



# Make Your Neighbourhood Age-friendly

**Both older people and the environments in which they live are diverse, dynamic and changing. In interaction with each other they hold incredible potential for enabling or constraining *Healthy Ageing***

-World Health Organisation

At **Bristol Ageing Better**, we decided to make this publication after learning that small changes make a huge difference to quality of life for older people. By producing an accessible toolkit such as this, we hope to inspire people to take an active role in community life and equip them with the tools and ideas needed to create change in their neighbourhood.

**Produced by Bristol Ageing Better**

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## Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce this toolkit, which is a great starting point for anyone who wants to make their local area a better place for people to grow older. As Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Communities, I know how vital it is that citizens feel able to influence decisions made about their local area, and have the tools they need to make changes themselves.

I've lived here all my life, and to say that I love Bristol would be an understatement. The national polls and news articles that name Bristol as the happiest, kindest, most forward-thinking and trendiest city to live are all testament to its incredible spirit, but it is still in many ways a city of contradictions. Communities can be starkly divided by culture, status or age, and this is something that I am passionate about addressing, by lifting up the voices of people who are disenfranchised. Becoming an age-friendly city provides us with a lens we can use to identify where inequality prevails, and allows us to work with, not for, older people in order to address the aspects of community life that are preventing them from living full, purposeful lives. Age-friendliness is a far-reaching concept; a city that is designed to accommodate older people is also better for other

groups including children, people with impairments, and carers.

People aged over 50 represent over a quarter of Bristol's population, with this percentage steadily rising. This gives us a great opportunity to harness the power of people's lived experience of the city's history to shape our future. It's very well-evidenced that older people provide a significant contribution to community life through volunteering, supporting community events and looking out for others, and this is something to be celebrated. I also hope that this guide finds its way into the hands of people of all ages; being an age-friendly champion isn't just for older people, and within these pages you'll find ideas for how you can make a difference no matter your ability or lifestyle. I'm confident that we can build a city that works for all, thanks to the work being delivered by Bristol's public, private and voluntary sector to increase age-friendliness, combined with the actions of residents in neighbourhoods across the city.

**Asher Craig**

Deputy Mayor

Cabinet Member for Communities

Councillor, St George West



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# Introduction

## What is Bristol Ageing Better?

Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership of individuals and organisations working together to increase the wellbeing of older people in Bristol. Since 2015, we have commissioned and gathered evidence from a huge variety of projects across the city that support people to build resilience to improve their experience of later life.

BAB has also been a key voice in the growing conversation around Bristol's age-friendliness, and together with Bristol City Council and Age UK Bristol submitted a successful application to join the World Health Organisation's Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This is not just another badge of honour for the city, nor is it something that the Council, charities and businesses will focus on for a temporary period, but instead recognises that Bristol is committed to making long-term improvements to aspects of city including housing, public spaces, transport, health services

and social opportunities that will benefit people in later life. These goals are laid out in the One City Plan, which is a collaborative document produced by the City Office that gives an overview of steps that will be taken by the Council and other committed organisations over the next 30 years. BAB has also provided funding to charities and businesses to make their work more accessible to older people, as well as talking to a diverse range of older people to find out what would make Bristol a better place for them to live. What has become clear to us through working in different neighbourhoods is how vital the contributions of community members are; when people take care of the environment and the people in it, an area becomes safer and more inclusive, with an increase in wellbeing and cultural engagement and a decrease in antisocial behaviour.

## About this toolkit

The importance of encouraging people to remain involved in community life – whether they label this volunteering, community activism, or simply being a good neighbour – cannot be understated. Taking some time to make a change to your community is incredibly rewarding work, and the case studies on pages 23-37 demonstrate just how worthwhile it is.

The following pages include some detailed explanations of the World Health Organisation's definition and identified aspects of age-friendliness. Don't be concerned if not all of it seems relevant to your neighbourhood or community; what is important to understand is that there are many overlapping factors that can make a place easier for older people to live full and meaningful lives. You may notice one particular domain that needs improvement in your area, should point you in the direction of initiatives you could start or join in with to make improvements in that area. If

you cannot identify local groups already in existence that you could join in order to start improving age friendliness, why not advertise through community noticeboards, local magazines or social media to see if anyone would like to join you?

Every member of a community has something unique to offer; age, mobility and ability should not be barriers to making your community more age-friendly. Even if you're not sure what you have to offer, by starting to investigate the kinds of changes you and others would like to see, you'll soon discover how you can use your voice or skills to create change. This work also isn't just carried out by and for older people! Many young people are making incredible contributions to benefit people from older generations and, as you will see on the following pages, age-friendliness creates a more inclusive environment for everyone.



# Age-friendly Neighbourhoods

# The Age-Friendly Model

The notion of age-friendly communities was introduced by the World Health Organisation in 2007, with its guide *Global Age-Friendly Cities – A Guide*. The creation of the guide was borne out of the fact that greater life expectancies and larger cities are two key trends shaping the 21st century. The WHO recognised that this is not just a challenge to be faced by cities, but a positive opportunity for diverse communities to ‘tap the potential that older people represent for humanity’. The report was thoroughly researched, through focus groups with older people as well caregivers and service providers, and identified core features of cities where people were able to thrive in later life. Since then, the concept has been adopted worldwide, leading to the development of the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, of which Bristol is a member.

An age-friendly community is defined as somewhere where people can live independently and continue to do what is important to them. This means that people

can retain a strong sense of purpose beyond retirement, and have close connections to other people even without having colleagues or living near family members. Also important to age-friendliness is the concept of co-production, which means that anything done to support people is done with them, rather than for them. It’s about recognising that older people are ‘experts through experience’ and should be consulted about decisions which affect them, rather than people with political or economic power implementing them independently. Forums, action groups and local campaigns are important tools in the pursuit of age-friendliness.

An age-friendly community is also one that is child-friendly, disability-friendly, and that mitigates social and economic inequalities to ensure everyone has access to the services and amenities conducive to a good quality of life. Diversity is celebrated, and people are free to express themselves personally and culturally without fear of discrimination or alienation.

The WHO identified eight aspects of urban living that particularly affected older people, and used these as a framework to support cities to become more age-friendly. These are categorised as 8 ‘domains’:



These distinctions were informed by conversations with older people and those who care for them. In the following pages, we outline the reason why each of these factors is important and give examples of how age-friendliness can be improved within each domain. It is important to note that in the context of this guide, the definition of a ‘community’ is not restricted to a particular geographic location, but can also be a group with shared characteristics or interests.

Transport has been raised as a huge priority for many of the older people we have spoken to. Being able to move about the city determines people's ability to attend **appointments**, run errands and take part in cultural and social activities. Access to a wide range of transport options is important, especially for people who do not drive or have impairments or reduced mobility. Transport needs to be reliable, affordable and simple to use, and citizens should easily be able to access **information** about the best mode of transport for any given journey.

Recent changes, such as the 20mph speed limit in residential areas, and more cycling routes and racks, have made cycling a safer and more enjoyable mode of transport. The Metrobus service has also increased the number of buses running, reducing congestion and giving bus pass users more options. However, air pollution, city centre congestion, and the reliability of public and community transport options are areas that still require significant improvement.

#### Ways in which you can improve transport access in your area:

- Organise a car-sharing club, to save fuel and reduce congestion
- Join your local bus users group, or speak to neighbours about setting one up
- Join the Bristol Walking Alliance, which campaigns for better pedestrian access across the city (see the contacts section on P45).
- Contact Bristol Older People's Forum (see contacts section on P45) about joining their Transport Action Group meetings
- If you would like to start or return to cycling, Life Cycle UK run a 'cycling buddy' scheme which helps you build up your confidence. If you already cycle, you could volunteer to be a buddy (includes full training), or encourage neighbours to give it a go.
- If you notice that bus drivers are being impatient with older people, ask them to ensure they wait until all passengers have sat down before moving off.
- First Bus have produced some 'safe journey cards' that people with impairments or who are not confident in navigating the city can use to tell drivers that they require extra assistance for their journey, such as more time to reach their seat, to be told once they've arrived at their stop, or communication needs such as lip reading. You can download them on their website or contact them for some printed versions. These can be very useful for people who face barriers to travelling by bus, so it's good to ensure there are some available at libraries and community centres for people to pick up.



An area that feels safe and pleasant for pedestrians and road users is one where people can stay **connected** to their community and easily access local services and businesses. It also encourages more active lifestyles, and facilitates the **wellbeing** benefits of connection with nature.

#### Indicators of age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings include:

- Well-maintained pavements
- Clear signage
- Safe crossings
- Public toilets, or facilities offered by businesses
- Appropriate street lighting
- Places to stop and rest, such as benches or other items of 'urban furniture'
- No littering or dog fouling
- Clear streets, without 'pavement clutter' such as bins, parked cars, or low-hanging branches, and plenty of dropped kerbs. Pavements should ideally be wide enough for two people or one wheelchair.
- Disabled access, hearing loops and appropriate seating at local businesses and public buildings
- Clear and easy-to-read road name signs
- Low levels of air pollution and noise from people and traffic





#### **Ways in which you can improve outdoor spaces & buildings nearby:**

- Carry out a neighbourhood survey using the checklist on pages 40-44. For a more detailed assessment of outdoor spaces, you can also use Swansea University's Older People's External Residential Assessment Tool (see the resources section on pages 39-48).
- Join your local Neighbourhood Watch scheme, or speak to neighbours about setting one up
- Organise a litter-pick, or see if there is a volunteers' group at your local park or nature reserve that may wish to help you organise one. If you're a keen exerciser, you may want to try 'plogging', where you collect litter while out for a jog!
- Join Bristol Clean Street Forum, run by Bristol Waste and the Council, which meets four times per year at City Hall to discuss ideas for how to make Bristol clean and tidy.
- Consider ways in which you could inspire neighbours to make their front gardens more colourful. A few plants can make a huge difference to the feel of a residential street, and is appreciated by local wildlife as well as residents! Bedminster has been running a volunteer-run 'front gardens awards' for 17 years, and the certificates they give out are a great incentive for people to spend a few hours sprucing up the front of their house.
- Encourage local businesses, such as cafés, retailers and arts spaces to become more age-friendly. Bristol Ageing Better has an age-friendly guide for businesses which can help them identify areas for improvement.

The ability for older people to remain living independently as long as they choose, and to feel safe and comfortable in their homes, is vital to health and wellbeing. Older people should be able to find suitable and affordable housing, have adaptations made to their home as they age or find suitable housing with additional care or support on-site.

#### **A neighbourhood that provides suitable housing for older people includes:**

- Affordable and accessible housing options
- Well-maintained rented and public housing
- Access to housing adaptations, with subsidies for those on low income
- Integration of older people's housing, so that retirement villages and care homes are not 'ghettoised'
- Housing that is not overcrowded

#### **Changes that can improve housing for older people in your area:**

- Let your neighbours know about free home safety visits available from the fire service (call 01179 262061, or text 'visit' to 07507 319694)
- See if any older neighbours would like help with household tasks, such as changing lightbulbs, hanging curtains, or gardening. Good Gym are a local running group that jog over to older people's homes to complete 'missions' such as these.
- Offer to clear leaves and snow from less-able neighbours' paths or driveways
- Organise a neighbourhood spring clean, where you share the cost of hiring a skip or truck and help each other to move heavy or bulky objects
- Connect with We Care Home Improvements to let older residents know what support is available to help them to continue to live independently in their own homes
- Volunteer with the Red Cross's First Call: Support at Home Service, which provides practical and emotional support at home to older people who have recently returned from hospital or experienced a significant life event.
- See if there is a neighbourhood planning forum in your area already, and if not consider setting one up. These forums create plans and policies that set out how local organisations and residents would like to see their area developed. These policies are used by the Council's planning and transport officers to inform their response to planning applications. See the resources section on P48.





Health and support services are vital to independence and active ageing. There is a significant disparity in health outcomes in the UK, with a person's postcode being the clearest predictor of their life expectancy. This is due to many complex factors, including the effect of poverty on mental and physical health and unequal access to **medical care, nutrition** and **leisure facilities**. Austerity has led to a greater pressure on health services, and this is exacerbated by the fact that loneliness has also been identified as a key cause of non-medical visits to GP surgeries and hospitals.

It is significant that the WHO listed this domain last in their list, as it is largely dependent on the other seven. For example, outdoor spaces and buildings affect whether GP surgeries and other secondary care services are conveniently located for older people, and transport will affect their access to hospitals. Housing also includes nursing homes, and respect is a hugely important factor in how older people experience their interactions with Doctors and health care providers.

As mentioned on page ten, no service that is provided to older people can truly be age-friendly unless it embodies co-production, and this is especially true of health services: health support plans, especially emergency planning, must take into account older people's needs and capacities, rather than dictating to them or failing to fully explain a person's range of options. If an older person feels that their voice is not being heard by their medical practitioner or care provider, the Council can provide an advocate to help with this, and The Care Forum also provides a free and independent service. See the resources section on pages 39-48.

#### **Ways in which you can support older neighbours' access to community support and health services include:**

- Join the Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme, which works with GP surgeries to provide transport for frail or disabled patients and also connect them to activities and services in their neighbourhood
- Set up a 'casserole club', where people take it in turns to batch cook meals and deliver them to neighbours
- Set up a walking group, to encourage others to increase physical activity and connect with nature
- Use the resources on the Alzheimer's Society website to work towards becoming a dementia-friendly community (see the resources section on P48).



Even if a neighbourhood has a very accessible infrastructure and lots going on, older people can still face significant **barriers** to inclusion in community life if they feel discriminated against due to their age. Disrespectful behaviour towards older people has been identified as an increasing problem by the World Health Organisation, with impatience, negative stereotyping and a lack of consideration to older people's needs all affecting older people's perceived level of respect. In many cultures, older people, or **elders**, have elevated status.

In the UK, where youth is highly valued, the false perception that older people are less intelligent or generous than others, or that they are a burden on public resources, can stop them from realising or being recognised for their full potential. Ironically, this narrative could not be further from the truth: in their 2011 report Gold Age Pensioners: Valuing the Socio-Economic Contribution of Older People in the UK, the Royal Voluntary Service found that older people are the 'social glue' of most communities, contributing more than any other group in society. RVS broke this down into seven key examples, including being '**pillars of the community**'; caring for friends and family; supporting efforts to improve community safety such as neighbourhood watch schemes; lending skills and experience to local projects such as conservation work or repair cafés; and making local amenities such as libraries, shops and post offices viable so that everyone in the community can benefit from them. With people living longer, healthier lives, they will be 'active citizens' for longer, which presents a huge opportunity to harness that social glue and ensure older people are able to contribute to all aspects of community life.

#### **Steps you can take to improve the respect and consideration shown to older people in your neighbourhood include:**

- Challenging rude or discriminatory behaviour when you hear or see it
- Encouraging the organisers of local events – particularly those held outside such as street parties – to include older people in the organising committee and avoid focusing events solely on children or families
- If you have connections to local schools, you could see whether they may wish to link up with older people or care home residents for activities or for a pen pal scheme
- Establish a garden- or allotment-share scheme which can be enjoyed by people of all ages and gives the opportunity for older people to share their knowledge and skills with younger people

An Age-friendly City provides opportunities for older people to contribute to their communities through different channels including informal and formal **volunteering**, charities, and through paid employment, if they so choose. Older people should also have the chance to be politically engaged and to access educational opportunities.

In the 2017 Bristol Quality of Life survey, 76% of respondents aged 50 and over volunteered or helped out in their community at least three times per year, however this often depends on personal circumstances, including confidence, health problems, and awareness of opportunities. The research also found that people who had good relationships with neighbours and their community felt most comfortable contributing to their communities. A number of interviewees noted that they increased their involvement when they were connected to a group such as a place of worship, social club or activity.

#### **Steps you can take to enable older people in your neighbourhood to pursue their vocation include:**

- Get involved with your local University of the Third Age, and make suggestions for groups in your area if there aren't many
- Set up a men's shed or repair café, which enables older people with practical skills to use them to benefit other local people
- Speak to neighbours about arranging a skills-sharing group – people can teach each other skills such as baking, gardening, or DIY, or exchange tasks with each other, for example swapping a clothing repair for some tree pruning
- Find out whether older people in your area would like to pass knowledge or skills gleaned in their professional lives to others. Community hubs often host activities run by older volunteers such as creative writing workshops, cookery classes, sewing, knitting or flower arranging.
- If there is a social or environmental issue you are passionate about, why not find others who want to raise awareness with you? Groups such as Grandparents for a Safe Earth, Bristol's Amnesty International Group, Bristol Physical Access Chain and many others are always keen to welcome new members.
- If you are an employer, it is important to ensure that older employees are offered flexible working options, that retirement is not seen as mandatory, and that where possible you offer training in post-retirement opportunities

The way information is communicated to citizens is ever-changing, and despite increasing channels of communication, many older people feel that information relevant to them is difficult to find and experience 'fear of missing out'. At Bristol Ageing Better's communication focus groups, many people felt that there was probably more going on in Bristol than they knew about, but didn't have **access to information** they needed to get involved. Bristol Older People's Forum's 2018 survey found that 54% of respondents aged over 55 had access to the internet, lowering to 30% of those aged over 85. Many older people who have online access do not regularly use it. This can cause isolation due to the growing amount of information only shared online.

#### **Features of accessible and inclusive communication and information include:**

- Printed information and signage designed with people with visual impairments, dyslexia and dementia in mind
- Information about events and activities written in inclusive language, cautious of the fact that phrases such as 'family friendly' and imagery that only shows younger people, or stereotypical images of older people, can seem exclusionary
- Opportunities for older people who would like to get online to do so, such as computer cafés and courses at local libraries
- Noticeboards on high streets and in local shops and community centres
- Free local listings guides delivered to people's homes

#### **Ways in which you could improve the access older people have to local information include:**

- Set up or contribute to community noticeboards
- Set up or volunteer at computer cafés or IT support sessions
- Create a local listings guide. With sponsorship from local businesses, this can be quite simple, and is a great way to counter the digital exclusion faced by people who are not and don't wish to be online
- If there are many people in your community who do not speak or read English, you could volunteer to translate relevant local information into languages commonly spoken in your area.
- Let people know about local radio shows run by and for older people, such as The Babbers Show on Ujima FM on Monday from 12:00 and Silver Sound on BCFM on Thursdays and Fridays from 10:00



Being able to regularly **participate** in social activities, and feel connected to a community, is a huge contributing factor to positive ageing. Loneliness has been very much in the media spotlight recently, and with good reason: **The Campaign to End Loneliness's** research suggests that loneliness can be as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Creating communities that provide plenty of opportunities for people to meet and enjoy activities **together** is key to improving health.

As you will see in the case studies section, social activities are most beneficial and sustainable when they are started by, or in partnership with, the people they aim to reach.

### Steps you could take to increase social opportunities in your community include:

- Organise a street party, tea party, or community picnic and ensure you put up posters in obvious locations so as many people as possible attend. If you would like some experienced help with this, you can contact the charity Playing Out ([hello@playingout.net](mailto:hello@playingout.net)).
- If you already attend classes at a leisure centre, see whether other members may like to go for a coffee afterwards
- If there isn't already one in your area, start up an arts trail, gardens trail or 'window wanderland' event, and encourage as many people as possible to get involved – these kinds of events shouldn't just be for those with artistic or horticultural expertise!
- Social media, particularly [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), can be a great tool for connecting people from different areas or with shared experiences. You could set up a friendship group and organise regular informal meetups for people who would like to make new friends.
- If you are part of a church or other faith community, these spaces and communities can be a great place to start an activity for people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Reminiscence sessions – whether aimed at people with dementia or people of all ages who would like to share stories – can be a great way to foster connections between people.





# Martin Grant

Manor Woods Valley Group

When I moved to Bedminster Down, I was so glad to have the stunning Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve on my doorstep. I know that green spaces are valuable resources that need to be looked after by those who benefit from them, and so I volunteered to join the local conservation group. Our work has gone from strength to strength over the years, and we're always planning new ways to make improvements, such as uncovering a hidden orchard, building new paths, planting wildflowers and coppicing. An incredible thing about working on projects in green spaces is what's good for wildlife is also good for residents – our beautiful wildflower meadow has attracted far more pollinators to the area, and creating dead hedges in the woodland is a really satisfying and straightforward task for volunteers to get involved in, which creates a shelter for birds and mammals and ideal habitat for insects. We have also partnered with Forest of Avon Trust, who run wellbeing courses here for people who are recovering from mental health issues.

I'm now the chair of the recently-renamed Manor Woods Valley Group – we're a constituted voluntary organisation with a treasurer, secretary, ecological adviser, planning advisor and website manager. This allows us to do more fundraising and have more of an influence on local planning decisions. We advertise through the local paper, in the community noticeboard at the local Coop and the community arts centre,

where we hold open meetings. I don't believe this is crucial for new groups, though – you can start really small, by just creating a poster suggesting a short 'work party' for residents, and things will grow organically.

I was by no means an expert in horticulture and conservation before I started volunteering, but I've learned so much that I can now enrich others' experience of the area. We regularly hold litter picks, and they're effective at not only making an instant difference to the look of the place, but in reducing daily littering. There's a well-proven theory that people are less considerate of their environment where there's clear evidence that others don't respect it, so it's great to know that people can see that this is an area that is looked after.

That's not to say that we've not had any trouble with antisocial behaviour – once, one of our noticeboards was vandalised by a young person from the local school, and by contacting the school we were able to convince the perpetrator to own up. In discussion with the school and the community police officer, he agreed to a community resolution; he apologised in person to our group, explained why he did it, contributed some of his pocket money to the repairs and agreed to do some community volunteering. It's important to identify the root cause of problematic behaviour, rather than being defeatist about it – so often, it's a way of somebody communicating that they don't feel heard in their community.



# Saada Jimale

Midnimo

I came to Bristol 14 years ago, having arrived in the UK from Somalia as a young mother. I was lucky to find the Barton Hill Settlement right away, where I started an English course. I was then able to complete an NVQ in childcare and get a job in a family centre, which I loved. A couple of years later, I volunteered to start an all-ages women's lunch club at the settlement, which gave women from the Somali community the chance to socialise in a relaxed setting while learning cookery skills. When the group became well-established, we named it Midnimo, which translates most closely as 'unity'. There's a wonderful sense of heritage in seeing older women pass their cookery skills on to other generations, and it's also exciting to learn about different cuisines. We now also run a monthly lunch club just for older women, where they enjoy choosing nutritious meals to cook together.

Having a strong connection to a community resource such as the settlement can open up so many opportunities, particularly for older people. We have run monthly awareness sessions, where we have talks on topics such as community safety from the police, or volunteering from local charities. This sense of connectedness starts local, but opens people up to the wider community – isolation comes when people only feel safe and secure within a very small neighbourhood 'island', and so I'm passionate about helping people to explore different

parts of the city and have organised day trips outside of the city too.

To me, being an active citizen and looking out for the wellbeing of your neighbours is fundamental. I strongly believe that we are shaped by our interactions with others – community cohesion is such a vital part of people reaching their potential, and those that are able should use their privilege to ensure others feel a part of the whole. It can be as simple as going out of your way to introduce newcomers and saying, 'Welcome! This is a great place to live. I'm at number 7, feel free to pop round if you need anything.' I was very warmly welcomed to this community when I arrived, and I want to pay that forward. Somali culture is very verbal, and people don't often rely on noticeboards or letters to know what's going on – members of the community are the local information point, and I'm unofficially known as the local 'housing champion'. Often people need other people to recognise their gifts and give them encouragement to use them – when I first started attending the settlement to learn English, staff member Sarah said to me, 'you have just the kind of energy we need'. I've achieved so much alongside Sarah since then, and I hope to keep inspiring other people to use their energy to make this neighbourhood even better.



# Ben Barker

BS3 Community

I've lived in Bristol since my late twenties, and enjoyed a long career in education. I taught politics and sociology at a further education college, and also worked as an Adult Education Officer as well as a Councillor, and for me, retirement didn't mean stepping away from my vocation as a community advocate.

Shortly after I retired, I went for a walk in my neighbourhood and ran into a friend, who said, 'let's go to The Southville Centre for lunch'. Even though I'd lived in BS3 for years, I'd never thought to go to the local community centre. Having just left my desk job, I was keen to start spending my time being more hands-on, so I volunteered to take on the regeneration of the centre's garden. This task was a refreshing contrast to my work routine, and I soon considered the centre a second home. By the end of that year, I was Chair of the management committee. After a while, I wanted to have the time to commit to more projects happening outside of the centre itself, and so I started exploring other ways to support the development of the local community. I've worn many hats since then: Chair of infrastructure organisation Voscur; member of Greater Bedminster Older People's Forum, advisor to the Business Improvement District, walkability surveyor, and co-founder of the BS3 social club and BS3 wildlife group, to name just a few.

About ten years ago, an issue raised by GBOPF was how the lack of

public toilets impacted people's health and isolation. The worry that you could be caught short, or not able to stop and rest if you get tired, or access some water if it's hot, can prevent older people from enjoying the kind of rich community life that they want. I knew there was the potential for local businesses to change this, and so a group of us created the Bedminster Toilet map; a simple printed map featuring over 20 locations where people can go in and use the facilities without having to ask or buy anything. We're just about to bring out the 5th update of the map, and Greater Brislington have also created a map now, and I'm hoping that other areas of the city will follow.

Several of the age-friendly domains can be summarised by what I like to call 'the cup of tea question'. If wanted to meet a friend for a cup of tea in your local area, what would you have to consider? Some people will have to get a bus, and some may have options within walking distance but none of the cafés are fully accessible. In affluent areas, the cost of an average cup of tea isn't affordable for some residents. These barriers aren't unavoidable; I've managed to share these concerns with local businesses, and the Council's health and transport department to help them understand the needs of the people they serve.



# Catherine Wescott

BS3 Helping Others

My husband and I arrived in Bristol in 2014. I didn't know anyone else here and being an older person, I found myself excluded from the usual places people make new friends when moving to a new area such as at work or university, or meeting other parents at the school gates. I started to search out other activities and volunteering opportunities, and quickly found lots of fantastic ways to spend my time, such as kayaking on the floating harbour with LinkAge, and volunteering with Monica Wills Trust and Windmill Hill City Farm.

Several months after I'd settled into the city, I still felt that I had a purpose here that hadn't yet been fulfilled. One day in spring, I put a post on a neighbourhood Facebook group, asking, 'Does anyone need any help?' In 24 hours, I received 350 likes and 60 comments. They were all really positive, with many people offering to meet for tea and cake, and others suggesting that I set up a group where people could offer and request help from their neighbours, and so - with the help of a tech-savvy friend - I did. People started helping each other straight away, and eventually it led to me setting up a weekly Tuesday morning meeting where anyone interested in volunteering could get together for an informal chat. The Tobacco Factory Café were more than happy to accommodate us, and even offer us free coffee. We now meet regularly on Monday evenings with a group of younger people who work during the day and who want to start up

a volunteering meetup for those who are only free at weekends and evenings. The younger people are happy to run this themselves after training from the older volunteers who started the Tuesday session.

I'm particularly passionate about providing befriending support to people living in care homes; before I moved to Bristol I worked for Age UK as an 'Expert By Experience' and visited several care homes, and was really shaken by the amount of loneliness I saw. For residents who don't have family visiting every day, they can end up being thrown into a life where they have very little time spent interacting with others. We have in the past, worked very closely with a local care home, running activities for the residents, such as a giant crossword, sing-a-longs, and church and concert visits.

It's amazing how many other people with a drive to help others will pop up when you put yourself out there. Just recently, somebody turned up to one of our meetings and offered to do all of our marketing and advertising for us, which is brilliant as the group keeps me so busy, I need all the help I can get from gifted volunteers! Thanks to social media, local press and word of mouth, we've made contact with over 1,200 people.



# Norman Laity

Lawrence Weston Repair Café and Men's Shed



I'm Bristol born and bred, and I've lived in my house in Lawrence Weston for 46 years. Lots of my neighbours have also been in the area for a long time, and we've always got along famously. People sometimes think that the culture of neighbours helping each other out has died off nowadays, but it's still alive and well here.

I was a joiner by trade, and still use those skills as much as I ever did now that I've turned my attention to volunteering in the community. I've also always been a keen hobbyist, and so in the last 10 years I've honed my skills in creating items such as custom-made pens, clocks, and restoring furniture. I really enjoy passing these skills onto others – though some work is incredibly technical and needs years of practice, there's always something new and hands-on that someone can get stuck into. Just recently, a neighbour had a coffee table that he thought was fit for scrap, and I'm so glad that he asked for my opinion as I could see that with a bit of elbow grease it would be back to its former glory. I showed him how to get started with sanding it, and he got so absorbed in the process that before he knew it he'd been sanding for 3 hours – his son passed by at one point and invited him to lunch, and he turned him down – and this was someone who just that morning said he had no DIY skills! I've also taught kids from the neighbourhood and at the local youth club – there's still a real interest in traditional craftsmanship.

My wife passed away 10 years ago, and being retired I knew I had to get myself into a routine where I could keep myself busy in the community. Some of my friends told me about Ambition Lawrence Weston, and I went to a couple of meetings there to see how I might be able to volunteer with them. The staff introduced me to people at the local care home, and together we set up a monthly repair café, where people can bring items that need fixing and have them repaired by volunteers. That's gone so well that we've secured funding to start a men's shed, which will be a fully-functioning workshop inside an old shipping container. I'm hoping to get down there at least twice a week; whenever I'm at a loose end, it'll be great to know that I can pop down to the workshop for a cuppa and to work on a project. My home workshop is overflowing at the moment too, so I'm more than happy to take some of the machinery down there to be used by the community.

If you are looking to find a new purpose in your community, I can assure you that once you get involved you'll never look back. I know there are so many skills and talents out there that are just waiting to be shared.

# Gloria Morris

Golden Agers

I've lived in Bristol for 61 years, having moved to the UK from Jamaica as a young woman. I trained as a nurse following the Queen's invitation to people from commonwealth countries to come and join the National Health Service. Bristol is a great place to be as there is so much going on, and if you look for them, there are so many welcoming community groups out there for people who feel lonely or unheard.

I worked as a nurse until I was 58, and when I retired I still wanted to be able to help people every day. One of the most rewarding ways I do this is helping to run the Golden Agers club in Easton, which is a social and wellbeing group that has been running since 1991. It started when a group of elders at my church expressed that they would like to spend time together after the morning service, but there was nowhere to go. It's now open to anyone from the wider community and we offer sewing classes, exercise, IT classes and a delicious shared meal. We manage to keep going despite not having much funding, as we have very talented members who fundraise by selling items they've sewn or knitted. The food is especially important – for some people who aren't able to cook due to health conditions or financial difficulties, it's the only home-cooked food they have, so we try to make sure people can take home extra portions if they wish.

I also keep really busy advising charities and forums on how they can support older people from diverse

backgrounds. I'm a Trustee of Bristol Older People's Forum and help to plan the Celebrating Age Festival. It's an honour to be able to represent the voice of other people in my community who are less able.

As I get older, I am finding that I have more physical challenges to deal with, so I have had to adapt my busy lifestyle slightly, but my energy for helping people hasn't changed. I take strength from my faith and my community – each day that I am able to get up and do something, I know that there are others who need my help. That's how I was brought up; before you eat, you feed the others in your community who need it most.



# Colin O'Brien

GayWest

I am an older person, a father, an active citizen, and a gay man, and I am proud of all of those things. It hasn't always been this way; I came out in my later years, and the transition to where I am now was a challenging process of presenting myself to the world in a new way, stepping into new places and introducing myself to new people. This is why I give so much of my time to my community; I want to be able to offer the same kindness and support that was offered to me when I came out.

I discovered GayWest shortly after I came out, around 10 years ago. I spotted an advert in Bristol listings guide *Venue* for the Rainbow Café, a weekly drop-in social in Bath for LGBT people of all ages. I rang the number on the advert and had a chat with the organiser who assured me that I would be met with a friendly welcome. It still took me three or four visits to the outside of the café before I had the courage to step through the door, but when I did, I knew instantly that it was the best decision I'd ever made. My husband and I have now taken over the running of the café – we're up early every Saturday to get everything set up for the 30 to 40 people who regularly attend. We also organise twice-monthly evening events in Bristol, as well as monthly events such as picnics, walks and a Christmas dinner. The group is a lifeline for those who want to meet others who identify as LGBT, but who don't feel attracted to the mainstream 'scene'. Most of our members are over

50, and around half came out in the second half of life.

GayWest was formed in 1982, when two local campaigning groups merged. The Campaign for Homosexual Equality and Bath Gay Awareness Group were both very politically active, writing to politicians and organising talks and events to highlight the legal and social discrimination that LGBT faced. These days, the focus is more on providing support to individuals, helping them to feel that they have the social connections they need. It is also still a useful forum for discussing how later life could be made better for LGBT people, such as greater awareness among nursing home staff. Running a group does have its difficulties; it was running at a loss at one point, and we had to increase the membership fee slightly in order not to rely on unreliable charity funding, but thanks to a few very committed members I'm confident it will continue to thrive.

One of the brilliant things about reaching later life is that you stop caring so much what other people think of you, and understand better what you need in order to feel content. One of my happiest memories is a few months after I came out – I stepped outside of the door to my new flat, on the way to watch my son play a concert at a local music venue, and felt absolutely fantastic. It was as if Gloria Gaynor had written 'I Am What I Am' just for me. And I wouldn't be what I am without the people around me.



# Café

Friday 8.30am-5pm  
and Sunday 10am-5pm



# Age-friendly Checklist

If you're not sure where to start with improving the age-friendliness of your neighbourhood or community, it can be useful to take a look around and use this checklist to identify where key areas for improvement might be. You could also complete it with others as a starting point for an age-friendly neighbourhood committee or neighbourhood watch scheme.

## Transport

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Are all houses within easy walking distance of a bus stop or inter-city train station?			
Are buses (and trains, if applicable) regular and reliable?			
Are buses (and trains, if applicable) well-maintained, accessible and not overcrowded?			
Are bus stops (and train stations, if applicable) well-maintained, with adequate seating and real time information displays?			
Are bus drivers understanding of older people's needs?			
Is there a well-publicised and affordable community transport scheme, suitable for taking people to appointments and events?			
Are there plenty of pedestrian crossings, which allow adequate time for people to cross?			
Are road markings and signs clear for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists?			
Are speed limits appropriate for the area, and are they obeyed by all vehicles?			
Is there suitable provision for cyclists, including designated lanes and ample cycle racks near amenities?			

## Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Are pavements suitably walkable, with plenty of dropped kerbs?			
Are pavements free of obstructions, such as bins, parked cars, or low-hanging branches?			
Are streets clean and tidy?			
Are local parks and green spaces free of litter and vandalism?			
Are public toilets convenient and accessible?			
Do local businesses provide toilets and rest areas for customers and non-customers?			
Are local businesses accessible for people with impairments or reduced mobility?			
Are there plenty of benches on streets and in green spaces?			
Are front gardens tidy, with external 'beautification' such as brightly-coloured doors, trees and flowers?			
Is street lighting adequate?			
Are road names and maps (where applicable) easy to read?			
Are noise and pollution from traffic at acceptable levels?			
Do amenities including GP surgeries, convenience stores, pharmacies and libraries have full disabled access?			
Is there a local Neighbourhood Watch, or other community safety scheme?			
Is there a Police Community Support Officer active in the area, who regularly speaks to residents about their concerns?			

### Housing

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Is there a range of affordable housing options, both in the for sale and rental market?			
Are all houses within easy walking distance of a convenience store, post office and pharmacy?			
Is the majority of housing fully accessible, enabling older people to 'age in place'?			
If there are any new housing developments, have they been designed with in line with the principles of universal design (see the NDA's 'Building for Everyone' guidelines listed in the resources section)			
Is there extra care housing, such as sheltered housing, retirement villages and assisted living facilities?			
Are extra care housing sites integrated in the community, rather than being at a distance from local amenities?			
Are you aware of issues with overcrowding in any rented or social housing accommodations?			

### Community Support and Health Services

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Are GP surgeries conveniently located?			
Is waiting time for an appointment at surgeries fair?			
Are you aware of surgeries offering social prescribing services, or links to organisations such as RSVP?			
Are residential care homes or nursing homes located close to residential areas, so that residents are integrated with the rest of the community?			
Are there affordable meal options for people with reduced ability to prepare their food, such as meals on wheels or casserole clubs?			
Are there leisure facilities such as affordable gyms and swimming pools, or exercise classes, which are frequented by people of all ages?			

### Respect and Social Inclusion

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Is there a culture of neighbourliness, where people regularly help each other out, outside of formal volunteering schemes?			
Do older residents feel respected, and not ill-treated through inconsiderate or rude behaviour from others due to their age?			
Have local festivals and festivals been designed with older people in mind, with older people represented on the organising committees?			
Are there activities such as computer cafes, allotment-sharing schemes, or partnerships between schools and care homes, that aim to benefit people through intergenerational sharing of skills and experiences?			
Do local businesses advertise the fact that they are dementia friendly?			
Do local businesses have signage that affirms that they are inclusive of people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities, and sizes?			

### Civic Participation and Employment

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Are there opportunities for adult learning, such as U3A groups and courses suitable for older adults at further education institutions?			
Are there opportunities for older people to utilize specialist skills, such as repair cafés or men's sheds?			
Do neighbours share skills such as gardening or DIY?			
Among formal voluntary groups, such as those maintaining parks and green spaces or volunteer networks, are many of the organisers aged over 50?			
Do local businesses employ many older people?			

### Communication and Information

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Are there community noticeboards both indoors and outdoors?			
Is there a local listings guide, that is delivered to all homes free of charge?			
Are there opportunities for people to learn IT skills and/or get online, such as tech cafés, or internet courses at libraries or community centres?			
Is there free internet access at cafes, libraries and community centres?			
Are signs and printed materials from local businesses clear and easy to read?			
Is local information available in languages commonly spoken in the neighbourhood?			

### Social Participation

Criteria	yes	no	n/a
Are there a wide variety of affordable social activities available to older people, appealing to different interests?			
Are these activities at convenient locations and convenient times of day?			
Are these activities welcoming to friends and carers?			
Are there plenty of community 'gathering places', such as community centres, community cafes and areas with outdoor seating where people socialise?			
Do churches and other faith spaces offer activities for people who are not members of the congregation or religious community?			
Are there volunteer-led friendship groups, such as those organised through social media, which regularly meet at local cafes or green spaces, and are they welcoming to new members?			

## Useful Contacts

### Bristol Ageing Better

-  [www.bristolageingbetter.org.uk](http://www.bristolageingbetter.org.uk)
-  [bab@ageukbristol.org.uk](mailto:bab@ageukbristol.org.uk)
-  0117 928 1539

### Age Friendly Bristol

-  [agefriendlybristol.org.uk](http://agefriendlybristol.org.uk)
-  [agefriendly@agefriendlybristol.org.uk](mailto:agefriendly@agefriendlybristol.org.uk)
-  0117 928 1539

### Bristol Older People's Forum

-  [www.bopf.org.uk](http://www.bopf.org.uk)
-  [bopf@ageukbristol.org.uk](mailto:bopf@ageukbristol.org.uk)
-  0117 927 9222

### Bristol Walking Alliance

-  <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/>
-  [neighbourhoods@bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk](mailto:neighbourhoods@bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk)

### Do-it (city-wide volunteering platform)

-  <https://do-it.org/>

### Bristol U3A

-  <https://u3asites.org.uk/bristol/contact>
-  0117 963 1032.

### Retired & Senior Volunteers Programme

-  <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/neighbourhood-planning>
-  [office@rsvp-west.org.uk](mailto:office@rsvp-west.org.uk)
-  0117 922 4392

### Red Cross Support at Home

-  <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-support-at-home>
-  [ilcrsouthciadmin@redcross.org.uk](mailto:ilcrsouthciadmin@redcross.org.uk)

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# Additional Resources

**Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide**, World Health Organisation:  
[https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)

**A Strategy for an Age-Friendly Bristol**, Bristol Ageing Better:  
<http://agefriendlybristol.org.uk/age-friendly-action-plan/>

**Bristol City Council's One City Plan:**  
<https://www.bristolonecity.com/one-city-plan/>

**Information about neighbourhood planning forums**, which enable local organisations and residents to write policies that inform planning applications.

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/neighbourhood-planning>

**Becoming an age-friendly employer**, The Centre for Ageing Better  
<https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-09/Becoming-age-friendly-employer.pdf>

**Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach**, National Disability Authority  
<http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/Building-for-Everyone/>

**University of Manchester's Handbook for Cultural Engagement with Older Men:**

<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=24251>

**Age-Friendly Resource Manual**, International Federation on Ageing  
<http://www.ifa-fiv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Age-Friendly-Communities-Resource-Manual.pdf>

**Older People's External Residential Assessment Tool:**  
<https://www.operat.co.uk/>

**Dementia-friendly guides from the Alzheimer's Society:**  
<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementia-friendly-resources>

**Neighbourhood Watch Network** (includes a database of local schemes, as well as downloadable toolkits and coordinator packs for those wanting to set one up)

<https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/>

**Resources for starting a men's shed or repair café:**  
<https://menssheds.org.uk/shed-support/resource-library/>

**Meetup**, a website which helps people connect with neighbours with shared interests: [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)

**Helpfulpeeps**, an online 'social marketplace' where people can swap skills, or offer free help to others: [www.helpfulpeeps.com](http://www.helpfulpeeps.com)

**Voscur**, training and resources for community groups: [www.voscur.org](http://www.voscur.org)

