

Becoming an Age-friendly Community

What is an Age-friendly community?

Age-friendly communities is a concept developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2006. In an [Age-friendly Community](#), services, local groups, businesses and residents all work together to identify and make the changes in both the physical environment (e.g. transport, housing, outdoors spaces) and social environment (e.g. volunteering, leisure, employment, and services) that are relevant to their own local context and enable people to lead healthy and active later lives.

What is the Network of Age-friendly Communities?

The [WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities \(GNAFCC\)](#) has over 700 members worldwide. Established in 2012, the [UK Network of Age-friendly Communities](#) is affiliated to the WHO Global Network and has members across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Founding members include the cities of Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Leeds, Belfast and Glasgow.

The Centre for Ageing Better works with the network to share learning about what kinds of approaches work, both in the UK and internationally. We share examples and provide guidance, connect places together and offer support to member communities in their efforts to become more age-friendly.

How does my community become Age-friendly?

To become officially recognised as Age-friendly, with the [WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities \(GNAFCC\)](#), the leadership in your town, city or county must make a written commitment to actively work towards becoming a great place to grow old in, for **all** of its residents. This is done with the support and engagement of older people and relevant stakeholders.

How much does being age-friendly cost?

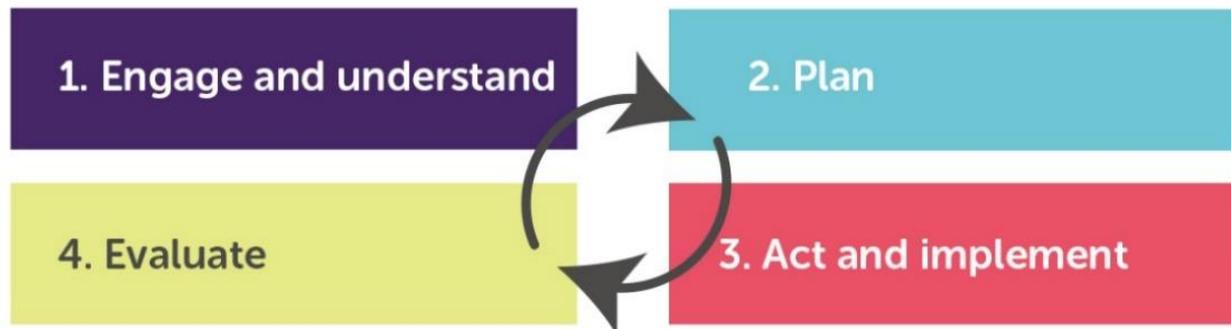
Membership is free.

There is no definitive set of costs associated with implementing your action plan to become age friendly and the scale and pace of improvements are determined by what is needed in your place. Experience has shown that resource is most required to coordinate the collaboration, as partnership working and involvement of older people, underpins the approach. Often no new money is needed for projects; age-friendly can be about using existing resources better.

How long does it take?

Becoming age-friendly is an ongoing process, with most places starting with an initial 5-year commitment, incorporating up to 2 years to deliver a baseline assessment and action plan. From there, progress is assessed, and the work continues.

Once signed up, communities carry out the following programme cycle:



Step 1: Engage and understand	The first step on the age-friendly journey is to engage with older people and stakeholders, creating a baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of your place. The eight domains of age-friendly provide a framework for understanding needs and preferences as well as barriers, local priorities, and opportunities for healthy, active ageing.
Step 2: Plan	This stage is where all stakeholders develop a shared vision, to determine the priorities for action and to plan and resource how your community will achieve its age-friendly outcomes.
Step 3: Act and Implement	Implementing an age-friendly action plan is at the heart of creating an age-friendly community. Even small steps can go a long way.
Step 4: Evaluate	Monitoring and evaluating progress of your age-friendly journey will help to identify successes and challenges and serve as the basis for defining priorities for future improvements.

What impact will being age-friendly have?

Age-friendly is built on the evidence of what supports healthy and active ageing in a place, allowing more people to live independent lives and contribute to their communities for longer. In addition, by committing to becoming age-friendly:

- Older residents are engaged in shaping the place that they live
- The potential for greater equity within the current older population is better understood
- Multi-agency and multi-level collaboration is strengthened, connecting the social and built environment across departments and reducing siloed working

What are the eight domains of age-friendly communities?

The eight domains of age-friendly are all the aspects of community life that need to be considered when making your plans.



Outdoor spaces and buildings	The outside environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of people in later life.
Transportation	Transportation, including accessible and affordable public transport, is a key issue for people in later life.
Housing	Housing and support that allows people in later life to age comfortably and safely within the community to which they belong are universally valued.
Social participation	Social participation is strongly connected to good health and wellbeing throughout life. Enabling accessibility, particularly for those with mobility issues, is also key.
Respect and social inclusion	Older people from all backgrounds are valued and respected.
Civic participation and employment	An age-friendly community provides options for people in later life to continue to contribute to their communities.
Communication and information	Staying connected with events and people and getting timely, practical information to manage life and meet personal needs is vital for active ageing.
Community support and health services	Community support is strongly connected to good health and wellbeing throughout life, alongside accessible and affordable health care services.

What are the benefits of joining the UK Network?

- **Being part of a growing movement** of communities, giving you access to contacts, ideas and expertise from the UK and across the globe
- The opportunity to **share your own learning** about what works to create the conditions for ageing better with a UK and international audience
- Access to support to build the **evidence of your impact and build the case for an age-friendly approach**
- **Practical support** to become more age-friendly, including examples of **good practice** on how to develop your age-friendly initiative
- Peer-to-peer insight to tackle emerging challenges across both the ‘how to’ and the ‘what’ of age-friendly, e.g. involving older residents, implementing age-friendly transport, or monitoring progress / measuring change
- **Guidance and support** to help you become a member of the WHO’s Global Network
- **Member-only** events, webinars and training, including access to travel bursaries for place-to-place learning exchanges with other age-friendly communities.

How can my community join the UK Network?

To join the UK Network, you need to be ready and able to demonstrate your commitment to and understanding of age-friendly. You will have some commitment from one or more stakeholders/sectors, and either have or be looking to gain, political commitment and broader stakeholder involvement.

How can I find out more?

To find out more about becoming an age-friendly community, either:

Go to: <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/afc>

Email: AFC.Network@ageing-better.org.uk

Phone: 020 3829 0113