, this has led to increased involvement locally. For example, from hearing about the reminiscence trail [in Age-friendly Fermanagh and Omagh] our Green Spaces Team and local green space charities set up a working group to share what is happening locally."

/ Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole /

How the UK Network helps

The UK Network champions and encourages the sharing of best practice around important issues affecting older people's access to local spaces, with recent peer calls on improving use of parks and green spaces and public toilets.

Centre for Ageing Better have also created case studies and implementation guides for effective approaches and methodologies used to make improvements to the built environment including Take a Seat campaigns and walking audits.

"Our previous ageing better strategy focused mainly on social care and health. Moving to a strategy based on the WHOs eight domains has widened our focus and encouraged us to reach out to colleagues in other teams and departments, such as Transport, Housing, Planning and Community [...] Without the Age-friendly framework I'm not sure that we would have done this."

/ South Gloucestershire /

"The Take a Seat [peer] call was really useful for us in Bury. We have implemented the Take a Seat initiative and it was really helpful to learn from Nottingham about their approach, learning and challenges and we were able to take some of their learning on board and grow the programme further." / Bury /

CASE STUDY: Making pavements more accessible in Lambeth

In Lambeth, age-friendly principles were incorporated into urban planning through the Kerbside Strategy, which was shaped by feedback from older residents (Figure 12).
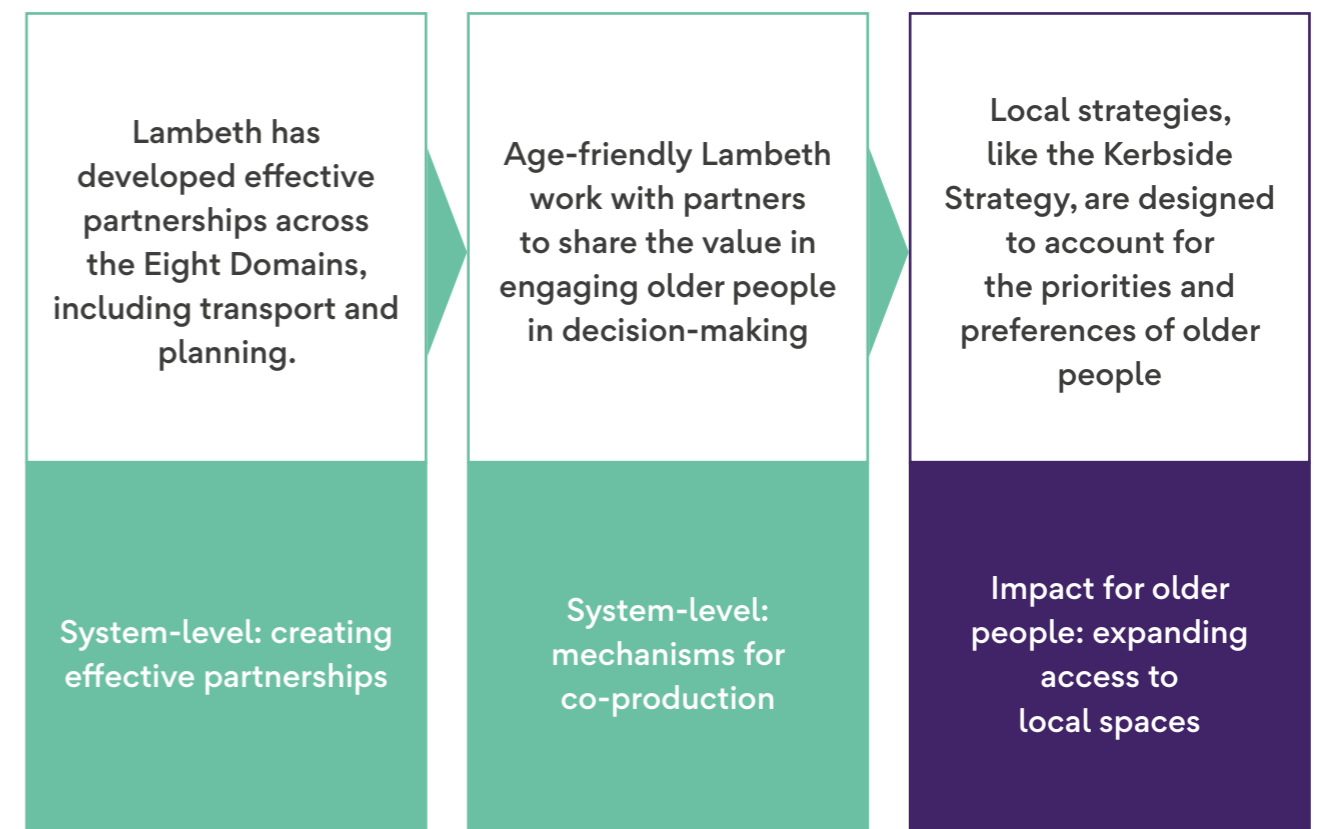
In Step 1 of the WHO's Four-Step Programme Cycle, Engage and Understand, Lambeth conducted extensive engagement with residents and key partners in the borough and developed an Older People's profile that brings together local and regional data on ageing and older residents in Lambeth.

Age-Friendly Lambeth used their engagement to provide insights and steer the development of the Kerbside Strategy. The Kerbside Strategy includes making pavements wider and more accessible for older residents and those using mobility aids. The strategy also emphasises the importance of greenery and rest places.

"[The approach] ensured that feedback from older residents on the built environment influenced changes, such as widening pavements and keeping greenery."

Figure 12: How systems-level impacts support impacts for older people in Lambeth

Lambeth has developed effective partnerships across the Eight Domains, including transport and planning.

Age-friendly Lambeth work with partners to share the value in engaging older people in decision-making

Local strategies, like the Kerbside Strategy, are designed to account for the priorities and preferences of older people

System-level: creating effective partnerships

System-level: mechanisms for co-production

Impact for older people: expanding access to local spaces

IMPACT: Expanding older people's access to support and services

- The Age-friendly Communities approach encourages places to improve the ways that support services are designed and communicated with a focus on improving accessibility.
- Services are being developed or adapted to better serve the needs of older people which, in turn, improves their outcomes.

93% of survey respondents think the Age-friendly Communities approach improves age-friendly communications, and 88% think it improves access to community support for older people.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Age-friendly Communities are expanding older people's access to support and services by improving awareness of and communications around services, and by making services more age-friendly or developing new offers where there are gaps (Table 5).

Table 5: Examples of Age-friendly Communities enabling access to support and services

Mid Ulster	Over 50s Forum developed a newsletter they named 'Live Happy' which aims to increase communication and sharing of information and resources. In total, 1,000 hard copies have been distributed in public spaces such as libraries and credit unions.
Hastings	Run a volunteer-driven 'Form-Filling Friday' to provide support with completing council forms, particularly for those with eyesight, dexterity, or cognitive issues. Attendees can have a hot meal and a chat.
Barnet	Worked with local charity Boost to bring digital inclusion workshops to sheltered housing schemes so they can more easily access online resources and services.
Manchester	Is piloting using peer ambassadors to spread information on Pension Credit.
Ynys Môn/ Anglesey	Use in-person events and social media campaigns to promote services to and support older people. For example, scam awareness training delivered through community hubs in partnership with Trading Standards has reached over 100 older adults.
Nottingham	Collaborated with local council teams, the local financial resilience partnership, community organisations and NHS colleagues to provide a financial literacy and wellbeing event to empower older adults to manage finances more effectively during the cost-of-living crisis and remain active, engaged and well during the winter period.

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change

The Eight Domains includes community support and health services, as well as communication and information, while the Four-Step Programme Cycle includes a focus on equity as a central element that should be considered across each step.

Age-friendly Communities use their partnerships to engage older people to understand what prevents older people from accessing services that exist and what additional services are needed to address their needs. The partnerships also enable changes to happen through disseminating information and supporting new and existing services.

"Having raised the issue [ticket office closures] with Centre for Ageing Better, they were able to quickly mobilise all [Age-friendly] areas to campaign […], arguing that it would have an adverse impact for older residents on their independence and health, by affecting their ability and willingness to use public transport. […] Following the consultation, stations which were set to close all remained open."

/ Trafford /

How the UK Network helps

The UK Network upskills and informs members about national policy changes that could impact older people's access to services and support. Network members also report back emerging issues from their localities.

For example, in 2024, improving and developing services and support around financial wellbeing has been a key focus for the UK Network. Many Age-friendly Communities run, collaborate on or signpost to financial literacy sessions on topics around Pension Credit (extra money designed to help with daily living costs for people over state pension age and on a low income), illegal lending or scam awareness training.

The UK Network also coordinates campaigns across localities on national concerns, and the Centre for Ageing Better has advocated on behalf of UK Network members where appropriate.

In 2024, the Centre for Ageing Better raised awareness of the issues around potential railway ticket office closures after feedback from the UK Network.

CASE STUDY: Enhancing older people's access to financial wellbeing support in Newham

Newham's 2022 'Ageing Well' strategy showcases an approach to help older people in diverse, urban communities thrive. The strategy was shaped by the voices of over 1,200 residents including those from ethnic minorities and marginalised groups, and a permanent Residents Advisory Group (Figure 13).

Resident feedback highlighted that the nature of existing communications was a barrier to engagement. Older people also noted that they wanted support on financial advice. In response, Newham developed leaflets and videos, alongside website changes for multiple topics including digital inclusion, parking, planning, financial advice and local activity maps.
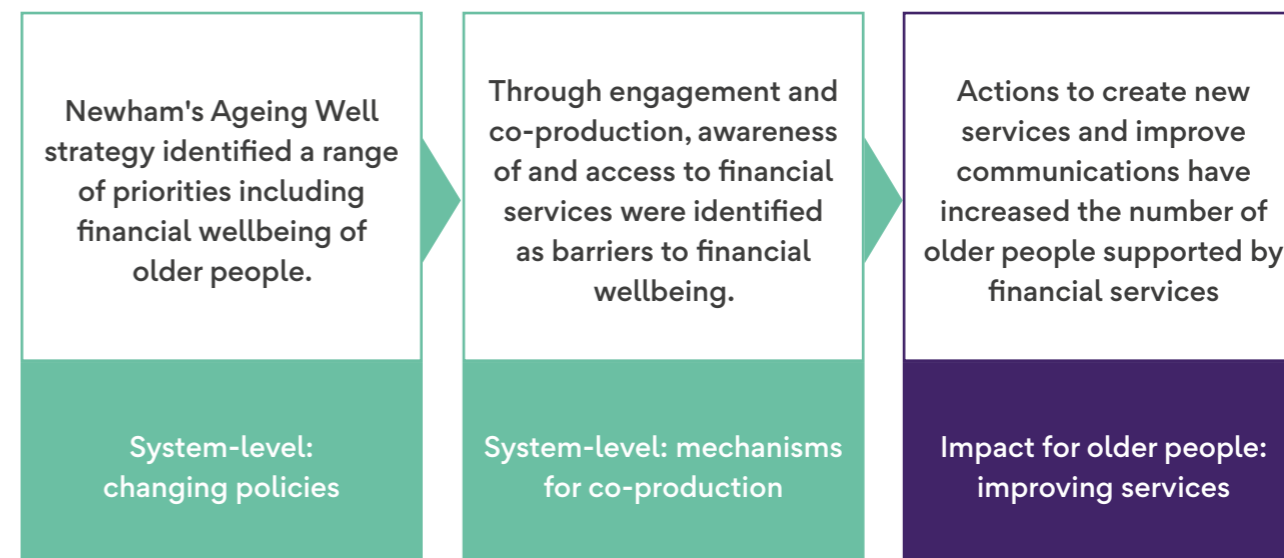
A key part of Newham's Ageing Well work following this has focused on financial wellbeing, through a pension credit uptake campaign, council tax reductions and emergency loans.

Residents' feedback has directly impacted service access so that older people can engage with services in a way that suits them. The Our Newham Money service also introduced a Just Managing tool to help people plan their finance.

"We have amended how residents can access the Our Newham Money Service, the Volunteering Service, etc – moving to paper, telephone and drop-in – leading to an increase in the number of older residents being supported."

Changes led to an 80% increase in the number of people aged 50+ supported by financial services.

Figure 13: How systems-level impacts support impacts for older people in Newham

Newham's Ageing Well strategy identified a range of priorities including financial wellbeing of older people.	Through engagement and co-production, awareness of and access to financial services were identified as barriers to financial wellbeing.	Actions to create new services and improve communications have increased the number of older people supported by financial services
System-level: changing policies	System-level: mechanisms for co-production	Impact for older people: improving services

IMPACT: Increasing older people's connections to and inclusion in society

- The Age-friendly Communities approach encourages development of activities to improve social participation and inclusion of older people.

- Providing opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections helps combat isolation and foster a sense of belonging and inclusion in society for older people

Overall, **93% of survey respondents** found the age-friendly approach improved older people's social connection and participation in activities.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Recognising and celebrating the diversity of older people is important to ensure all older people have opportunities to improve their social connections and feel more included in society.

Age-friendly Communities run and support many events, activities and initiatives aimed at increasing social connection opportunities. These opportunities connect diverse groups of older people with their peers, as well as connecting older people with other age groups (Figure 14). Communities also improve access to existing events and activities, making sure older people can take part in broader community offers.

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change

Two of the Eight Domains are 'social participation' and 'respect and inclusion', which pushes Age-friendly Communities to improve the participation of diverse groups of older people.

Additionally, 'engage and understand' is the first of the Four-Step Programme Cycle. The approach prioritises understanding the local diversity of older adults and the range of existing activities so that tailored opportunities are supported to improve inclusion.

"We are at the start of a piece of work around working with diverse communities and will be doing a number of different pieces of engagement with black and racially minoritised communities, gypsy roma traveller, LGBTQ+ and faith communities. The CfAB [Centre for Ageing Better] programme inspired this work."

/ Brighton and Hove /

Figure 14: Examples of increasing inclusion in society

International Day of Older People (IDOP)	Over 40 Age-friendly Communities celebrated IDOP 2024 in the UK. Hundreds of activities took place, from a photography exhibition in Perth and Kinross and a fashion show in Hackney, to an 'Unconference' in North Somerset where people shared views on the local State of Ageing Report. In Barnet over 500 people participated and in Newham over 900.
Creative opportunities	In Sheffield, arts and culture organisations facilitate events that support older people to attend museums, theatres and libraries.
Supporting people affected by dementia	East Lindsey's local Dementia Friendly Community Network provides training and activities to raise awareness across the community about living with dementia. Activities, such as running 'dementia cafes', support people living with dementia to be understood, respected and empowered to remain part of their community and live well with dementia.
Pride Month	Many communities supported Pride events to celebrate older LGBTQ+ people. In Barnet, Age UK held a drag bingo event that sold out and raised over £1000 for local charities. In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Pride organisers worked with the Age-friendly Community to support care home residents to attend "Gay, Grey and still Fabulous" event, many attending a Pride event for the first time.
Intergenerational sports events	Leeds have hosted multiple intergenerational walking football matches where teams from local primary schools play against Bramley Walking Wanderers, a local walking football club that is for older people.

How the UK Network helps

Through sharing good practice and providing resources for communities to run key events, the UK Network is central to connection and inclusion efforts. For example, peer calls around sensory clinics (August 2024) and promoting social connections in unlikely places (June 2024) have inspired communities to develop new events and approaches.

Additionally, ahead of International Day of Older Persons (IDOP), celebrated on 1st October every year, the Centre for Ageing Better work to develop a collective theme. In 2024, the theme was The Part we Play: Celebrating the integral role of older people in our communities. The Network shares ideas for how to mark the day, and resources like infographics and press release templates to support those developing events. In the lead up to IDOP, several weekly network calls are run where members can share best practice.

"The focus on International Day of Older Persons as something to be celebrated remains a highlight and each year informs our Trafford approach with partners, due to the sharing of resources and suggested comms materials."

/ Trafford /

CASE STUDY: Diane's Journey: Reconnecting with her community in Salford

Diane was referred by her GP to Age-friendly Salford (AFS) support. She had recently suffered the loss of her husband and was waiting for a knee operation.

She was initially hesitant but agreed to weekly phone calls. Over time, she was encouraged to join group activities. AFS's development workers supported her to download Zoom on an old laptop she owned. She joined weekly Brew and Chat online sessions where she found companionship.

With her increased self-confidence, Diane signed up for Tech and Tea at Winton Library in March 2021 to improve her digital skills.

Diane also told the AFS team that she missed the social interactions she had when teaching line dancing and organising dances. The team supported her to start volunteering at Age UK Salford's Critchley Café once a week.

Diane later joined the Voice and Influence group and now contributes to consultations. She is committed to raising the voice of older people and making life better for older people across Salford (Figure 15).

"I never would have joined this course before getting involved with Age Friendly Salford, I didn't have the confidence. The tablet is much easier to use than my old laptop and I like using it with my granddaughter."

"I feel I'm part of the community and able to have a role and worth to society through my volunteering."

(Diane, an older person in Salford)

Figure 15: How systems-level impacts support impacts for older people in Salford

Salford's partnerships ensure health services know to refer people to Age-friendly Salford	Salford's Voice and Influence group allows older people to get involved in policymaking	Diane is more connected to her community and has her voice heard. This improves her wellbeing
System-level: creating effective partnerships	System-level: mechanisms for co-production	Impact for older people: increasing connections with society

IMPACT: Enhancing older people's voice, representation and inclusion in decision-making

- The Age-friendly Communities approach prioritises creating mechanisms to enhance older people's representation and inclusion in local decision-making.
- Doing so boosts older people's agency and provides opportunities for older people to shape public life.

91% of survey respondents feel the age-friendly approach has improved the inclusion of older people in decisions that affect them and their communities.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Age-friendly Communities are empowering older people to have a voice in local decision-making, increasing their **representation** and **inclusion.**

The Right to Vote campaign in **Ynys Môn/ Anglesey** reached over 120 people and raised awareness about how to register to vote, and new voter ID requirements, for the 2024 election.

In **Greater Manchester**, a mayoral hustings was organised by the Older People's Network, to give members the opportunity to hear from and question the mayoral candidates on issues that matter to them.

Older people's voice is enhanced through the development of **older people-led forums**, **ambassadors** and **champions** schemes, and other forms of engagement.

Additionally, to enhance older people's voice and representation and create more inclusive decision-making practices, Age-

friendly Communities find it is important to develop more **accessible** and **inclusive communication practices**. Having more paper-based or face-to-face options can support more older people to get engaged in local decision-making.

> "Older people tell us they value and want face-to-face comms."
>
> / Kirklees /

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change

Older people are at the centre of the Eight Domains with three of the Domains explicitly focusing on inclusive engagement – social participation, respect and social inclusion, and civic participation and employment. Additionally, participation of older people is a core principle of action in the Four-Step Programme Cycle.

Overall, **96%** of survey respondents have at least one mechanism for engaging older people: those that do not had only joined the UK Network within weeks of completing the survey.
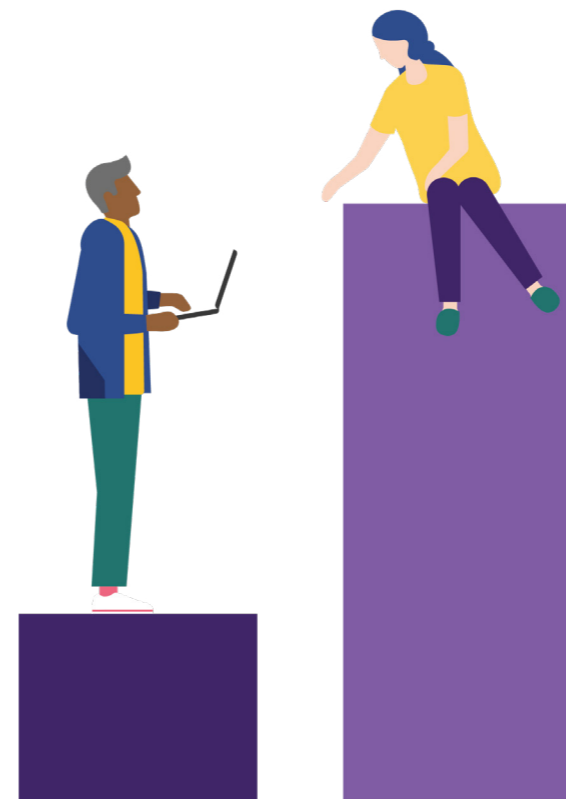
How the UK Network helps

Joining the UK Network requires evidence that older people are represented in decision-making.

The UK Network provides members with training and support sessions around listening to and working with older people. The 2023 annual conference included sessions on 'working with older people as co-researchers' and 'improving outreach and engagement'. Recent weekly peer calls have focused on older people's voices in local elections and their contributions to tackling climate change.

Members can also access training and resources on improving the accessibility of communications. For example, the Centre for Ageing Better facilitated a peer network call with Good Practice Mentors in 2024 around best practice for communications and co-production.

Additionally, the Centre for Ageing Better's Experts by Experience network engages older people in decision-making around UK Network activities. For example, older people have contributed to decision-making around which activities should be funded via the Age Without Limits Action Day micro-grants, as part of Centre for Ageing Better's campaign to tackle ageism.

CASE STUDY: Raising the voice of older people via ambassador and champion schemes (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Barnet, Newham, Bolton)

Age-friendly ambassador and champion schemes across the UK are amplifying the voices of older people and empowering them to shape local strategies and decisions that impact them.

Almost half (49%) of survey respondents had ambassador or champion schemes in place. Sunderland and Leeds have the most ambassadors (over 200 and over 300, respectively). The weekly peer calls inspired many Age-friendly Communities to set up schemes, with established communities providing bespoke support and advice for others to learn from.

Ambassadors and champions are involved in a variety of activities, such as developing and delivering age-friendly training modules on ageism and communication to local community groups, services and organisations. They also get involved in local decision-making, including giving feedback to local strategic boards.

Members share their successes to inspire others. Bolton's Ageing Well Champions informed the development of communications around illegal money lending following requests from older people. These communications were shared with the UK Network and are used nationally.

In places like Newham, the ambassador scheme is framed as a volunteering opportunity. Their ambassadors report social benefits and a sense of meaning and purpose from their involvement.

These schemes highlight the role of the UK Network in amplifying and spreading good practice, through sharing resources and enabling conversations about the success and challenges.

"We set up [our ambassadors Scheme] this year after the support from Sunderland and Leeds."

(Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole)

"[Older champions] lead our age-friendly drop-ins which take place in shopping centres, health centres, libraries and supermarkets to engage with the public and spread information about age-friendly Barnet. This has made our project much more people-focused and allowed us to better represent the people we serve." (Barnet)

CASE STUDY: Giving older people a voice in Ynys Môn / Anglesey

Ynys Môn / Anglesey have a dedicated Age Friendly Communities Development Officer in post, funded by the Welsh Government, who leads on their age-friendly activities and engagement.

The Development Officer has prioritised engaging with the community, to understand what was and was not working with the previous Older People's Forum that stopped meeting at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Feedback was taken on board to adapt the Forum from its pre-pandemic structure of four central forums, to eight smaller meetings in towns and villages across the island, to make the forum more accessible. Anglesey also hosts two Island-Wide Forums a year that bring together representatives from all over the island to address shared challenges and to exchange good practice. Additionally, there is a focus on sending information in paper copy formats that members prefer.

The Forums reach over 140 people. Attendees are given the opportunity to:

- Learn more about the Age-Friendly Ynys Môn / Anglesey work, and how they can get involved.
- Have their say on any barriers to ageing well they're facing, or good practice to share.
- Socialise with others in their community.
- Access information and guidance about support and services.

Guest speakers from local services attend, which is particularly well-received by attendees.

"Paper copies [...] have enabled more older people to have their say and be heard by decision makers and are more involved in political processes."

(Ynys Môn / Anglesey Age-friendly Communities Development Officer).

"An enjoyable forum, suitable and interesting topics. It was good to have the chance to ask questions and get clear and respectful responses. I'm looking forward to the next forum."

(Ynys Môn / Anglesey attendee)

IMPACT: Improving older people's health and wellbeing

- The Age-friendly Communities approach emphasises developing opportunities that directly impact older people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

- Health and wellbeing are also supported by initiatives that focus on improving meaning, agency, and social connection or improve people's access to and ability to move around the local environment.

What Age-friendly Communities are doing

Most Age-friendly Communities have developed at least one health- or wellbeing-focused initiative such as **strength and balance classes**, **health MOTs**, **nutrition and hydration information programmes**, **walking groups** and other social meetings. Initiatives often address both health and wellbeing.

The **Greater Manchester Falls Collaborative** is a regional partnership developed to create a holistic whole-system approach to falls prevention. Multiple sectors collaborate to enable access to assistive technology, walking aids, advice, and strength and balance classes for older people.

Middlesbrough developed 'sensory drop-in clinics' to support those living with sight or hearing loss. They take a holistic approach, providing support across physical activity, life skills and

90% of survey respondents feel the age-friendly approach improves health and healthy behaviours.

"I really feel it is making a difference taking part in the gentle exercise activities. I can feel better movement in my arms doing it regularly, after a fall last year I'd lost all my confidence but this is great, I'm making friends and getting fitter in the process."

/ Older person in Brighton/

digital skills. It also offers access to specialist equipment and engages service providers. This has led to the introduction of more inclusive booking systems, audio newsletters, and transport guides.

In other cases, activities, such as **volunteering opportunities** or **events** that bring older people together improves older people's wellbeing.

How the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change

The Eight Domains address the broader social determinants of heath, with an explicit focus on community support and health services in one domain.

Additionally, the priority that the Age-friendly Communities approach places on meaningful engagement with older people cannot be understated – supporting older people to shape local policies and engage with organisations and other older people – has important impacts on wellbeing. More than this, older people are engaged to co-develop a health and wellbeing offer that is appealing to and works for them.

"The Age Friendly baseline assessment identified an interest among older people to do more physical activity and also a lack of knowledge about what is on offer [...]. These findings, and the Age-friendly Community approach and commitment from the Council encouraged partners and residents to engage with us to take action. Age-friendly ambassadors were recruited [...] to help develop the campaign title and partners such as our Leisure provider showed a keen interest in supporting this approach for this campaign and the future."

/ Kingston /

How the UK Network helps

The UK Network supports improvements to health and wellbeing through providing space for Age-friendly Communities to share successes and learnings.

The UK Network also raises awareness around important issues such as falls prevention. Recent peer calls have included:

- Enabling physical activity
- Keeping well in winter
- Implementing home safety checks
- Incorporating falls prevention into local strategies

Network members can also join the WHO's global falls collaborative to access global examples of best practice.

"Healthy ageing is about more than access to health services; the age friendly community framework supports the physical and mental health and wellbeing of older people by ensuring they can continue to participate and have value in their local community, maintain connection and independence. In the absence of opportunities nationally, or in many regions, the UK Network provides a vital role in enabling peer learning between places and seeding good practice across its members."

/ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities /

CASE STUDY: Supporting older people's health and wellbeing in Mid Ulster

Health and wellbeing has been one of the four key focuses in Age-friendly Mid Ulster since their first year.

Through this focus, the community has created new or improved access to services and opportunities that impact physical and mental health. Their work has benefited from funding through the Northern Healthy Lifestyles Partnership, the Northern and Southern Health and Social Care Trust, and the Public Health Agency.

Examples of their activities include:

- Organising health, leisure and wellbeing pop up stands to promote council services.
- Completing 6,733 'good morning calls' with Mid Ulster Agewell (October 2023 - July 2024 figures).

- Carrying out home safety checks for over 65s by health and wellbeing officers.
- Engaging over 30 older people at weekly social walks and chat groups through the Mid Ulster Loneliness chatty library initiative in Dungannon and Magherafelt.
- Hosting events such as a celebration for the Mid Ulster Loneliness Network and Age-Friendly Alliances' strategy launch, as well as Making Connections event to raise awareness of support services for people aged over 50 during 2024's Age Without Limits Action Day.
- Promoting physical activity programmes, delivering physical activity sessions to four community groups, and running three 'Tea dances' with an additional dance planned for Christmas 2024 (Figure 16).

Figure 16: How systems-level impacts support impacts for older people in Mid Ulster

Mid Ulster prioritise preventive approaches to address health and wellbeing → Mid Ulster have effectively engaged partners across the domains to develop and improve services → A range of services support older people in Mid Ulster to improve their health and wellbeing

System-level: a preventive approach | System-level: creating effective partnerships | Impact for older people: improving older people's health

What enables impact?

Age-friendly Communities benefit from the structured approach set out by the WHO's Eight Domains and Four-Step Programme Cycle. Engaging Age-friendly Communities for this report shows there are certain key enablers in the approach that are particularly important for helping communities achieve their impacts.

There are two main ways that the Age-friendly Communities approach enables change, and five ways that the UK Network provides support.

How Age-friendly Communities approach enables impact

Engaging partners across the Eight Domains

Age-friendly Communities are motivated to engage and develop relationships with a range of partners based on the Eight Domains of the WHO Age-friendly Community framework.

The WHO Four-Step Programme Cycle

The Four-Step Programme Cycle provides a structured framework to guide Age-friendly Communities about what to do, when and how.

Some activities were repeatedly referenced by UK Network members as being vital to their ability to create impacts (see Table 6). In particular, activities within the first step – engage and understand – create the foundation for meaningful change.

"The benefit of the age-friendly approach is the number of areas [or domains] it covers which supports a system wide approach."

/ Buckinghamshire /

"The [approach] has provided more prominent focus and structure to our existing older people's strategy work."

/ Sir y Fflint/Flintshire /

"Having a well-represented steering group (NHS, Better [local leisure provider]), DWP, council, funders, etc.) is a key starting point to then being able to take actions."

/ Cumberland /

Table 6: Activities to enable impact through the WHO Four-Step Programme Cycle

	Steps in the Four-Step Programme Cycle	Vital activities
Step 1:	Engage and understand	• Gaining political commitment • Identifying and engaging system partners • Engaging older people meaningfully • Creating baseline profiles
Step 2:	Plan strategically	• Developing and adapting strategies • Aligning on common aims
Step 3:	Act and implement	• Achieving additional funding • Consulting older people • Implementing activities
Step 4:	Evaluate	• Monitoring and evaluating progress continually • Sharing findings with others to scale elsewhere

CASE STUDY: Creating a regional Age-friendly network in Northern Ireland

Age-friendly Communities across Northern Ireland formed a regional network to strengthen the voice and influence of older people and support regional sharing of resources and best practice.

Launched in 2019, the Age-Friendly Network Northern Ireland (NI) unites Age-Friendly Officers from all 11 NI council areas. Organisations represented in the network include local councils, Age NI, the Department for Communities, the Commissioner's for Older People's office, the Public Health Agency, as well as other public and third-sector organisations. The networks helps to develop regional age-friendly initiatives and to coordinate action on issues that sit outside of local powers such as housing and transport.

The regional network grew stronger through an Age-friendly Communities conference hosted by the Centre for Ageing Better after the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendees from the network were able to meet in person and be inspired by other regional approaches, such as in Greater Manchester, to realise the potential for greater change by working together, particularly on issues that are controlled regionally.

The network are proud to provide a stronger voice for older people by enabling collective regional responses to public consultations. Recently, this included responding to a public consultation that helped to maintain free transport for people aged 60+. The Network also facilitates the NI 'Positive Ageing Month', which is held annually in October, through enabling organisation of regional events.

"There's always a council in England that has done something similar [...] the benefit of the UK Network is putting them in touch with people who can guide them through their experience."

(Age-Friendly Network NI)

How the UK Network enables impact

The UK Network is a **community of practice*** that inspires, connects and supports Age-friendly Communities across the UK. Through its affiliation, the UK Network also connects the UK to the global network.

Notably, many participants feel this is one of the best networks they have been involved in, because of the strength of connections made and opportunities to learn from others.

Figure 17 shows how important different elements of the UK Network have been for enabling Age-friendly Communities
to create impact. This shows that all elements of support have value for Age-friendly Communities.

*

A community of practice is a group of people with a common interest, concern or problem. The group will share best practice and create new knowledge to improve practice through collective thinking and reflection on an ongoing basis.

"The network and sharing of information and contacts is very impressive. The best I've experienced in 25 years of public service."
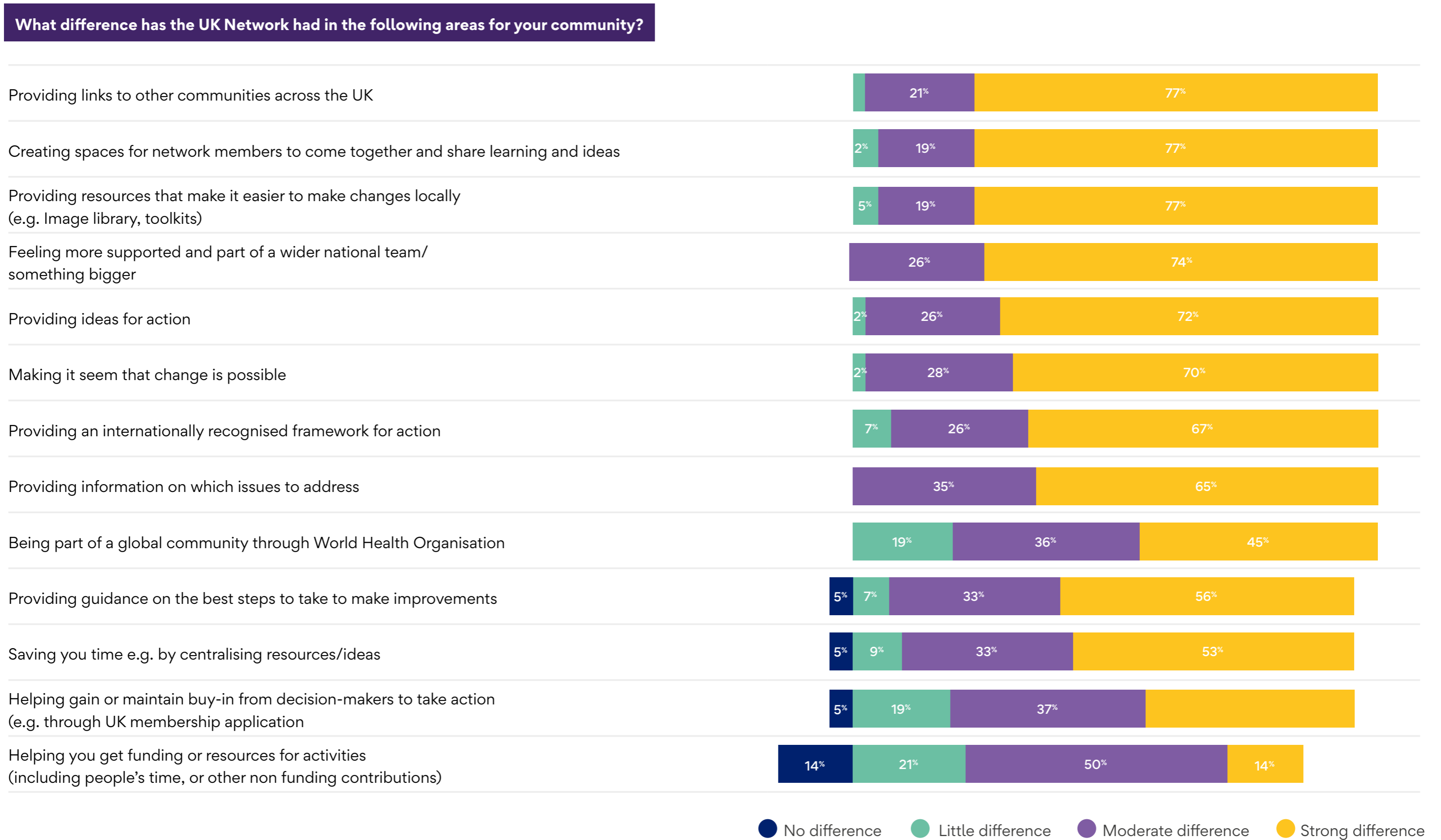
/ Kirklees /

Engagement with the Age-friendly Communities highlighted five core elements or enablers that are particularly important for helping them create positive impacts for local systems and for older people and communities:

1		**Connecting people via a network of networks**
2		**Helping individuals feel part of a bigger movement for change**
3		**Accelerating impact through shared ideas and learning**
4		**Boosting engagement and change through high-quality resources**
5		**Building capacity through a tailored, responsive approach**

Figure 17: Age-friendly Communities views on the difference made by the UK Network

What difference has the UK Network had in the following areas for your community?

Area	No difference	Little difference	Moderate difference	Strong difference
Providing links to other communities across the UK			21%	77%
Creating spaces for network members to come together and share learning and ideas		2%	19%	77%
Providing resources that make it easier to make changes locally (e.g. Image library, toolkits)		5%	19%	77%
Feeling more supported and part of a wider national team/ something bigger			26%	74%
Providing ideas for action		2%	26%	72%
Making it seem that change is possible		2%	28%	70%
Providing an internationally recognised framework for action		7%	26%	67%
Providing information on which issues to address			35%	65%
Being part of a global community through World Health Organisation		19%	36%	45%
Providing guidance on the best steps to take to make improvements	5%	7%	33%	56%
Saving you time e.g. by centralising resources/ideas	5%	9%	33%	53%
Helping gain or maintain buy-in from decision-makers to take action (e.g. through UK membership application	5%	19%	37%	
Helping you get funding or resources for activities (including people's time, or other non funding contributions)	14%	21%	50%	14%

● No difference ● Little difference ● Moderate difference ● Strong difference

1/ Connecting communities via a network of networks

The UK Network is a national network of local and regional networks that is connected to the WHO's Global Network.

At the time of writing, the UK Network consists of 91 Age-friendly Communities and an estimated 4,277+ partners across the UK. Increasingly, Age-friendly Communities are developing connections across their regions. Greater London, Greater Manchester, Northern Ireland and Northeast England, for example, all have regional networks.

This network of networks allows communities to connect with similar localities, learn from one another, and align approaches. Ultimately, this supports efficiency of work.

"Being able to share the collaborative approach undertaken by other areas has allowed me to argue for the same approach here in Southwark - this has meant I have had more time to go on a journey with residents and those supporting older people."

/ Southwark/

"Honestly, I've just felt less alone (as I was originally a one-woman team), and feel as though I have a great group of people to bounce ideas off of, come to for expert advice, and just generally make life a little easier, and planning a lot clearer. I'm VERY grateful for the network!"

/ Bath and North East Somerset /

2/ Helping individuals feel part of a bigger movement for change

The UK Network offers the chance for Age-friendly lead coordinators to feel part of a wider cause.

Coordinators are often the only person employed in their locality with an explicit focus on ageing. Many reflect that their role would feel lonely if not for the UK Network.

The weekly calls give people the opportunity to meet peers and gain both emotional and practical peer support.

3/ Accelerating impact through shared ideas and learning

Extraordinary knowledge, expertise, experiences and evidence exists within the national, regional and local networks. Members are encouraged and provided opportunities to share their expertise. This enables communities to accelerate impacts as they can work more efficiently and effectively.

Enabling the sharing of successes creates and sustains motivation by showing members that change is possible.

Sharing ideas and learnings enables Age-friendly Communities to avoid recreating the wheel and to learn from good practice. This collective intelligence enhances expertise across the network.

> "When starting a new project [the UK Network via the Centre for Ageing Better] send a shout out or link you directly with people who have done something similar. This leads to shared knowledge and easier set up."
>
> / Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole /

> "I've been able to refer colleagues [...] to the weekly calls which has been really invaluable and gives them a push when they realise that loads of other areas are really getting on with it."
>
> / Sheffield /

4/ Boosting engagement and change through high-quality resources

The UK Network offers members access to a variety of resources that improve capability, opportunity and motivation for engagement and action by decision-makers.

Members particularly appreciate:

- **The monthly newsletter** – a source of information on the latest events, opportunities and new research that Age-friendly Communities can use to inform their local work.

- **The Knowledge Hub** – a collection of key resources for evidence and learnings provided by the Centre for Ageing Better and UK Network members about what actions to take and how. It provides example baseline reports, toolkits, case studies and evaluation materials.

Members also get enhanced access to the Centre for Ageing Better's wider resources and expertise such as support around the Age-Friendly Employer Pledge and Image Library, as well as the ability to shape Ageing Better's work on annual reporting, lobbying, and the development of new resources and events.

> There is a vast amount of information available on the website and shared via peer calls, newsletters etc, I find the examples from other areas on the knowledge hub incredibly useful to access and learn from.
>
> / Buckinghamshire /

> "[The] State of Ageing report and image library really reinforce the importance of this work and supported our aims - particularly before we had completed our local research."
>
> / Barnet /

5 / Building capacity through a tailored, responsive approach

UK Network members receive highly tailored and responsive one-to-one support, alongside group learning and training to improve approaches and strengthen local action and impact.

This support includes feedback on applications, signposting examples of good practice to individual queries, ad hoc learning activities to respond to emerging issues like winter fuel payment changes, and planned learning activities such as webinars.
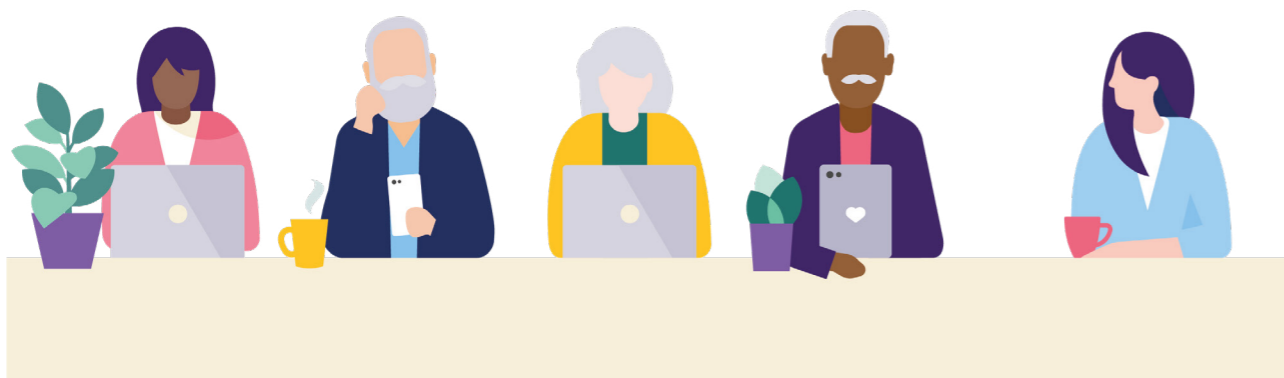
Members particularly appreciate being able to shape and influence the support to their needs.

"[The Centre for Ageing Better's support] at the very start of our programme was very valuable. It set us on the right path and provided information to inform the development of our programme. [...] The feedback provided on our application and approach also acted as external expert validation for our approach, which we were able to use locally to further support the development of our strategy and partnership."

/ Buckinghamshire /

"If there are a few of us keen to hear about something they will organise a peer call speaker on the subject. If something 'big' comes up that needs discussion they will facilitate this." (East Lindsey)

/ East Lindsey /

CASE STUDY: The value of the UK Network: reflections from Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove became an Age-friendly Community in 2013. They are active members of the UK Network and particularly appreciate the weekly peer calls.

Since becoming involved, the Brighton and Hove team have been motivated to learn from other UK Network members. They particularly value the opportunities to:

- Connect to other areas such as by receiving financial support for two colleagues to go on an inquiry visit to Leeds.

- Receive one-to-one guidance from the Centre for Ageing Better including for their Age and Dementia Friendly survey and attendance at their local conferences and meetings.

- Receive resources, training and toolkits from UK Network members, which have been adapted locally.

- Participate in Action learning, training and webinars

- Feed in to the Centre for Ageing Better projects, for example, in group discussions around their Age Without Limits Campaign and a focus group for their age friendly businesses.

"The peer calls and conference regularly inspire me to improve and refocus my work. [...] The peer calls are amazing and are so well run and informed by the groups wishes that I have changed the way I chair meetings, including our Dementia Action Alliance."

"The resources are incredible e.g. ageism. I have used them to inform training and have just sent the pension credit guide to my benefit and revenue colleagues and our older peoples council who are planning a campaign."
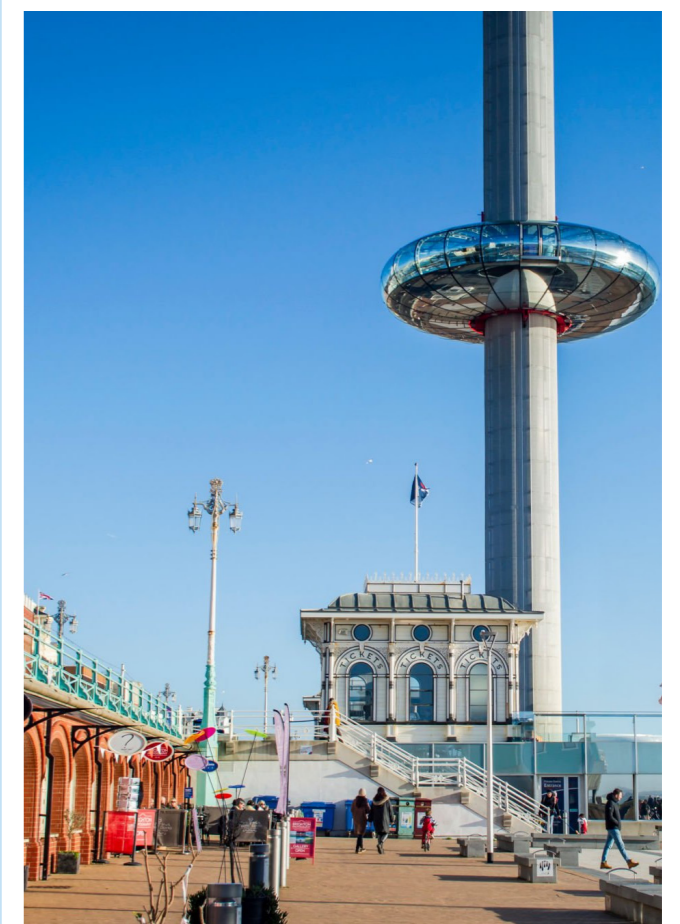
Conclusions

UK Network for Age-friendly Communities, with its 91 members and an estimated 4,277 partners and counting, has enabled important impacts for older people and the systems that support them.

Impacts (see Table 7) are deep and far reaching because of the guidance provided by the WHO's Age-friendly Communities approach and the success of the UK Network as a highly engaging space for members to share, learn and be inspired.

Table 7: Key impacts reported by the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities

Key impacts reported by the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities	
Local systems	**Older people and their communities**
Creating partnerships that drive local action and build in efficiencies	Expanding older people's access to and use of local spaces
Supporting evidence-informed decision-making	Expanding older people's access to support and services
Enabling co-production in policymaking	Increasing older people's connections to and inclusion in society
Changing policies, mindsets and language	Enhancing agency, representation and inclusion in decision-making
Embedding and enabling a preventive way of working	Improving older people's health and wellbeing

As the UK Network grows, and as existing Age-friendly Communities continue their journeys, these impacts will develop and strengthen. To support this, local Age-friendly Communities and the UK Network as a whole must engage in and focus on supporting evaluation and capturing lessons about how to effectively make change.

Recommendations for Age-friendly Communities are to continue emphasis on:

- Aligning actions and priorities with older people's preferences and available capacity and resources.

- Developing strategic connections and collaboration opportunities that unite older people, representatives from different sectors and decision-makers to drive innovation.

Recommendations for the Centre for Ageing Better are to:

- Continue providing resources to guide communities in implementing the Age-friendly Community approach, including tools and examples for the Four-Step Programme Cycle.

- Consider new ways of working, including regional calls and other approaches that can inspire, connect and support Age-friendly Communities as the network expands.

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