

## **Age Friendly Communities, March 2025**

### Report of the Director of Public Health

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Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

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#### **1) Recommendation**

We recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board approve the recommendation for the adoption of Devon County Council as an age-friendly community, as recommended in the [Director of Public Health's Annual Public Health Report 2023-24](#).

#### **2) Background**

##### **Ageing well in the community**

Where people live determines healthy ageing, through barriers or incentives that affect opportunities, decisions and behaviour, as well as the experience of older age. Age-friendly environments, whether housing, transport, outdoor spaces, health and social care and other aspects of the broader community, enable people to age well.

If as a community we aspire for older people to maintain their independence and quality and enjoyment of life, we need to ensure the environment, and particularly the built environment, is adapted and optimised for them.

Environments comprise all the factors in the extrinsic world that form the context of an individual's life. These include the home, communities and broader society. Factors within these environments include the built environment, people and their relationships, attitudes and values, health and social policies, the systems that support them, and the services they provide. Age-friendly environments are those that foster ageing well by building and maintaining health and wellbeing throughout the life-course.

These environments give individuals the ability to age well where they want to, to be protected, to continue to develop personally and professionally, to be included, and to participate and contribute to their communities while retaining their autonomy, dignity, health and wellbeing.

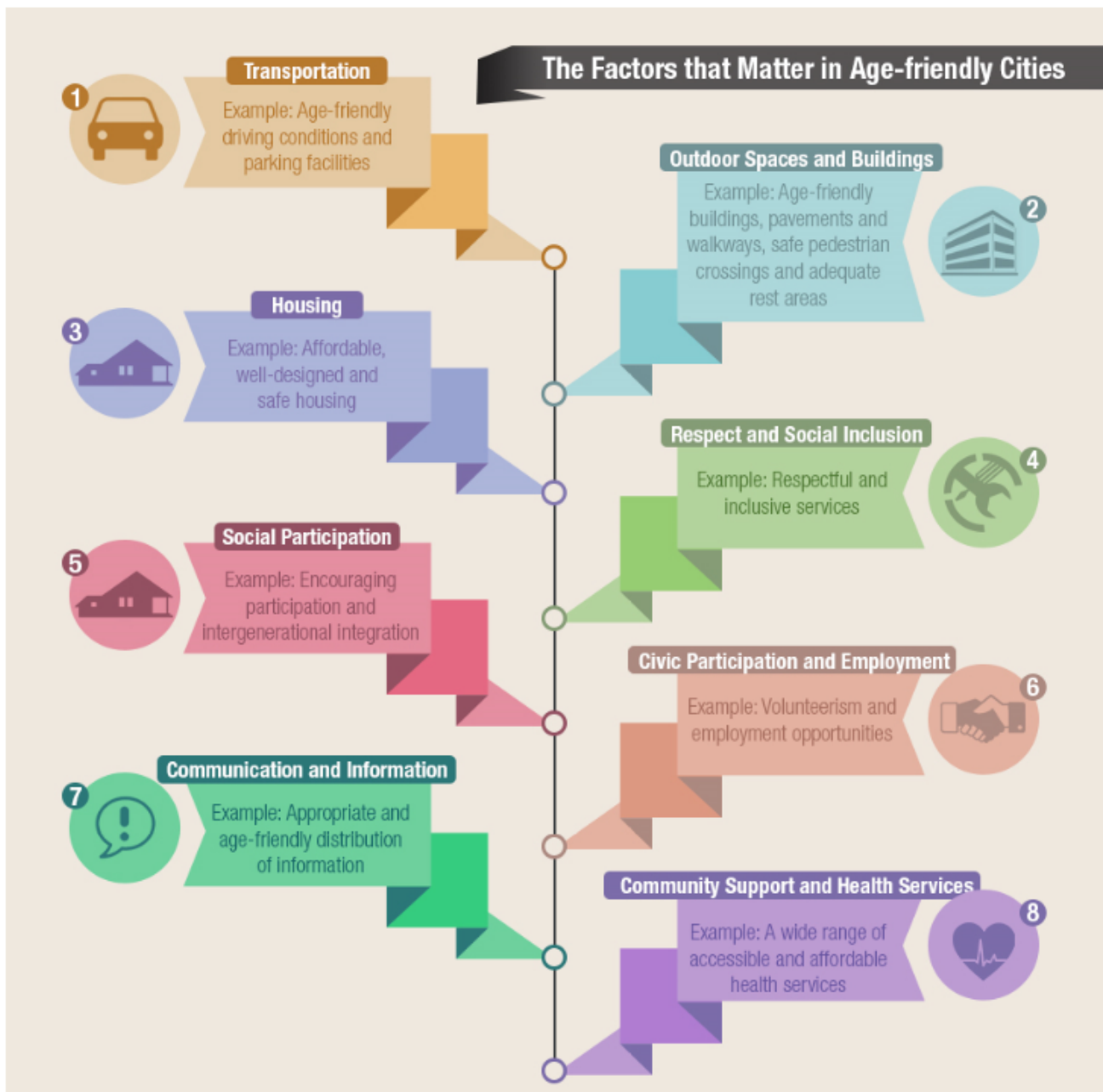
## WHO age-friendly communities

The World Health Organization defines an age-friendly community as an age-friendly environment that fosters healthy and active ageing.



Taken from the [World Health Organization's National programmes for age-friendly cities and communities guide](#).

The World Health Organisation's Age-friendly Communities framework has developed an eight-domain approach to the guide the development of age-friendly communities. The eight domains are the areas of the built and social environment which, when acted upon, can help to address barriers to ageing well.



Taken from the [World Health Organization's national programmes for age-friendly cities and communities guide](#).

Overall, age-friendly communities have demonstrated evidence that they are better able to respond to changing contexts and continue to meet the needs of older people, their families and communities. In humanitarian crises and emergencies, when older people are commonly marginalised, such communities have demonstrated readiness, resilience and responsiveness to the challenge.

Much of the investment in local policy or infrastructure to create age-friendly communities will also have direct benefits for other sections of the population. For example, improved access to transport, public buildings and spaces and assistive information and

communication technologies can facilitate the inclusion and participation of all people, such as those with disabilities and parents of young children.

### **The WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities**

The WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (AFCC) was established in 2010 to connect cities, communities and organisations worldwide with the common vision of making their community a great place to grow old in. The mission of the network is to stimulate and enable cities and communities around the world to become increasingly age friendly. The network seeks to achieve this through inspiring change by showing what can be done and how it can be done; facilitating the exchange of information, knowledge and experience; and supporting cities and communities to find appropriate innovative and evidence-based solutions.

Membership to the network is not an accreditation for age-friendliness. Rather, it reflects commitment to listen to the needs of an ageing population, to assess and monitor age-friendliness and work collaboratively with older people and across sectors to create age-friendly physical and social environments. Membership is also a commitment to share experience, achievements and lessons learnt with other communities.

### **The UK Centre for Ageing Better**

The Centre for Ageing Better is a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the Government's What Works Network. Their vision is for a society in which everyone can live a good later life. They hope to achieve this through tackling ageism and taking action to reduce the inequalities people experience as they grow older. They seek to change behaviours, attitudes, policy and practice by campaigning and influencing; developing new ideas for policy and practice and testing them out; and identifying effective practice and innovation and supporting widespread uptake.

The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities is a network of over 75 places across the country committed to making their community a better place to age in. The Centre for Ageing Better works with the network to provide guidance, connect places and offer support to member communities as they work towards making their services and infrastructure more age friendly.

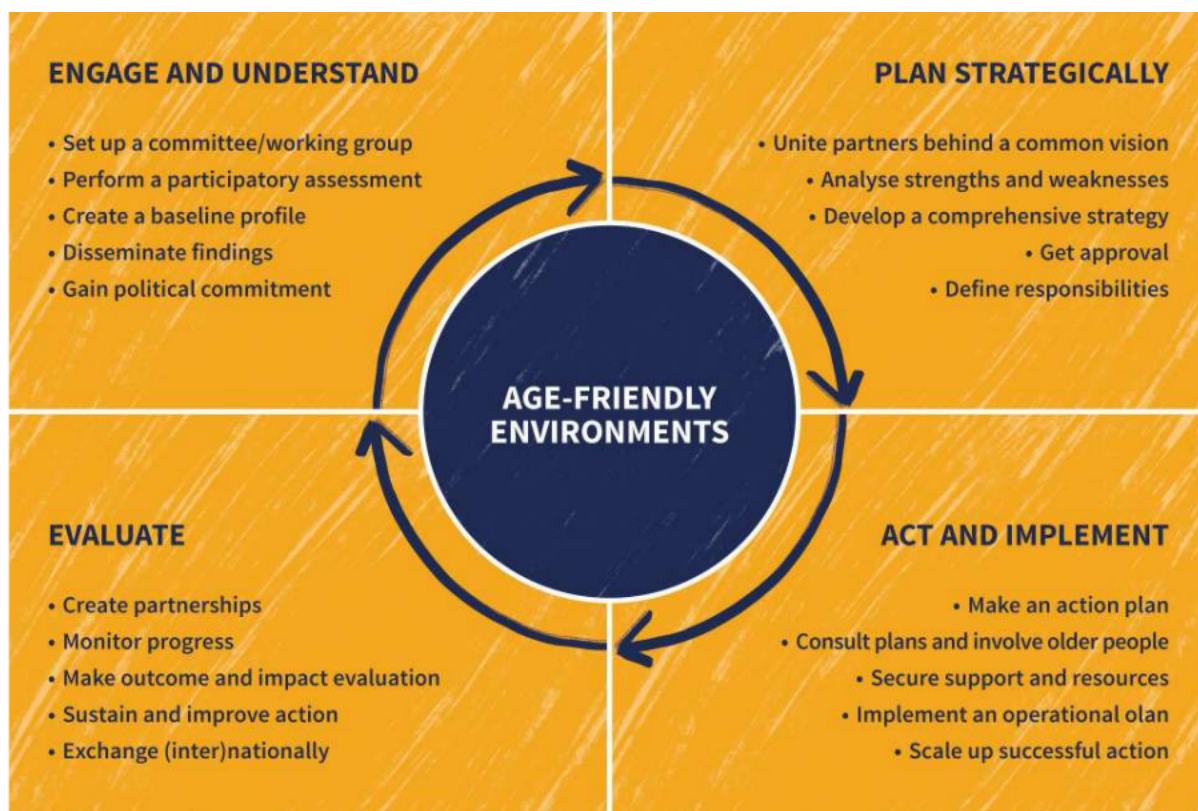
Communities interested in joining the UK Network can do so by completing their registration form to show the progress they have made in the first steps in embedding the age-friendly communities approach (i.e. gaining political commitment, looking at their data, considering how they will embed the voice of older people).

### 3) Proposal

The [Director of Public Health's Annual Public Health Report 2023-24](#) sets out the challenges faced for Devon, with its older population profile and faster population growth than the national average. This population change, coupled with the fact that people are spending more years in ill-health, poses challenges in Devon in relation to the health, wellbeing and quality of life of the citizens of Devon. The report also emphasises the importance and benefits to all of tackling this through early proactive intervention.

We recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board approve the recommendation for the adoption of Devon as an age-friendly community, and thereby, in the first instance, progressing an application for membership to the UK Centre for Ageing Better and WHO AFCC.

To make progress towards these memberships, a three-year strategy would then be developed based upon the WHO AFCC four step programme cycle. Whilst the actions are broadly chronological, it should be considered a fluid process with some actions occurring simultaneously and some actions being iterative.



Taken from the [World Health Organization's National programmes for age-friendly cities and communities guide](#).

The development of a three to five year age-friendly cities and communities strategy is required for an application to become a member of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, alongside a letter of support from the local MP or

counsellors, which we seek to demonstrate through commitment from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

We acknowledge there is much work already happening across Devon to support healthy ageing, and we seek to build on this working collaboratively alongside partners, including understanding how we develop a model of working that compliments and aligns with already established partnerships.

#### 4) Options

- a) Preferred: Adoption of Devon as an age-friendly community through membership of the UK Centre for Ageing Better and the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Communities. This would involve creation of a three-year strategy outlining how Devon would seek to achieve this ambition.
- b) Alternative: Proactive work to develop health ageing work with partners, without the benefits of membership to the national and international collaborations.

### 1 Consultations

Because older people know best what they need, they are at the centre of any effort to create a more age-friendly community. We would progress strategy development with local collaboration across key partner organisations, including NHS, VCSE, employers and individuals.

Across Devon, Plymouth joined the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities in December 2023. Torbay became a member of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities and the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities in 2021. We would collaborate with our local age-friendly community neighbours, in addition to our engagement across the national and international networks to share learning.

### 2 Strategic Plan

Adoption of Devon as an age-friendly community aligns with the vision and priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (<https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan/>).

- **Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts.** The proposed work will deliver a strategy to promote healthy ageing across Devon. This may include initiatives such as creating greater opportunities for physical activity, supporting carers, and other activities to improve the number of healthy life years for the population of Devon.
- **Tackle poverty and inequality.** Addressing inequalities will be a core focus for the development of an age-friendly strategy for Devon. Consideration will be given to the development of initiatives that promote resilience and independence and promote community cohesion. All initiatives will ensure the most vulnerable are supported and do not exacerbate existing inequalities.



- **Help communities be safe, connected and resilient.** The proposed work will deliver a strategy to promote healthy ageing across Devon through meaningful engagement with older people and working with communities to tackle this shared challenge and opportunity, addressing upstream community level drivers of healthy ageing.
- **Support sustainable economic recovery.** This work has the opportunity to support sustainable economic recovery, through the recognition and maximisation of the older workforce, for example through initiatives such as the age-friendly employer pledge.

## 5) Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations and no funding being requested at present.

## 6) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations.

## 7) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

The environmental impact will be considered throughout the strategy development, including climate change, sustainability and socio-economic impacts.

## 8) Equality Considerations

Equality, diversity and inclusion will be a core priority in the development of an age-friendly Devon strategy.

## 9) Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified but will be considered throughout the strategy development process.

## 10) Summary

We recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board supports the adoption of Devon County Council as an age-friendly community. Approval of this recommendation through the Health and Wellbeing Board would support our application to the UK Centre for Ageing Better and WHO age-friendly communities, of which the next steps involve the development of a strategy to support healthy ageing for the population of Devon.

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