

CAMPAIGN REPORT
SUNDERLAND OLDER PEOPLE
CHAMPIONS
AN AGE FRIENDLY SUNDERLAND CITY
CENTRE



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INTRODUCTION

The Sunderland Older People Champion Network was set up a year ago by Age UK Sunderland to try and encourage more older people in the City to have a say on the issues that they feel are important and that impact on their and other older people's lives. The work of the Champions is also supported by 50+ Forum members who make up the five local 50+ Forums in Sunderland that meet regularly to discuss local issues.

A key priority of the Champions over the last year was the City centre and how age friendly it is. Champions expressed frustration over the lack of shops and variety of products available in the City. They shared experiences of how dirty the City was and how inaccessible some areas of the centre are.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

The Champions met in March 2014 to decide a campaign to address the issue and agreed the following key objectives for the campaign:

- 1. Cleaner City**
- 2. Thriving Economy**
- 3. Accessible to all**

To achieve these key campaign objectives the Champions identified what they see as the key elements that create an age friendly City which were:

- 1. Cleanliness** – Cleanliness of: the shops, their frontage, streets etc.
- 2. Safety** – Shop frontage, seating, quality of pavements etc.
- 3. Shops** - accessibility, products, service etc.
- 4. Signage** - a) to facilities, b) to places
- 5. Toilets and Changing Rooms** – accessibility, cleanliness etc.

The Champions then arranged a series of evidence gathering sessions in the City centre in April and May to look at each of the key age friendly elements and score Sunderland City centre on how close it meets these requirements.

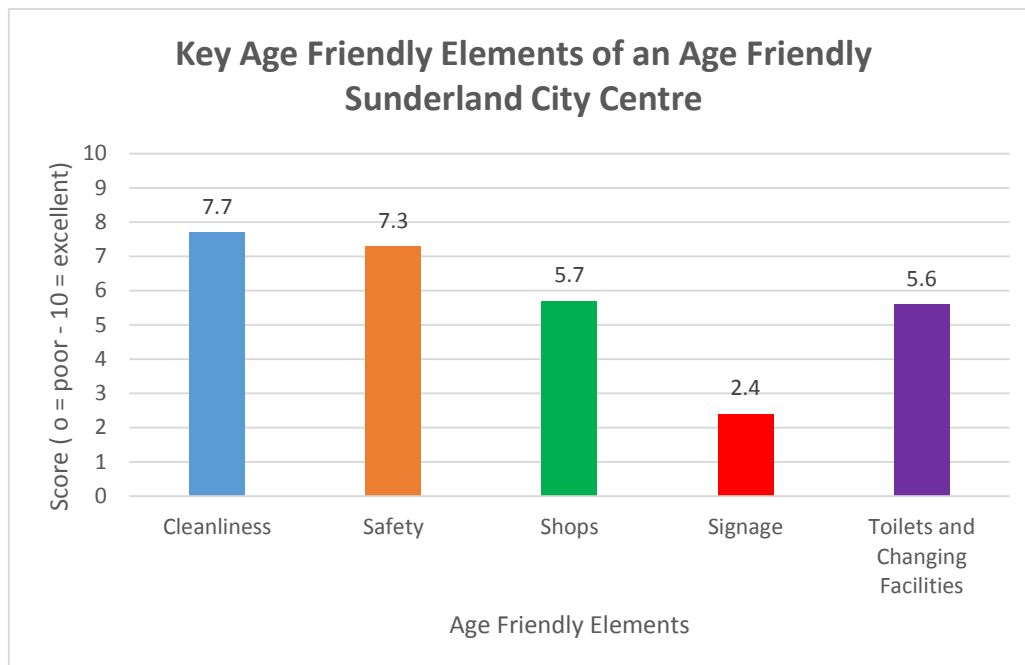
The Champions decided to focus on key areas of the City centre that they felt were most used by older people. The areas were:

- The Bridges – and Jackie Whites Market where appropriate
- High Street West
- Park Lane
- Fawcett Street
- Blandford Street
- Sunnyside
- Holmeside

The following campaigns report is a summary of these findings and the report concludes with a Wish List for improving the Age Friendliness of Sunderland City centre. This report also makes the case that the campaign's Age Friendly wishes will also benefit the wider community using the centre and not just older people.

FINDINGS

The following diagram illustrates the overall score that the Champions gave the City centre for each of the five age friendly elements. The score is based on the average rating from all geographical areas covered in the centre. A score of 10 is excellent and 0 is poor.



CLEANLINESS: At meetings prior to the evidence gathering sessions Champions noted that cleanliness was an issue in the City, especially litter. However, the cleanliness of the City was consistently marked high in many of the centre areas by the Champions. One suggestion raised by Champions was to arrange a twice yearly high-powered wash of centre paving to brighten up the area. They understood that this may create a cost but it would brighten up the areas and make others proud of the City centre and less likely to litter. Champions suggested that if the costs were high then volunteers could also be looked for or those doing probationary service etc.

SAFETY: Although many areas of the centre scored highly on safety (such as the Bridges) there were some areas that brought the overall score down. This included the following issues:

Pedestrian areas - Most of the pedestrian areas were marked highly for safety with plenty of managed crossing points etc. However, Park Lane was identified as a key 'trouble spot' for pedestrians because of the level of traffic in the area. One Champion explained that if you have trouble walking and use a stick or walking frame and a car is behind you as you walk it can be quite daunting and off putting. This is a key issue because many older people use Park Lane for bus travel. Another general Champions observation was the issue of cyclists and their use of pedestrian areas. Although cyclists are not allowed to use pedestrian paths in most areas Champions reported that many still do. For older people with visual impairments or hearing loss this can be a real issue and risk their safety.

Seating – Champions observed a lot of seating in all areas of the City and all seats were heavily used during the session (especially by older people). However, there were areas where seating was needed (such as bottom of Blandford Street) and areas where the condition of the seats was poor and needed a refresh (such as Fawcett Street). The main issue with seating in the City centre is that the majority of seats have no arm or back rests which are vital for many older people who have physical difficulties. For example, arm rests are vital support to help older people raise and lower themselves.

Pavements – Although the cleanliness of City centre streets was rated highly by the Champions there were issues with the safety of paving stones. This included:

- Cracked paving which creates an uneven walking environment – a real issue for those older people not steady on their feet.
- Variable cambers of paving which can affect people with dementia and other cognitive impairments and wheelchair users, especially those who rely on manual wheelchairs, creating a lot more effort needed to progress along the path.
- Potentially slip hazards on paving within centre shopping areas when wet. Champions noted that there were staff mopping floors when it was raining but commented that this would not be enough to stop a frailer older person slipping. Champions suggested adding some grips to key entrance paving for wet periods. This will build confidence in older people using the shopping centres.

SHOPS: The Champions scored the variety of shops quite highly but raised a number of issues in terms of shop accessibility. The streets surrounding the Bridges were found to be lacking in accessibility and those shops that had some measures in place could still improve (for example, ramps that are too steep and A-Boards placed in doorways restricting access). The Champions found that the shopmobility facility in the Bridges is very hard to find and suggested many would be put off from coming due to the limited access and signage to the shop. Many of the streets have vacant shops and the Champions felt more could be done to make the outside look more attractive to encourage prospective business to the area and also brighten up the streets for the public and tourists.

SIGNAGE: Signage scored the lowest score of all the age friendly elements for the City centre. The Champions found a lot of areas lacked any signage and there was little consistency across the areas where there was signage. Signage in the Bridges was very bland and blended in with the surroundings making it hard for people with visual impairments to notice it and Champions found that there were some inaccuracies and difficulties in using the signs. There is no locator mark on the maps on the Bridges signs such as 'you are here' which makes it harder to navigate the centre. The Champions noted that this was a critical issue that needed addressing to attract more people to the City. The accessibility of signage also needs to be considered in greater detail.

TOILETS AND CHANGING ROOMS: Toilets scored very highly in the Bridges but not in other parts of the City centre. Marks and Spencer's toilet was scored low due to accessibility and the public toilets near Park Lane, outside the Market Place scored very low on all aspects including cleanliness, signage and accessibility. The Champions also suggested that more thought should be given to the other changing facilities available in the City centre. Some adults also need a changing area for incontinency etc. and the existing changing facilities are all geared towards mothers and babies. Hand rails in the normal toilets were suggested to help those older people who could still use the main toilets but may need just a little support to use the facilities.

BREAKDOWN OF CITY CENTRE AREA SCORES

The following evidence tables detail the key findings of the Champions evidence gathering sessions and the scores each area was given. The tables use a simple traffic light system to highlight room for improvement (Green – none to little improvement needed, Amber – improvement needed and red – urgent improvement needed).

THE BRIDGES

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	The Champions were impressed. Cleaners were all visible throughout the sessions and there were plenty of bins which were well located and clearly visible.	10	GREEN
Safety	Lots of seating in constant use. Some seating very low. Pavements could have better grip in key entrances. There are no directions to the First aid.	8.5	AMBER
Toilets and Changing Rooms	Clean and hygienic. Hand rails could be fitted in normal toilets for those who struggle with lower seats. Adult Changing space should be made available.	5.5	AMBER
Shops	Good variety and most are accessible. Some shops could have better laid out displays and shelves to help with accessibility.	8	GREEN
Signage	Not enough signage. Maps don't have a locator sign. Signs blend in to background and are not easily identified. Major issue when trying to find Shopmobility.	2/3	RED

HIGH STREET WEST

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	Only a few littered areas which were mainly down to cigarette butts and chewing gum. Plenty of bins that were well located.	9	GREEN
Safety	Quality of pavements good, limited security information, St Mary car park has leaky roof and lift does not always work. Don't always feel 'safe' in street.	6.5	AMBER
Toilets and Changing Rooms	None on street. Marks and Spencer's toilet found to be very inaccessible.	0	RED
Shops	Good variety and accessibility ok. Doesn't seem to be many people there and not very attractive.	5	RED
Signage	Only one sign identified, old and basic. No consistency.	1	RED

PARK LANE

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	Plenty of bins and pavements clear with some litter and chewing gum.	8	AMBER
Safety	Confusion over pedestrian and traffic areas. Also an issue with cyclists and using pavements etc Seating good and varied.	6	AMBER
Toilets and Changing Rooms	No soap, not very clean, no signage at Park Lane, very smelly, not good wheelchair access. Toilet gender signs old and worn away.	2	RED
Shops	A lot of shops don't have wheelchair access – Olive Street and Derwent Street very bad.	6	AMBER
Signage	Signage for shops but no signs directing to Park Lane. Needs signs at top and bottom.	6	AMBER

FAWCETT STREET

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	Plenty of bins. Paving very dirty and some litter.	4	RED
Safety	Broken paving and variable camber in some parts. Wheelchair access limited at some shops including banks. No seating on library side of the street. Seating on one side could do with a refresh.	4.5	RED
Toilets and Changing Rooms	Library toilets available but male toilet often broken. On The top floor and toilets are very small for those who have mobility issues. No signs to toilets.	0	RED
Shops	Issue of accessibility to shops is an issue.	4	RED
Signage	Hard to spot and doesn't follow through to any area. Old Primark sign very good to new shop.	2	RED

BLANDFORD STREET

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	No litter – lots of bins. Pavements need washing.	8	AMBER
Safety	Good seating and varied but could be more at end near Newcastle Building Society. Some uneven paving stones	8	AMBER
Toilets and Changing Rooms	None available and no signage to where there may be toilets.	0	RED
Shops	Some accessibility problems but good value shops.	7	AMBER
Signage	None to show where shops, bus station or toilets are.	4	RED

SUNNISIDE

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	Lovely public space – could be made more of. Fountain is not working.	9.5	GREEN
Safety	Good and feeling of safety.	10	GREEN
Toilets and Changing Rooms	None available and no signage to where there may be toilets.	0	RED
Shops	A lot of issues on accessibility due to steps on terraces.	4	RED
Signage	None sign posting to and from the area and should be better supported as a public space.	3	RED

HOLMESIDE

AGE FRIENDLY ELEMENT	OBSERVATIONS	SCORE 0 – 10 (10 being excellent)	GREEN / AMBER / RED
Cleanliness	Roads and paths look scruffy and side roads uncared for. Lots of shutters down and unattractive – even those that are occupied have unattractive shutters.	4	RED
Safety	Good Pedestrian crossing.	8	AMBER
Toilets and Changing Rooms	None available and no signage to where there may be toilets.	0	RED
Shops	Several shops have no wheelchair access.	4	RED
Signage	None noticed. None to key areas and facilities.	0	RED

WISH LIST

The Champions are realistic in terms of the need for finance and other resources to tackle the issues outlined in this campaign report. However, they feel strongly that the evidence they have gathered highlights some key actions that must be taken by the key stakeholders involved in the City centre's development. The following wish list includes a set of five wishes that the Champions have for the City centre. They believe that they would contribute towards not just a more age friendly Sunderland but the three key objectives set out at the start of this campaign report – a Cleaner City, with a thriving economy which is accessible to all.

SUNDERLAND OLDER PEOPLE CHAMPIONS WISH LIST:

1. A new signage system across the City centre that:

- Is clear, visible and adaptable
- Consistent across the centre
- Includes key destinations and facilities
- Accessible to all with thought given to colour, format etc.
- Developed with consultation with a wide section of the public including older people

2. Audit of seating in the City centre that considers:

- Accessibility – in relation to back rests, arm rests etc.
- Areas where limited seating is available
- Refresh and paint

3. Better Safety in the City centre that includes:

- Clearer division between pedestrian areas and traffic (especially Park Lane)
- Pavements – develop quality and address safety concerns

4. A more accessible City centre

- Ensure Shops accessibility
- Changing Areas for Adults – better signed and promoted
- Audit of toilet facilities and work with local businesses to ensure toilet accessibility and links to business benefits

5. A positive promotion on how clean the City centre is

- Positive marketing campaign to dispel dirty myths
- A deep clean of streets twice yearly to brighten up streets appearance – possibly with volunteers etc.
- Education campaign on litter, cigarettes etc. to maintain high standards

THE WIDER IMPACT OF AN AGE FRIENDLY SUNDERLAND CITY CENTRE

Although this campaign has been led by older people the Champions believe that the campaign's wishes for the City centre's development will also benefit the wider community using the centre.

For example, better accessibility to the City centre and shops will mean not just better access for older wheelchair users but also younger wheelchair users. Better access will also mean better access for mothers and children in pushchairs etc.

The same could be said for better signage in the City Centre which will better help people of all ages with visual and cognitive impairments to access what the centre has to offer. Better signage will also help to encourage more tourists to visit the centre and utilise everything it has to offer which will benefit the centre's economy on a whole – leading to better job prospects etc.

A key message from this campaign can be summed up from a Champion's comments during an evidence gathering session,

'If you get it right for older people, you get it right for many other people of all ages who need a little extra help to get on with their day.'

The Champions are also keen to promote the health and wellbeing opportunities of developing an Age Friendly Sunderland City Centre.

NEXT STEPS

1. Meet with key decision makers in the City to present the Champions campaign findings.
2. Arrange a 'walk around' session with Ken Dunbar, Chief Executive of Sunderland Business Improvement District to explain and demonstrate the findings.
3. Support the development and progress of Sunderland BIDs action plan in relation to the Champions wish list.
4. Arrange a 'One Year on' campaign session in April 2015 with Champions to evaluate progress.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- John Lloyd
- Norman Jemison
- Janet King

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And of course a thank you to the wider Champion network and those who have taken the time and effort to contribute to the campaign in this first stage.