

**DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AGE-FRIENDLY
PROGRAMMES IN MANCHESTER, UK:
NEW APPROACHES & PROGRAMMES IN THE
CONTEXT OF COVID-19**

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Areas Covered

- **Demographic background to Greater Manchester Region**
- **Age-Friendly Manchester**
- **Current priorities**
- **Achievements/Challenges**
- **Age-friendly work and COVID-19**

Greater Manchester

- **Greater Manchester** has a population of 2.8 million
- **Consists of 10 local authorities**
- Around **900,000 people 50 plus** (30% of the population)
- By 2035 **1.1. million people 50 & over** (37% of the population)
- By 2035, **3 in 20** residents in Greater Manchester will be 75 years or older; **1 in 20** will be 85 or older.
- High levels of **poverty and unemployment** amongst those 50 and over

Greater Manchester Age-Friendly Region

- Development of Greater Manchester as an **Age-Friendly region** (2018) (first in UK)
- **Greater Manchester Ageing Hub** – brings together health and social care, voluntary sector, housing associations
- **Ambition for Ageing** – £10.2 million pound project tackling **social isolation** across GM led by Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation
- Extensive collaboration with main **universities** in the region.

Age-friendly Manchester

- **Launch of Age-Friendly Manchester in 2010 – first UK city to join WHO Global Network**
- Focus on developing **age-friendly neighbourhoods working** with community groups & local businesses
- **Age-Friendly Older People's Board:** provides a critical voice for the Age-Friendly Manchester programme; residents, aged over 50, drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, neighbourhoods and organisation.

Current Priorities for Age-Friendly work in the Greater Manchester region

- **Employment & Skills**
- **Ageing Well**
- **Digital Inclusion**
- **Challenging ageism**

Employment and skills

- **Supporting older workers into employment** - through support programmes and skills provision
- **Supporting older workers to progress within work** – through careers advice, skills and retraining opportunities
- **Engaging with employers to be age-friendly**
 - **Mid-life career planning**
 - **Training & Lifelong learning**
 - **Support to employers with advice/information**

Ageing Well

- Co-ordination of **healthy ageing activities** across GM
- **Supporting existing work** on nutrition advice, falls, mental health, & wellbeing services
- Developing emphasis on the role of **arts & culture** in promoting health and well-being
- Importance of **green spaces** (neighbourhood parks)

Digital inclusion

- **59% of people 75 plus had not used the internet in last three months or had never used the internet (GM figures -2019)**
- **Support groups unable to use/afford/lacking in confidence using the internet**
- **Importance of non-digital alternatives** for older people not online or who prefer not to access info online
- **Key role for community organisations** in encouraging use of the internet

CHALLENGING AGEISM

- **Promoting a positive and realistic narrative** around older people through running and supporting campaigns, influencing key decision makers and the promotion of good practice
- **Actively applying an ageing lens to policy discussions** and promoting older people's voices and engagement in public debate and the policy-making process
- **Tackling ageist thinking and practice:** Research shows that ageism has far reaching impacts on all aspects of people's health and takes a heavy economic toll on individuals and society. According to WHO one in two people are ageist towards older people.

Achievements of GM work

- **Greater recognition in regional planning of the implications of population ageing**
- **The development of organisations and networks at regional and local government levels**
- **Interventions supporting the empowerment of older people at a neighbourhood-level**
- **Campaigns around ageism and inter-generational solidarity**

Challenges to developing age-friendly work

- Many communities lack **structural capacity** to support ageing populations – age-friendly initiatives need to go alongside economic support for neighbourhoods
- ‘Ageing in place’ may be unattractive where the places in which people are ageing are facing **economic and social decline**
- Lack of influence of age-friendly strategies on **private developers**
- **Communities are changing** – greater inequality within older cohorts; growth of single-person households; ethnic diversity in cities

New Challenges with COVID-19

- Evidence for increasing **inequality** between poorer and wealthier neighbourhoods – in England people in poorest communities **dying at twice** the rate of COVID-19 as those in richer areas (ONS, 2020)
- **Austerity policies** following 2008 financial crisis cut many of the key services necessary for tackling the pandemic (health personnel, public health, nursing home care)
- Rise of **ageism and discrimination** against older people (García-Soler et al., 2020; Ayalon et al., 2020)
- Rise of **violence against women** by male partners (United Nations, 2020)

Developing age-friendly recovery planning

- **Develop community support**
- **Developing an age-friendly strategy for nursing and residential homes**
- **Strategic issues for age-friendly work**

Develop community support

- **Develop new models neighbourhood working** which strengthen *collective organisation of older people* at a local level
- **Supporting co-research** by older people to identify issues and concerns within their community
- **Develop community leadership** bringing together different generations
- **In urban areas, strengthen ties between ‘anchor institutions’** (e.g. universities) and low-income neighbourhoods

Developing an age-friendly strategy for nursing & residential homes

- **30 – 40% of deaths have occurred in residential and nursing homes in many European countries**
 - Need to **incorporate care homes** into age-friendly planning and activities
 - Need to develop **new models of residential care** (especially for those diagnosed with dementia)
 - Protection of **human rights** of residents of care homes (Amnesty International, 2020)

COVID-19 & Strategic Issues for Age-Friendly movement

- Need an age-friendly strategy which responds to the likely medium-term **continuation of social distancing**
- Age-friendly movements will need to **collaborate with other organisations** working on 'healthy cities', 'smart cities', and climate change
- **New inequalities** may emerge as Covid-19 continues (e.g. *digital exclusion*)
- Importance of **intergenerational** work

Questions raised by the age-friendly debate

- Can the age-friendly movement be part of the drive to address issues of inequalities in social **justice and rights** affecting urban life?
- Post-COVID: can older people play a bigger role in the **future planning of cities and regions** and the communities within them?
- Can the age-friendly movement play a leadership role in challenging the impact of **ageism**, in bringing different generations together?
- Can the age-friendly movement contribute to the debate about what kind of post-COVID society we want to **re-build** or **'recover'**?

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