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**London signs up to the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**

The Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, Matthew Ryder, QC, today revealed that London has signed up to the World Health Organisation’s Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

Speaking at Age UK London’s “Tackling Loneliness Amongst Older Londoners” Conference, Matthew outlined the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan’s aim for London to be recognised globally as an age-friendly city.

Matthew Ryder, QC, Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, said:

*“We’re very excited to be joining the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. The Mayor’s vision is for London to be a place where people of all ages can thrive. Older Londoners make an extremely valuable contribution to city life - as professionals, volunteers and carers. We want to encourage all Londoners to participate actively in community activities and to treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age. We look forward to working with other age-friendly cities and communities in the UK and across the world.”*

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (the Network) was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide. All members of the network display the desire and commitment to promote healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for their older residents.

Key actions the Mayor has already committed to include reducing barriers to decent jobs for older workers, reducing digital exclusion, providing more accessible and adaptable homes, and ensuring sports and arts and the transport system across the city are inclusive and responsive to the needs of older people.

Paul Goulden, CEO of Age UK London, said:

*“We’re so pleased that the Mayor has signed up to the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. This is a real step forward to make sure that older Londoners can enjoy everything that London has to offer. We look forward to working with the Mayor to help all of London to love later life.”*

Anna Dixon, the Chief Executive of the Centre for Ageing Better, which convenes the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, commented:

*“Ensuring that everyone can make the most of living longer and enjoy lives spent in good health, good work and good housing must be a collective endeavour.*

*“It will require local leadership, which is why it is so great to see London commit to becoming a more inclusive city for people of all ages and abilities by committing to becoming an age-friendly city.”*

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**

* Age UK London is a regional charity that helps London to love later life by campaigning for older Londoners, working on their behalf, and championing their cause.
  + [www.ageuk.org.uk/london](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/london)
  + [www.twitter.com/ageuklondon](http://www.twitter.com/ageuklondon)
  + [www.facebook.com/ageuklondon](http://www.facebook.com/ageuklondon)
* The Centre for Ageing Better is a charitable foundation that works to bring about change to improve later lives, bring fresh thinking to the challenges and opportunities that society faces as more people live longer, and to develop, share and apply evidence to help people age better.
  + [www.ageing-better.org.uk/](http://www.ageing-better.org.uk/)
  + [www.twitter.com/Ageing\_Better](http://www.twitter.com/Ageing_Better)
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* In 2016, over a million Londoners were aged 65+ and 140,000 of those were aged 85+.
* In 2014, 20% of households in London were headed by a person aged 65 or over.
* 40,000 older people in London are “chronically lonely” meaning that they often or always experience feelings of isolation.
* The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness found that “more than 1 in 3 people aged 75 and over say that feelings of loneliness are out of their control.”
* Research has suggested that loneliness can be as harmful for our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

**BACKGROUND – letter from SK**

*I am writing to ask that London is formally recognised by WHO as an Age-friendly City through membership of the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.*

*My vision is for London to be a place where people of all ages can thrive. Older Londoners make a valuable contribution to city life in many ways, including as professionals, volunteers and carers. We must celebrate this contribution and foster a caring society that fully meets the needs of our increasing ageing population. I want all Londoners to actively participate in community activities and to treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age.*

*Membership of the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities will be a catalyst for London to continually improve our approach to making our city a great place to grow older.*

*We are collaborating with older people’s forums in London because we recognise how important it is that this work is led by older people themselves. The needs and concerns of older Londoners are clearly acknowledged in my recently published equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy, which was drawn up following a programme of consultation. This included commissioning Positive Ageing in London to consult with older Londoners and their organisations.*

*The strategy builds on the baseline study conducted by King’s College London in 2007 and the review which they carried out in 2015, on the extent to which London is an Age-Friendly City. These documents and my strategy will provide the basis for an action plan and indicators for us to monitor progress.*

*Key actions I have already committed to include reducing barriers to decent jobs for older workers; reducing digital exclusion; providing more accessible and adaptable homes, a safer city, inclusive sports and arts and a transport system all of which are responsive to the customer service needs of older people.*

*I will shortly be appointing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group, under which will sit an older people’s stakeholder network. This will be the mechanism through which we will involve older people in our age-friendly city work going forward.*

*I look forward to working with other age-friendly cities and communities in the UK network and beyond to share learning and best practice.*

*I hope the act of joining the network will help us continue to make London a more age-friendly city. I also hope this will encourage every community in London to renew their commitment to improve the lives of local older people.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Sadiq Khan*