

August 2019



# Age Friendly Champions Action Guide

Practical ways to promote Age Friendly in your council area

## Looking forward to a more Age Friendly future for Northern Ireland

In the 2019 local election, voters went to the polls to elect Councillors to take up the 462 seats across the 11 council areas in Northern Ireland. In the run up to the 2019 election, Age NI ran a campaign aimed at securing a commitment from candidates that, if elected, they would commit to be an Age Friendly Champion in their council role and work to promote and galvanise Age Friendly work within their councils.

## What is Age Friendly?

Age Friendly<sup>1</sup> is a framework developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to support the development of Age Friendly communities. An Age Friendly world enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people and things which are important to them. It also helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.

The framework outlines eight themes to consider when developing Age friendly plans.

These are:

- Civic participation & employment
- Communication & information
- Social participation
- Outdoor space & buildings
- Transportation
- Respect & social inclusion
- Housing
- Community support & health services

In practical terms, Age Friendly environments are free from physical and social barriers and are supported by policies, systems and services that promote health and wellbeing across the life course and enable older people to continue to do the things they value.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/>

We chose to focus the election campaign on this topic because it has been highlighted time and time again in our engagement with age sector networks. It really matters to older people at a local level and we want to support them to bring about the change they want in their communities.



## What have Age Friendly Champions promised?

### The pledge:

By signing the pledge to be an Age Friendly Champion, you have agreed to...

- ✓ Promote and support good Age Friendly practice and planning in their council.
- ✓ \*Engage with older people's groups and networks. Listen to, understand and act on older people's views to improve their neighbourhood.\*
- ✓ \*Drive engagement and coproduction with older people at community level.\*
- ✓ Encourage and adequately resource Age Friendly initiatives that improve older people's wellbeing and connections and reduce loneliness and social isolation.
- ✓ Support council staff in their work advancing Age Friendly planning practices and partnerships.
- ✓ Encourage Age Friendly partnerships to explore evidence based intergenerational approaches to creating great places to grow old for everyone.
- ✓ Value the contribution older people make in their communities.

## Get involved: practical actions you can take

This next stage of the campaign aims to support the development of productive relationships between older people and their elected representatives.

As an Age Friendly Champion, we encourage you to;

### Engage with older people's groups and networks

October is positive ageing month and provides an excellent opportunity to reach out and engage with older people in your community; and to promote your Age Friendly Champion status.

**Suggested actions:** Make contact with local older people and services in your area. Talk to them about the commitment you have made by pledging to be an Age Friendly Champion. Listen to older people's views on what they would like to see happening in their community to make it more age friendly. Think about how you can help drive engagement and coproduction with older people at community level.

## **Promote your Age Friendly Champion status**

Familiarise yourself with the key messages below and promote your Age Friendly Champion status by taking some of the suggested actions.

### **a) What does Age Friendly mean?**

In practical terms, age-friendly environments are free from physical and social barriers and are supported by policies, systems, services, products and technologies that:

- promote health and build and maintain physical and mental capacity across the life course and
- enable older people, to continue to do the things they value.

See the eight domains for the age friendliness baseline of the city outlined in the Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2018-2021.

### **b) Why does Northern Ireland need Age Friendly communities?**

Living longer is a huge opportunity. We can all age well if we prepare and plan for our ageing population and take steps to ensure our neighbourhoods and communities are welcoming, accessible and inclusive places for us all to age well in. As we grow older, we may spend more time in our homes and neighbourhood, so our environment has a significant impact on our health, wellbeing and the quality of our lives.

There is a real need to work together to remove the barriers older people face to participating in the life of their local communities. Where we live and its immediate environment sets the tone for our daily life and, while many older people continue to play an active part in their community, lack of accessible local transport options, somewhere to sit down, or access to clean public toilets limits how far people are able to get around. Poor quality pavements, inadequate street lighting or fear of crime can stop people feeling confident enough to go out.

Age Friendly places are essential for us all as we age, as consumers, as volunteers, workers and as care givers. As our population ages, ensuring that those who are less mobile or not online are not left behind will be vital.

### c) What role will Age Friendly champions have in delivering it?

In the Active Ageing Strategy<sup>2</sup> Government set out a framework to plan and prepare for our ageing population: ***‘Northern Ireland being an Age Friendly region in which people, as they get older, are valued and supported to live actively to their fullest potential; with their rights respected and their dignity protected’.***

Age NI believe that everybody should be able to live in an age-friendly world that enables people of all ages to participate in the life of their local community, connected to each other and to opportunities in their local area, valued for the contribution they can and do make to their local community. Councillors will have a key role to play in promoting Age Friendly and supporting their council in the development and implementation of Age Friendly plans and initiatives.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

Use social media to promote your Age Friendly Champion status:

- Highlight why you think Age Friendly is important in your social media posts.
- Show examples of how you help older people to “Be More Connected” in your community.
- Take a selfie with an older people’s group you have connected with or with older people you have met at an event.
- Make a video stating your commitment to promote age friendly initiatives in your community and post on social media.
- Use the following hashtags:  
#positiveageingmonth  
#lovelaterlife  
#agefriendlychampion
- Look out for others using these hashtags and retweet
- Follow us on Twitter @agenipolicy and tag us in your posts.
- Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/agenicharity](http://www.facebook.com/agenicharity)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/active-ageing-strategy-2016-2021>

