

# Age-friendly Belfast

## Progress Report

### April 2018



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## Introduction

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Currently 19.3% (65,496 2016 MYE) people in Belfast are aged 60+. Belfast's new community plan for the City, the Belfast Agenda, states that by the middle of this century it is estimated that more than a third of Belfast population will be over 60 years older. We also know Belfast is one of the youngest cities in Europe, with young people up to the age of 21 making up nearly a third of our population. Our age-friendly approach builds on the innovative intergenerational work that has been developed and integrates with child friendly and family friendly initiatives.

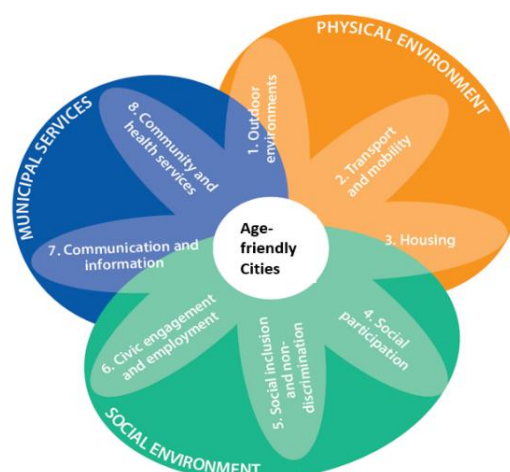
20,400 people are living with dementia in NI and approximately 35% do not have a formal diagnosis. It is expected that these numbers will more than treble in the next 20-30 years. Currently 3,005 people of all ages have been diagnosed with dementia in Belfast.

In May 2012, the Lord Mayor of Belfast signed a declaration committing Belfast to develop as an Age-friendly City. In 2014, the city of Belfast joined the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) focuses on life inequalities and leads the Age-friendly process supported by the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP). An Age-friendly baseline report was completed in 2014 and this report has been prepared in order to review progress and provide a balanced and realistic review of the current "age-friendliness" of Belfast.

In compiling this report we have drawn upon a range of data, research reports and strategy documents outlined in appendix 1. We specifically refer to the following pieces of work:

- » Belfast City Council Residents Surveys 2014 and 2017- in 2017 the sample size was 1,548 residents (436 aged 60+). A stratified sample meeting quotas for gender and age that covered all district electoral areas and wards across Belfast.
- » The Age-friendly Belfast Surveys 2015 and 2017 were administered through a range of events, outreach sessions, an online survey and partnership contacts. This was a less robust survey that involved 411 older people in 2017
- » The Northern Ireland Cohort for the Longitudinal Study of Ageing Wave 1 Key findings report (the NICOLA Study), Queen's University Belfast, November 2017
- » 'Engagement with Hard to Reach Groups' a focus group report compiled by Age NI peer facilitators in 2016 involving older people with a disability, older people from BME groups, older LGBT people, older carers and older people living in sheltered accommodation
- » A stakeholder workshop with 120 older people and stakeholders June 2017
- » NISRA's NINIS site and their Belfast Age Friendly profile

In the following sections a short summary is provided on the age-friendliness of Belfast under the eight criteria identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO)



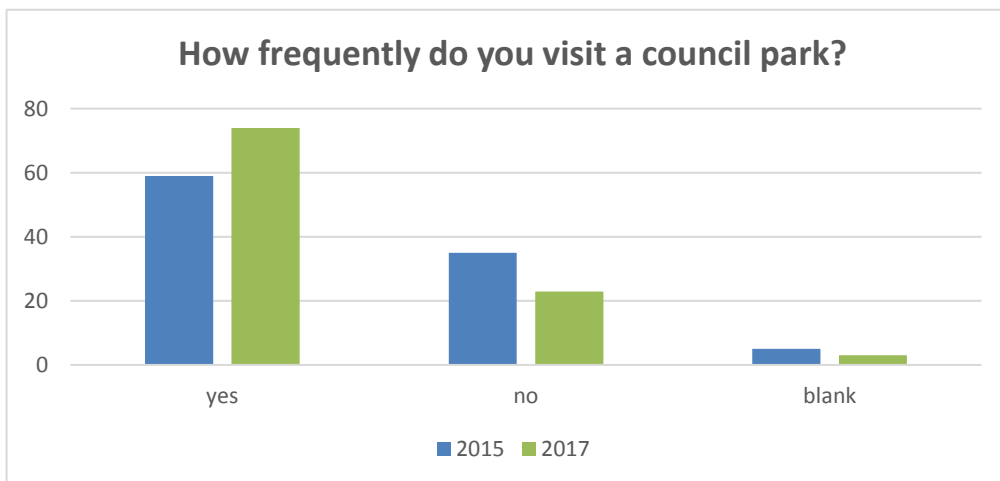
# Outdoor spaces and buildings

The outside environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people and affect their ability to 'age in place'.

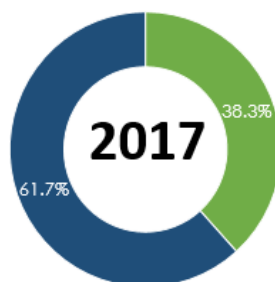
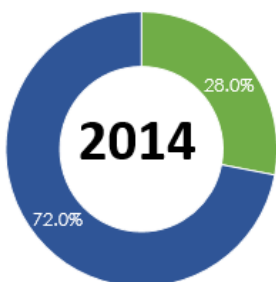
## Greenspace and walkability

Belfast has an abundance of open space - more than any other urban area in the UK - including parks, playing fields, greenways as well as the River Lagan and Belfast Hills. Belfast City Council manages 48 Parks and open spaces, 17 of which now have 'Green Flags', the national excellence standard for parks management. 15 of these 'Green Flag' sites are located within a 1km radius of almost 72% of Belfast residents. 21 of these parks include mapped walking routes for users, and parks facilities include 13 bowling greens. As well as the 7 allotments the Council manages, 13 community gardens are also available, where people can come together to grow their own fruit, flowers and vegetables.

The Age-friendly Belfast Survey asked the following question: How frequently do you visit a park in Belfast? Our survey in 2017 showed that over 76% of people who answered stated they used parks in Belfast to varying degrees of frequency, an increase of over 12% since our survey in 2015. Of the parks users, 81% considered walking in Belfast parks to be average, good or excellent.



During 2016/17, a total of 5,119 older people took part in Active Belfast Programmes. This represented 38% of all participants. Active ageing programmes, leisure centre participation levels and participation in parks have contributed to a marked improvement by 10% of older people in Belfast, completing a total of 30 mins or more of physical activity in a typical week (the Belfast Residents Survey).



These participation levels are still very low, with only 15.2% of older people in Belfast meeting the recommended chief medical officer's physical activity guidelines. The NICOLA Phase 1 study also reported that 51% of older people from the most deprived areas in NI were inactive suggesting that most gain may be achieved through targeting older people with the following characteristics:

- 'older ' older people
- living in deprived areas
- female
- single
- lower education levels

Walking is one of the best ways for older people to increase their physical activity levels and parks were mentioned as places where older people in Belfast take walks with family or friends providing spaces for social contact. 38.5% reported using these on a weekly basis and they specifically mentioned places to sit as being important facilities within parks. Others cited mobility issues, lack of interest or having to wait for a family member or friend to take them as the most common reasons for not using parks.

Walking Belfast: Older People's Views, a report by Belfast Healthy Cities in 2016, summarised development of a walkability tool and reported findings from 24 walks completed in local neighbourhoods and parks across Belfast involving 250 older people. A key recommendation from this report is to formally engage older people in policy and decision making on planning and physical development in Belfast.

## **Pavements and neighbourhoods**

In recent years there have been many developments in Belfast that support age-friendly design and improved walking infrastructure in Belfast. For example, the Comber and Connswater Greenway developments, a range of public realm improvements through the Department for Infrastructure Development(DfC), investment in parks by Belfast City Council and work undertaken by DfI on road improvements, transport initiatives and active travel policies. Future developments will include Belfast City Council's Local Development Plan, the new Accessible Transport Strategy, introduction of Belfast Rapid Transit(BRT)and continued work on active travel including work to support walking.

Many older people state that their neighbourhood is a good place to live and this view has remained fairly constant (Belfast Resident's Survey 2014 and 2017). However, when asked about improvements needed in Belfast and their local neighbourhood, changes to the outside physical environment are consistently stated in the top three improvements needed. It is important that neighbourhoods are designed to support all ages and work through Belfast Healthy Cities on child friendly spaces highlight the importance of open and green space and clean and safe environments.

Older people in Belfast are consistently asking for more and better placed seating and toilets, and improvements in pavements. Worcestershire County Council has developed a draft Planning for Health Supplementary that covers age-friendly and dementia-friendly environments. Advice includes:

- Public footpaths should be well lit and evenly surfaced. Where there are some changes to ground levels, the transition should be slow. Where steps are unavoidable, the provision of railings is necessary.
- It is important that pathways contain seating areas located in strategic places, for example at crossroads. People living with dementia might take a little bit longer to remember their destination or

how to get there. Placing benches under street trees to allow shading during hot weather would also be beneficial.

- The design of street furniture should be kept simple and familiar to avoid it being mistaken for another object. The built environment can enable social interaction and connect people with places and with other people. The provision of green and open spaces and walkable neighbourhoods can encourage and facilitate increased physical activity amongst older people. It is crucial that these spaces and routes are safe, well-maintained and accessible.

The quote below reflects feedback through and the Age-friendly Belfast stakeholder workshop in June 2017.

*Much positive work takes place within the city centre-this needs to be rolled out to other areas, - more toilets and seating, parking on kerbs that stop prams, wheel chairs and scooters*

## Transportation and mobility

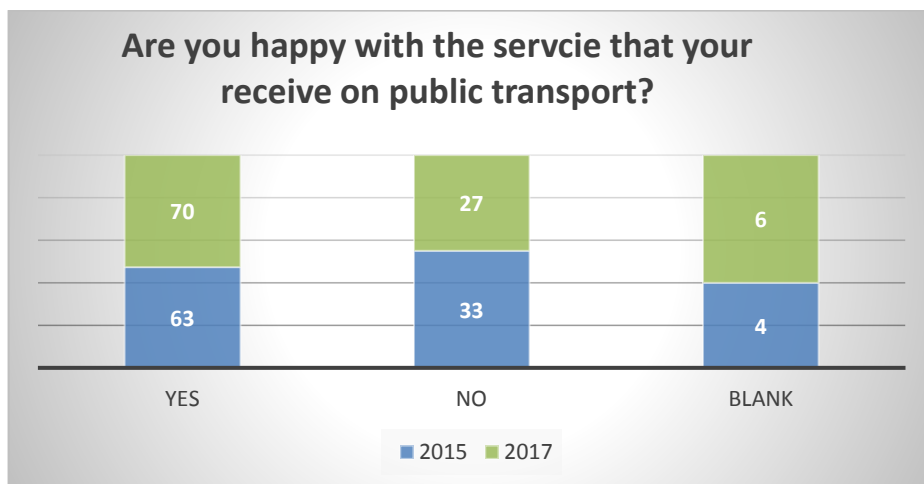
*Transportation, including accessible and affordable public transport, is a key factor influencing active ageing. It is a theme running through many other areas of discussion. In particular, being able to move around the city and local neighbourhoods determines social and civic participation and access to community and health services.*

### Transport availability and use

Free public transport for older people in NI remains a very valued and important provision. The Campaign to End Loneliness identifies transport as an important gateway service in reducing isolation and loneliness. As of December 2017, there are a total of 53,166 active SmartPass holders in Belfast. This represents approximately 81% of those eligible to receive a SmartPass and 67% of these passes were used at least once in 2016-2017. As of 1 January 2018 there were total of 13,426 Blue Badges holders aged 60+ by postcode in Belfast. The scheme includes older people with severe mobility problems, allowing badge holders to park close to where they need to go, including free on-street parking in 'pay and display' bays.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Infrastructure report that there were 1,361 buses used in 2016/17 as public service vehicles of which 1,079 have an accessibility certificate or low floor access.

When the Age-friendly Belfast Survey was repeated in 2017, 275 people out of 386 that were surveyed (70%) claimed they were happy with the service they received on public transport. This has improved since the 2015 survey, where 63% said they were happy. We also know that 81.5% of older people can walk to a bus stop in under 13 minutes. Over 86% of older people surveyed can get a bus at least once an hour from their closest bus stop, while nearly three quarters (70.81%) would be able to get a bus from their closest bus stop at least every half hour.



Local transport was one of the top 4 things that are done well in communities according to our current Age-friendly Belfast Survey: 2017 and beyond, but also one of the top improvement needed. There are continued request from older people for improvements in customer care and improved timetabling during weekends.

**Suggested actions that were brought up during focus group meetings included:**

- Working with the DfI and Translink on widespread communication on new transport developments (BRT and new ticketing);
- Improving accessible public transport;
- Increasing coordination and provision of volunteer driving;
- Continuation of training of drivers on public transport is recommended, specifically in recognition of the needs of older people;
- Transport made available to get people to and from organised events.



Significant work is being undertaken currently to provide new buses and services linking East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter via the city center.

This, the first phase of £90m Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme from the Department for Infrastructure, is due to start in September 2018.

BRT Phase 2 aims to link north and south Belfast, encompassing the City Hospital and Queen's University, and will present an opportunity to consider further integration with the proposed transport hub on Great Victoria Street. Passenger numbers using the Belfast Hub are expected to increase from 6.7 million to 10 million a year.



**Modes of transport**

Whilst we do not have figures specifically for older people in Belfast, we know that for the population of Northern Ireland as a whole, i.e. all regions and all ages, the proportion of all journeys where the main mode of travel is walking, cycling or public transport has remained essentially static in the last 10 years.

**Proportion of all journeys where the main mode of travel\* is walking, cycling or public transport\*\*: 2006 to 2016**

Year	Percent of all journeys			
	Walking	Cycling	Public Transport**	Walk, Cycle or Public Transport**
2006	17%	0%	5%	22%
↓				
2015	19%	1%	5%	25%
2016	19%	1%	5%	24%

\* Main mode is the form of transport used for the greatest length of the journey. For example, if the journey had 2 stages, walking 1 mile to the train station and then taking a 10 mile train journey, the train would be the main mode and therefore the journey is assigned to the "public transport" category.

\*\* Public Transport includes Ulsterbus, Metro, Other Bus, Northern Ireland Railways and Black Taxi.



**Journeys per person per year by main mode -  
Belfast LGD<sup>1</sup>: 2013-2015**

Percentage /  
Journeys /  
Miles

LGD	Walk	Bicycle	Car <sup>2</sup>	Public Transport <sup>3</sup>	Other <sup>4</sup>	All modes	Walking, Cycling or Public Transport <sup>3</sup>	Average number of journeys	Average distance travelled (miles)
<b>Belfast</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>3,922</b>
95% Confidence Intervals									
	±3%	±1%	±3%	±2%	±1%		±3%	±40	±309
<sup>1</sup> Belfast LGD from April 2015 onwards. Data has been assigned to LGDs based on where the respondent lives. <sup>2</sup> Car includes 'Car driver', 'Car passenger' and 'Car undefined' <sup>3</sup> Public Transport includes 'Metro and Ulsterbus', 'Other bus', 'NI Railways' and 'Black Taxi' <sup>4</sup> Other includes 'Motorcycle', 'Other private', 'Taxi', 'Other public' and 'Undefined mode'									

There are 110 miles of cycle lanes in Belfast and 1344 miles of footways. It is important that the cycle network is further developed and that cycling on footpaths is limited as older people are increasingly concerned about safety issues and this may affect the numbers of older people walking in their local neighbourhoods.

## Housing

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*Older people have diverse housing preferences and needs, and an age-friendly city should have a spectrum of housing options available to meet the needs of older adults. Services and supports can help older adults age in place, if they wish to do so.*

### **Housing provision and adjustments to homes**

The World Health Organisation states that research shows that housing and support allow older people to age comfortably and safely within the community to which they belong and are universally valued. The Belfast Agenda identifies provision of suitable housing as a key area for older people

Currently Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) have 14,100 small unit housing stock in Belfast and in March 2017 there were a total of 1,236 older person household registered on the NIHE housing waiting list representing, 11.51% of the total household groups and 812 older people in housing stress. These figures are very similar to the figures of almost 1,300 applicants on the housing waiting list in 2013 and 832 in housing stress.

The 2016 House Condition Survey headlines show that housing unfitness levels in Northern Ireland are now at an all-time low of 2.1% . Furthermore almost one third of all households were older households and of these 73 % lived in owner-occupied homes.

In March 2017 there were 85 wheelchair applicants in housing stress registered on the waiting list for Belfast regional area. A number of these will be catered for in the future social development programme. The Department for Communities has approved a wheelchair standard accommodation target of 6% of all general needs new build and this will rise to 7% in 2018/19.

In total, 18,573 households presented as homeless to NIHE in 2016-17, a decrease of less than 1% from the previous year (18,628). The household types with the highest number of homeless presenters in 2016-17 were single males (33%) and families (32%). However, homelessness in pensioner households in NI is increasing with 2335 pensioner households presenting as homeless in 2016/2017 compared to 1968 in 2013/2014.

The NIHE research on the Future Housing and Support Needs of Older People in 2013 concludes that older people in future will mostly be home owners and reported strong evidence that older people wish to maintain independence in their own homes for as long as possible. In order to do this people will need a range of support and information. The Disabled Facilities Grant is to help to improve the home of a person with a disability, and may be based on the recommendation of an occupational therapist. During 2016/17 there were a total of 76 grants approved for older person households to adjust their homes compared to 113 grants in 2013/2014.

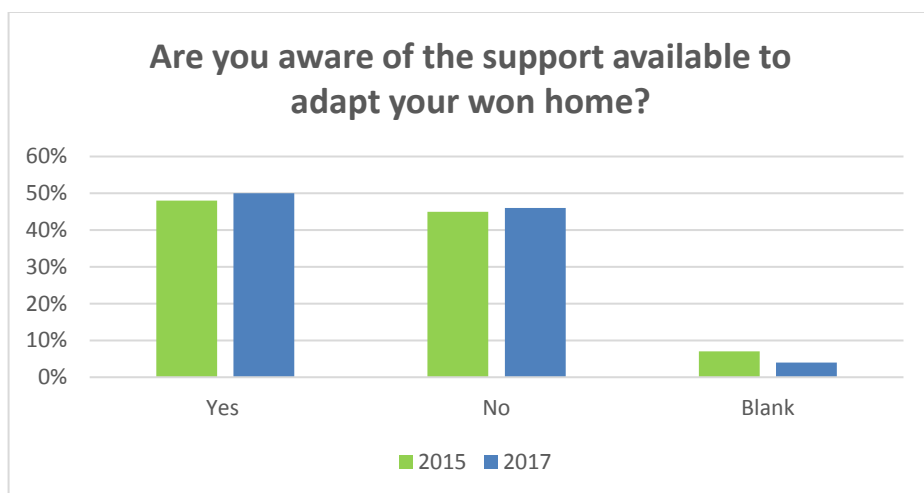
NIHE also provides a disability/adaptation services to assist our tenants to sustain their tenancies, by remaining at home. This type of work comprises of improvements such as the installation of level deck showers, ramps, vertical/chair lifts or property extensions to facilitate ground floor bathroom and bedroom extensions. NIHE work very closely with occupational therapy services to find appropriate housing solutions, and in Belfast during 2016/17 they delivered approximately 25 individual schemes to ageing and older tenants.

A city-wide Handy-person Home Safety Check and Repair Service has been established since 2015, through a collaborative partnership with Belfast City Council, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, Public Health Agency and Bryson Energy. The service is for those aged over 65 years (or a vulnerable adult) living in Belfast. Recipients receive a free home safety check and 'helping hand' equipment. Handy person repairs are carried out at an affordable rate by police checked staff.

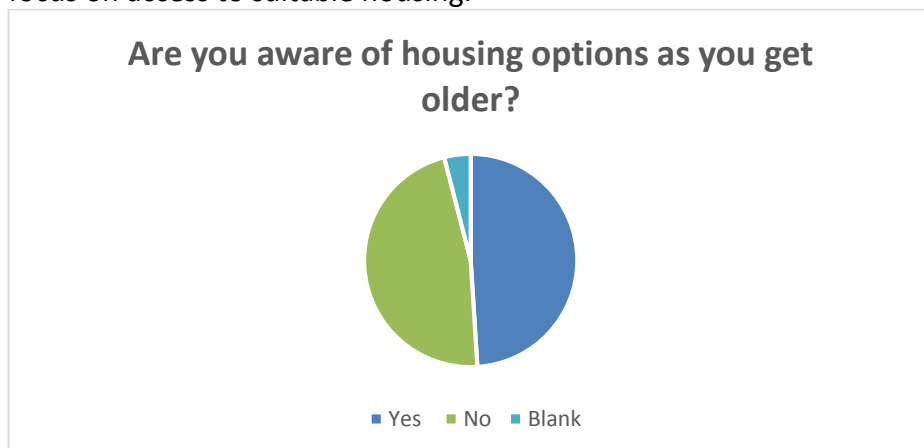
In 2016-2017, 485 home safety checks were completed, with 140 of these homes receiving repair work that was identified by the handyperson which would prevent future falls and accident. Evaluation found that 95% of respondents noted a good to substantial difference made to their confidence and independence in and around their home, and 91% of respondents noted a good to substantial difference made to how safe and secure they felt in their home.

### Older people's views on housing options and support

The Age-friendly Belfast survey showed a slight increase in knowledge amongst older residents regarding the support available to adapt homes as residents grow older, from 48% in 2015, to 50% in 2017.



Awareness of future housing options remain quite low with 46% not being aware of housing options as they get older. In addition, consultation on the Belfast Agenda also highlighted the need for a particular focus on access to suitable housing.



The focus group report with lesser heard groups of older people found that often interviewees were reluctant to discuss future housing needs. Some interviewees stated that they had thought about the matter and seemed aware of the options to either change their homes or move to alternative

accommodation. Several individuals have already moved to supported housing and they were not thinking further about this whilst others had adaptations made to their own home. Social services, occupational therapy, doctors and NIHE were cited as a source to seek support. Others stated should their home require changes or should they need to move they would rely on scheme managers or family to support them in finding this information.

## **Fuel poverty**

The Affordable Warmth Scheme has improved 5,069 homes in 2016/17. Between September 2012 and March 2016, 35,010 Boiler Replacement Grants were approved amounting to £23.8 million investment. The 2016 House Condition Survey estimated that approximately 22% (160,000) of households in Northern Ireland were in fuel poverty (Table 6.1). This represents a significant improvement in fuel poverty levels since 2011 when the figure was 42% (294,000).

This decrease of 20 percentage points in the five year period is statistically significant and is largely due to lower average fuel prices, lower modelled household energy use (mainly due to improved energy efficiency of the stock, particularly dwelling fabric and heating systems) and increased income. There has also been significant investment in the social sector and promotion of the Warm Homes scheme.

The 2016 House Condition Survey indicated that 15% of households in Belfast were considered to be in Fuel Poverty and this has reduced from 39% in 2011. By council, Belfast shows the largest proportionate decrease in fuel poverty of 24 percentage points in the ten year period. This cannot be disaggregated to a lower level to provide the levels of fuel poverty in older people in Belfast, but we do know that of the 22% of households considered to be in fuel poverty in NI, 38% are headed by older person households ie 75 years +.

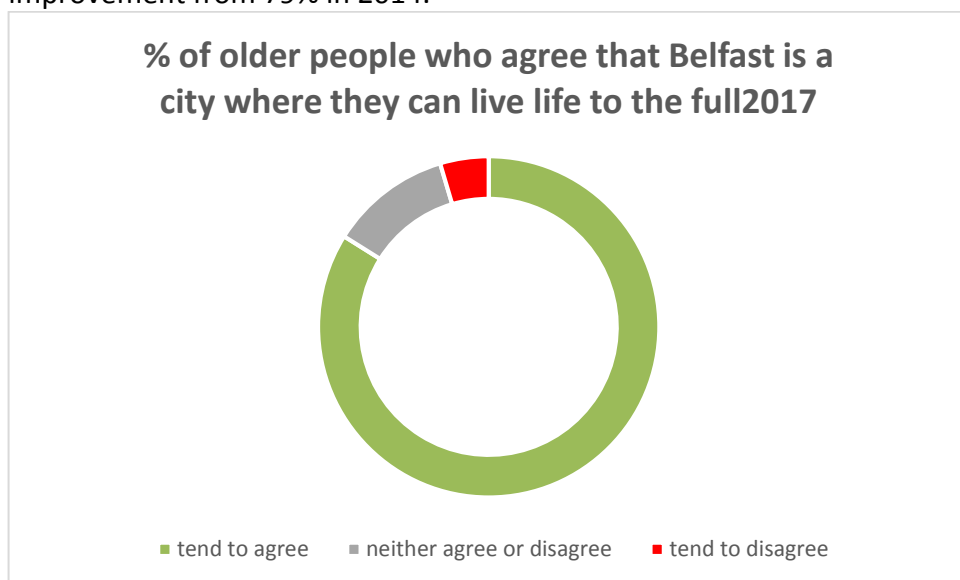
## Social participation

*Social participation and social support are strongly connected to good health and wellbeing throughout life. It involves participating in cultural, leisure and social programmes, it includes spending time with friends and family, and it is also about how older people feel about the quality of these interactions.*

### Cultural, leisure and social programmes in Belfast

Belfast City has a thriving cultural and social scene, high quality sporting facilities and many excellent examples of natural and built heritage. Across all age groups, engagement in arts and cultural activity in Belfast stands at 85%, while 32% directly participate in arts activities. The Mercer 2015 Quality of Living rankings listed Belfast as 5<sup>th</sup> the UK and 63<sup>rd</sup> overall out of a total of 230 cities around the world.

The 2017 Belfast residents survey reported that 84% of older people aged 60+(n=432, 428 valid responses) agreed that Belfast is a city where they can live life to the full and this showed an improvement from 79% in 2014.



The Age-friendly Belfast Survey carried out in 2017, showed that 303 of 396 people surveyed (76.5%) had participated in or attended an arts or cultural event in the last 12 months and 51.6% were satisfied or very satisfied with these events.

Belfast City Council owns and maintains 14 leisure centres, now run by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) under the 'Better Belfast' brand. In 2017, the 12 week "Healthwise" exercise programme helped 1,056 people referred through their GP to increase physical activity and rehabilitate from cardiac, coronary, obesity and other health related issues. The second Annual Club Games saw 100% increase in participation with 8 teams of over 55s competing in a range of sports including table tennis, dander ball, badminton, boccia and darts.

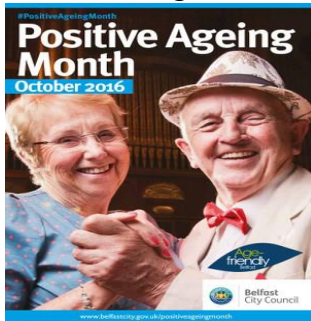
Older people's activity programmes are delivered in BCC's 24 community centres either by direct service delivery or in partnership with local older people's groups/ volunteers. Programmes vary across centres as they are developed in response to local older people's needs and interests. Activities are social, cultural and leisure focused addressing social isolation and encouraging regular participation. Advice and signposting to other local/ city wide services and opportunities are also provided. All programmes are at

minimal cost to participants, centres are fully DDA compliant, have been awarded a PQASSO kit mark, and are designated a BCC Age Friendly facility.

Community Services also provides programme support to older people's groups through an annual Community Development Project Grant programme. This grant of £500 supports small scale community projects eg seasonal celebrations, fun days, information days, activity programmes

The Belfast Residents Survey includes the following question: Generally over the past 12 months, how often would you use the following council facilities for physical activity - Council sports and leisure facilities? A total of 69 of the 121 (57%) who answered the question stated that they used such facilities.

Positive Ageing Month has taken place in October each year since 2015. Initiated through older people in west Belfast, it is now hosted by Belfast City Council and in 2016 involved over 200 events with approximately 10,000 attendances by older people. Participants reported a positive effect on their health and wellbeing.



***"I'm exhausted! Best October ever."***  
***"It's been great and you keep learning every time you come."***  
***"I am on my own, so was a bit apprehensive about coming but everyone has been great."***  
***"It's amazing how happy this has made my mum."***

Belfast has a vibrant community and voluntary sector. Over one quarter of all the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Northern Ireland are in Belfast. The age sector works together in Belfast to provide or signpost older people to approximately 400 group activities and there are a number of one- to-one befriending and Good Morning Schemes.

The City Matters magazine distributed to all Belfast households by Belfast City Council has a regular senior's section and promotes programmes including tea dances, arts festival, dementia friendly programmes, IT sessions and intergenerational programmes.

## **Barriers to participation**

There is increasing evidence that both isolation and loneliness have major effects on older people's health and wellbeing and also present barriers to social participation. The 'Have Your Say Belfast' survey issued in 2016 by Belfast Strategic Partnership was completed by 4,934 residents with 50% of respondents aged over 51. Findings for this age group included 25.5% having been treated for anxiety or depression in year prior to survey and 57% stating they feel lonely. Whilst this is a very wide age range it supports the need to prioritise work to reduce isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Belfast.

The data from Wave 1 of NICOLA study indicates that the majority of older people taking part in the survey had a wide circle of family and friends, but nearly one in five people (18%) said that they do not have any close friends. This is higher for men (22%) than women (16%), and for those in the oldest age group (27%) compared to 50-64 year olds (16%).

39% of participants report involvement in activity groups (especially sports or religious groups), 30% in a local group, 9% in a national group and 18% were involved in voluntary or charitable work. Only one in ten participated in groups for older people. Overall participation rates were higher among married participants, and those with higher qualifications, or those living in least deprived areas.

Queens University Belfast carried out a piece of work for HASP in December 2016 to map isolation and loneliness amongst older people in Belfast. These maps showed isolation and loneliness is a citywider issues. Whilst people most at risk live in some of the most deprived areas in Belfast, there are also small pockets or areas at risk across the city.

One of the five key priorities for the next Age-friendly Belfast plan identified through the stakeholder workshop in June 2017 was to improve information and connections for more isolated older people. Actions suggested, which would have the biggest impact in this area includes have a one-stop -shop for information, more collaboration between service providers to give more information to frontline staff who visit people's homes, developing local information champions and reviewing the Seniors Info directory.

*Focus on the diverse range of older people in Belfast, 60-100 is a large age range- you need to consider older people living with a disability, older LGBT people and older carers*

## Respect and social inclusion

Older people report experiencing conflicting types of behaviour and attitudes towards them. On the one hand, many feel they are often respected, recognized and included, whilst on the other hand, they report experiencing a lack of consideration in the community and in some services. Feeling respected and included can play a significant role in older people's health and wellbeing.

### Respect and dignity

Consultations in Belfast have shown that respect and dignity are important to older people. The Belfast Residents Survey in 2017 demonstrated an unchanged picture of around 74% agreeing that Belfast is a city where older people are treated with respect and dignity and this is consistent with the overall population of Belfast (76%). Cleveland, a city in America with a similar population of older people, found that 61% of older people felt they were treated with respect.



Conflicting opinions have been expressed with this issue being the number one rated priority through consultations in 2014, 1 of 5 priorities highlighted in the recent stakeholder review June 2017, but wasn't highly rated as a priority improvement needed in the 2017 Age-friendly Belfast survey.

### Intergenerational work

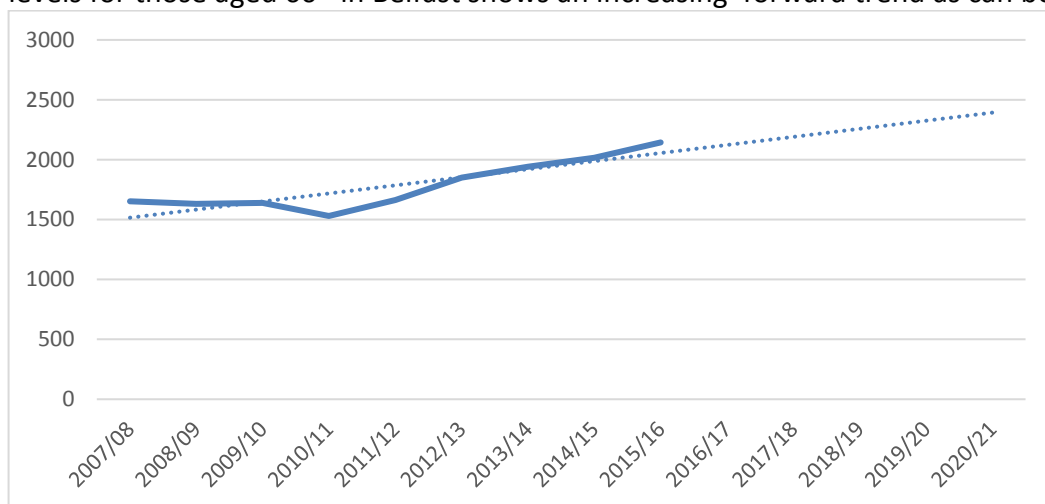
Linking Generations NI (LGNI) pursues a vision of a Northern Ireland where all generations are respected, understood, connected and engaged in their communities. To achieve this vision LGNI work regionally to develop and support opportunities for generations to come together and see age-friendly as a key agenda to generate intergenerational connections. Since 2014 LGNI have supported and delivered the development of intergenerational activities in Belfast through the following projects/programmes – An Age-friendly School Project, Digital Age Project, ITea Time & ConnectIT projects, Living Learning Growing Together Kirk House and other care home projects, All Ages April and Communities for All Ages. LGNI sit on the East Belfast Dementia Friendly Community partnership and deliver dementia awareness training to young people before supporting engagement with older people and care home residents. LGNI seeks to



continue support/catalyst organisation supporting the development and embedding of intergenerational approaches within agendas such as age-friendly and community planning.

## Crime

The PSNI report 'Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2015/16, states that of the 73,541 offences recorded in 2015/16 where there was a person victim, 10 per cent were persons aged under 18, 83 per cent were aged 18-64 and 7 per cent were aged 65 or over. Twenty eight per cent of victims aged 65 or over were victims of theft, while 26 per cent were victims of burglary and 27 per cent were victims of criminal damage. Sixteen per cent were victims of violence against the person offences. Belfast City has shown a downwards crime trend over the past two years. The level decreased from September 2015 (3,196 offences) to January 2016 (2,642 offences) before generally increasing to a level of 2,994 offences recorded in October 2016. However, it should be noted the general recorded crime levels for those aged 60+ in Belfast shows an increasing forward trend as can be seen in the chart below.



The Commissioner for Older people for NI (COPNI) carried out a prevalence study on financial abuse in older people in 2016 as a result of casework being brought to the commissioner's office and reported levels of financial elder abuse through health and social care organisations having tripled in the 3-4 previous years. The resulting report "Financial Abuse of OP: The Unsettling Truth" found that 75,000 people aged 60+ in NI are affected by some level of financial abuse in Northern Ireland and 21% of older people are affected in Belfast.

## Lesser heard older people

Age-friendly Belfast commissioned Age NI to carry out focus groups with older people from under-represented groups February-April 2016. These focus group discussions were co-ordinated by peer facilitators and included older people with a disability, older people from BME groups, older LGBT people, older carers and older people living in sheltered accommodation. There were some specific issues or comments:

- some older people's events are not suitable for older people from for the LGBT community
- older carers have a limited knowledge of age-friendly initiatives, are interested in cultural activities and getting some exercise but opportunities are limited due to time restraints
- There is a need to increase promotion of Age-friendly Belfast events to under-represented groups.

## Income Deprivation

Income deprivation affecting older people is a complicated picture and the tables below show that areas that are most deprived below don't coincide with the most deprived areas in terms of multiple deprivation. For example, Windsor\_2 is the second most deprived in Belfast for older people (income below median) yet in terms of multiple deprivation it would be one of the least deprived in Northern Ireland (ranking 790 out of 890).

SOA2001_name	Proportion of the population aged 65 and over living in households whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the NI median Rank (MDM in ( ))	Proportion of the population aged 65 and over living in households whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the NI median (%)	2016 MYE >65	no. pop low income
Botanic_4	17 (189)	12.9%	39	5
Windsor_2	18 (790)	12.9%	132	17
Ballyhackamore_2	87 (823)	9.9%	305	30
Bloomfield_1	133 (139)	8.9%	235	21
Bellevue_2	156 (123)	8.5%	246	21
Ardoyne_2	176 (4)	8.2%	245	20
Orangefield_1	178 (667)	8.2%	233	19
Botanic_1	187 (580)	8.0%	50	4

At the other end of the scale – the least deprived (older people living in households whose income is below 60% of the NI median) is showing the opposite. Upper Whiterock\_2 is one of the most deprived areas (multiple deprivation 23) yet is 2<sup>nd</sup> least deprived in the whole of Northern Ireland in terms of income deprivation affecting older people.

SOA2001_name	Proportion of the population aged 65 and over living in households whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the NI median Rank (MDM in ( ))	Proportion of the population aged 65 and over living in households whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the NI median (%)	2016 MYE >65	no. pop low income
Glencolin_4	882 (116)	1.0%	292	3
Shankill_2	883 (18)	1.0%	490	5
New Lodge_3	887 (32)	0.7%	156	1
Twinbrook_1	888 (42)	0.6%	162	1
Whiterock_2	889 (23)	0.4%	250	1
Upper Springfield_2	890 (77)	0.4%	282	1

It may be that the benefits system is ensuring that the majority of older people have an income that is/above average. Therefore it is important to keep in mind that the least deprived areas in Belfast have pockets of older people who are very much income deprived.

## Stakeholder views

Positive views of ageing and being able to live life to full both scored highly with older people in the Belfast resident's survey.

*Positive ageing-so many inspirational older people, full of fun, use these positive people to inspire us all*

However, persistent issues have been reported in stakeholder discussions on being given more time and better communication with service providers. Older people also express the desire for more intergenerational programmes and the need to provide more jobs and leisure programmes for younger people.

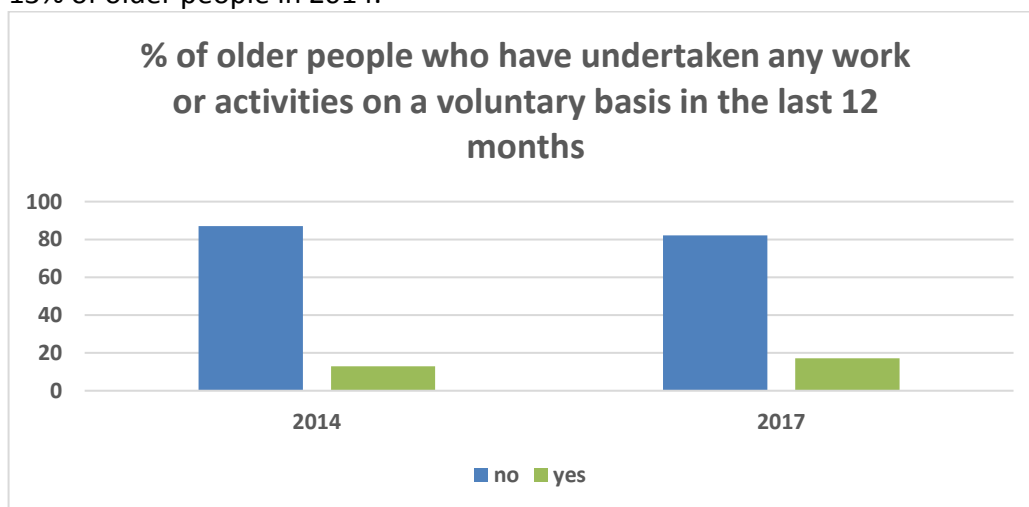
## Civic participation and employment

*Older people do not stop contributing to their communities on retirement. Many continue to provide unpaid and voluntary work for their families and communities. In some areas, economic circumstances force older people to take paid work long after they should have retired. An age-friendly community provides options for older people to continue to contribute to their communities, through paid employment or voluntary work if they so choose, and to be engaged in the political process.*

### What we know about civic participation in Belfast

18% of those aged 50+ in the NICOLA wave 1 report were involved in voluntary work or charitable activity, and participation is higher among those aged 50-74 years (20%) than it is among those aged 75+(10%). There is a reported variation according to where people live, with those living in the least deprived areas being more likely to be involved than those living in the most deprived areas (25% and 12% respectively). The NISRA Age-friendly Belfast profile reports 9.6% of people aged 65+ undertaking voluntary work and 12.6% providing unpaid care. This compares to 10.7% and 12.35% respectively for the NI population.

The Belfast Residents Survey also reflects similar participation but indicates an increase in participation levels in those aged 60+. In 2017, 17% of older people volunteered in the last 12 months compared to 13% of older people in 2014.



The Age-friendly Belfast plan 2014-2017 included actions to promote and highlight the importance of volunteering in older people. Since 2014, there has been a total of 242 volunteers nominated in the annual Age-friendly Belfast Older Volunteer Awards, with a significant increase of 140 nominated in 2017.

An All Party Reference Group on older people was formed in Belfast City Council in 2008 and is chaired by an Older People's Champion. This group meets quarterly and is made up of elected members from each political party, its aim is to lead on the Council's approach to tackling the issues affecting older people in the City. The political input provided by the reference group is at the heart of the Council's approach to improving the quality of life of older people in Belfast.

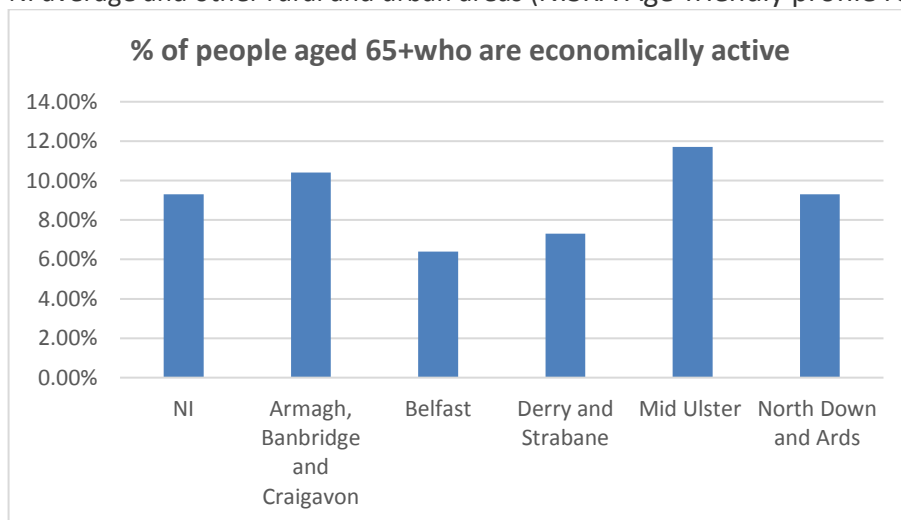
The chair of the All Party Reference group on Older People who became interested in the Age-friendly approach and liked the structure of the process and its potential to engage partners and the whole City in improvements for older people. The Reference group meets with Greater Belfast Seniors Forum (G6) every 6 months to talk together about progress achieved and actions needed to support older people in Belfast. G6 ensures that older people in Belfast have a strong, informed and united voice. A core of representatives from each of the 6 areas based forums are joined by key personnel from Age-friendly Belfast and Age Partnership Belfast and they meet monthly in Belfast City Hall. Each year an action plan is developed to address priority issues for older people in the city. Current priorities are promoting mental health, influencing health and social care service, transport and fuel poverty.

### What we know about employment in older people

Business the Community has stated that *‘our research shows that of the 3.3 million economically inactive people aged 50-64 in the UK, approximately 1 million people have been made ‘involuntarily workless’ – pushed out of their previous job through a combination of redundancy, ill health or early retirement’*

The Northern Ireland Labour Market Report 2017 stated that employment rates for the over 50’s have been increasing since 2008, but we have the second lowest employment rate of older adults in the UK with just over one third of those over the age of 50 in work. The NICOLA wave 1 report found that the employment rate amongst those that reported their health status as good as or better than good is 71% compared, to 45% of those who report their health as fair and 16% of those who report poor health. Involvement in the labour market is also influenced by education and deprivation levels, pension provision, caring responsibilities and long-term sickness or disability.

The chart below demonstrates current low level of economically active over 65s in Belfast compared to the NI average and other rural and urban areas (NISRA Age-friendly profile reports).



An Age@Work partnership was developed in 2017 to support older workers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to remain/return to work in order to help them have enough income, stay connected and have a fuller working life. The partnership funded a recent YouGov survey with over 500 older workers in NI, which found that:

- 46% of NI respondents are likely to work past retirement age (in line with UK average: 45%)
- The top reasons for working past retirement was for financial reasons (49%), but also for social reasons and concern about being bored and alone at home

- The top reason for not working past retirement age was that people's health would not be good enough

40 organisations and businesses have signed up to the Age-friendly Belfast Charter and a key section is about supporting an ageing workforce. Future planning for recruiting and retraining older workers is important to Belfast's economic development.

## Communication and information

*The goal of interventions in this domain is to assist older adults in accessing timely, reliable, relevant and understandable information about their community, ways of engagement, available services and health topics through word of mouth, general press or the use of information technology.*

### Sources of information

Communication and information for older people in Belfast is available through an increasing range of sources as shown in the table below:

<b>Verbal or face to face information</b>	Information shared face-to-face by friends, families, the community and voluntary sector and staff working in statutory service such as health, social care or housing Good morning/phone call services Community navigator/connector roles Getting information over the telephone or radio
<b>Hard copy Information</b>	The Seniors Info directory, City Matters magazine, the Age-friendly Belfast update, regional newsletters, local newsletters and flyers distributed by organisations. Information in libraries. Large print information for events
<b>Digital/online information</b>	Websites such as Belfast City Council, Making life Better Together, Age NI and NI Direct. Social media, email updates, information on Apps

Hard copy information remains a key way of communicating with older people, with City Matters being a very effective way of communicating on key services and events. The Seniors Info directory remains a very popular publication, but is out of date very soon after it is published. A reliable and joined up approach to communication plays an important role in closing gaps in access to services, activities and events, and in reaching out to more isolated older people.

### Access to and use of information

Creating age-friendly environments in Europe: a handbook of domains state that:

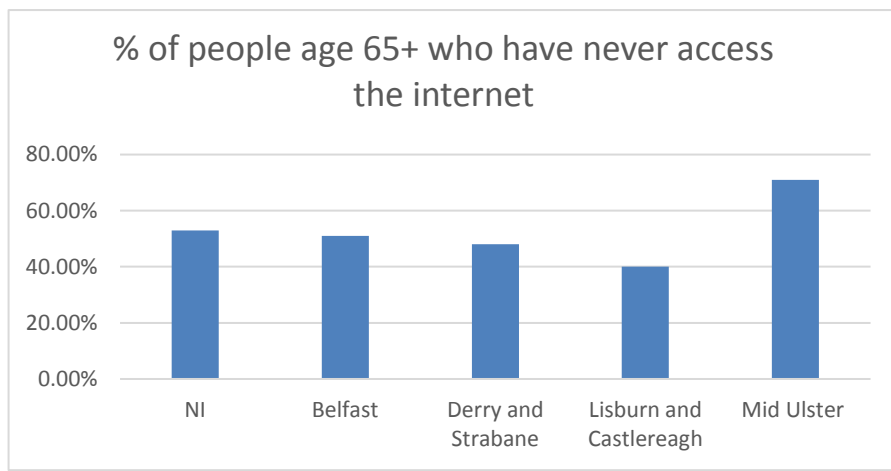
*Community activities for healthy ageing are often attended by groups of relatively healthy older people – they tend to be part of social and family networks that help them to stay connected with community life and informed about the range of activities and services available for them, including their rights and how to access public services. Opportunities to access information are therefore not equally spread among older people.*

Findings from the Age-friendly Belfast survey 2017 supports this premise finding that 58% of older people are aware of Age-friendly Belfast activities. Focus groups with lesser heard groups recommended an increase the promotion of age-friendly events as few in the participant groups were knowledgeable about the range and scope of events on offer.

Health literacy – the ability to access and comprehend health-related information – is limited in every second older person (Sørensen et al., 2015). This presents a challenge for communicating healthy ageing and other key messages.

Access to the internet has increased sharply in recent years for older age groups. Among 60-69 year olds, 46% had access to the internet in 2009-10 compared to 10% in 2001-02. Over one fifth (22%) of people aged 70 and over had internet access in 2009-10 compared to just 3% in 2001-02

The NICOLA wave 1 survey found that men are less likely than women to communicate via text, email or chatrooms. The survey also found that digital communication is used more frequently by those aged 50-64 years than among those in older age groups. It is also used more frequently by those living in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry than in more rural areas. It is also known that 51% of 65+ years old persons living in Belfast have never accessed the internet. (NISRA) and those participants with higher educational qualifications or those living in the least deprived areas are also more likely to communicate using digital media.



### Stakeholder feedback

One of the five key priorities for the next Age-friendly Belfast plan identified through the stakeholder workshop in June 2017 was to improve information and connections for more isolated older people.

Key Actions:	Other Practical Suggestions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a one-stop -shop for information and reviewing the Seniors Info directory</li> <li>More collaboration between service providers to give more information to frontline staff who visit people’s homes</li> <li>Developing local information champions, including contacts with lesser heard groups of older people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Dfi and Translink on widespread communication on new transport developments (BRT and new ticketing)</li> <li>Having more face-to-face information in hospitals e.g. by volunteers</li> <li>Give greater help with using IT e.g. Apple Evening Classes Help older people use technology and advise on scamming</li> <li>Have a single point of contact in the Council with multiple links to services</li> <li>Have community and voluntary groups (e.g. Men’s Sheds) calling with people at home to support care workers</li> <li>Continued development of seniors page in the City Matters magazine</li> </ul>

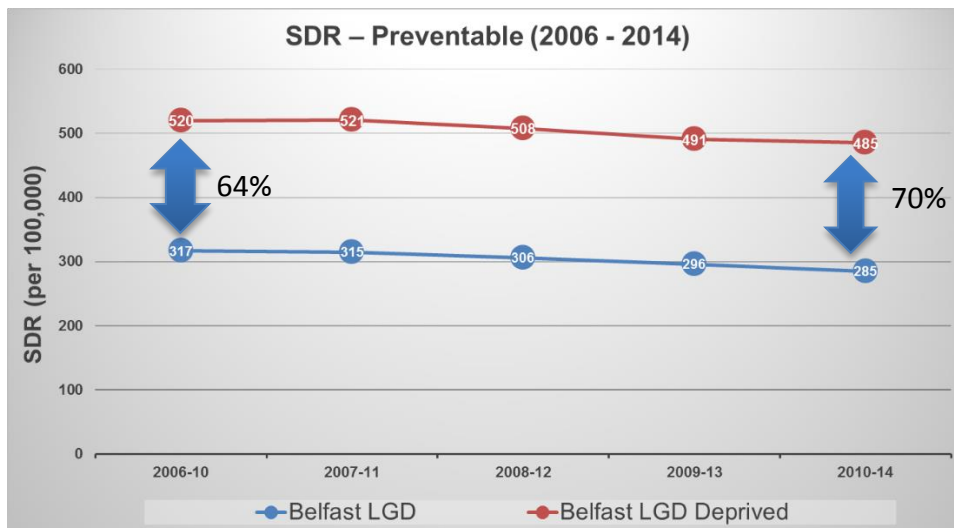


## Community and health services

Health is a key indicator that determines an individual's ability to stay independent and active in the community across the lifespan; inadequate health services and community supports can be particularly detrimental to older adult residents. Age-friendly community supports and health services are conveniently located, accessible to people with various physical abilities, and delivered respectfully.

### Health inequalities and health improvement

People are living longer in Belfast but there is a difference between the most deprived areas (5.6 years for females and 9.2 years for men) and the least deprived areas in the city. Healthy life expectancy for women in most deprived areas is 53.4 compared to 68 in least deprived (14 years difference). Generally women are living longer but in poorer health in most deprived areas. The chart below shows the trend for preventable deaths in Belfast over the last decade with a reducing trend at both city and deprivation level, but despite this the gap is increasing.



In order to reduce the effect of these inequalities there is a need to target key healthy lifestyle programmes such as smoking cessation, physical activity, healthy eating, substance misuse and emotional resilience programme to older people living in areas of deprivation in Belfast. It is also important to keep in mind health literacy issues as mentioned in the previous chapter.

A city wide approach is also needed for some health programmes. 61% of NICOLA participants reported drinking alcohol on a regular basis. 18% of participants (approximately one in three regular drinkers) consumed more than the recommended level of 14 units per week. Two in every five men (41%) and nearly one in every five women (19%) who drink currently reported consuming more than the recommended amount of alcohol per week. The prevalence of drinking more than the recommended weekly allowance was highest in individuals living in the most deprived areas, though the lowest prevalence was not in the least affluent areas but in the intermediate areas. Evidence also recommends a health improvement focus on falls prevention, supporting people living with dementia and work to reduce the risk of older people becoming lonely and isolated.

### Community and health services in Belfast

In 2014/15, 61% of 65-74 year olds and 69% of those aged 75+ years had a long standing illness. Figures from 2011 showed that 21,540 people aged over 65 years in Belfast had mobility or dexterity difficulty,

15,486 people suffered long term pain or discomfort, and 11,617 people had chronic illness. 12.6% of those aged 65+ in Belfast provides unpaid care, this is similar to levels across NI.

There are currently 53,183 residents aged 65 and over in Belfast LCG area. 14% of this population are in receipt of domiciliary care services to support them to remain independent in their own home. Since the establishment of the reablement team all suitable new referrals for domiciliary care now receive a period of reablement before any domiciliary care is put in place. Key priorities for older people's community service in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area are to:

- promote early intervention/prevention through the development and implementation of Connected Community Care Hubs
- expand intermediate care
- extend district nursing and social work to support primary care
- reduce unplanned admissions to hospital for people with long term conditions
- reduce waiting times for an appointment with a consultant or therapist and any subsequent treatment required
- continue to increase the proportion of older people living independently in their own homes
- continue to increase the number of carers' needs assessments offered and increase the support available for carers

## Stakeholder discussions

The stakeholder workshop in June 2017 prioritised improving access to health and social services for the next Age-friendly Belfast plan with an overall recommendation of working on a co-production approach to understanding funding of health and social care services and shaping new developments.

### Key stakeholder suggestions to improve access to health and social care:

- Promote the use of pharmacies for advice on health
- Have weekend and evening GP surgeries
- Fast track appointments for hospital and GP appointments for those with dementia
- Have more information on how health funding is used
- Have nursing and residential homes work with their local communities to reduce stigma and improve intergenerational relations
- Ensure dementia patients are seen promptly at hospital to reduce their stress
- Checklist for hospital discharge
- Improve respect – this is a big – reduce stigma associated with dementia
- Improve connections to services and between services and follow up on connections made to ensure they solved issues
- Provide more social contact services e.g. befriending
- Increase home care to more than 15 minute visits.

*There is not enough information on care packages, it's like the secret service!*

## Conclusions

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### Age-friendly Belfast achievements

Actions co-ordinated through the Age-friendly Belfast plan 2014-2017 and support for existing work through partner strategies have contributed to the following improvements in the age-friendliness of Belfast:

1. Active ageing programmes, leisure centre participation levels and participation in parks have contributed to a marked improvement by 10% of older people in Belfast, completing a total of 30 mins or more of physical activity in a typical week
2. 70% of older people were happy with the service they received on public transport in 2017 and this has improved from 63% in 2015
3. A city-wide Handy-person Home Safety Check and Repair Service has been established since 2015, with support from Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency and in 2016-2017, 485 home safety checks and 140 repair work was carried out
4. In 2017, 84% of older people agreed that Belfast is a city where they can live life to the full and this showed an improvement from 79% in 2014. In 2017, 76.5% of older people had participated in our attended an arts or cultural event in the last 12 months
5. There has been an increase in volunteering participation levels in those aged 60+ in 2017 with 17% of older people volunteering in the last 12 months compared to 13% of older people in 2014. There has been a total of 242 volunteers nominated in Belfast City Council's annual Age-friendly Belfast Older Volunteer Awards, with 140 nominated in 2017
6. 40 organisations and businesses have signed up to the Age-friendly Belfast Charter and most of these businesses and organisations have taken steps to train staff and volunteers as dementia friends. The Alzheimer's Society has worked with a range of organisations to train 27 dementia friendly champions and create 3,635 dementia friends. Dementia NI have established a Belfast empowerment group for those living with dementia 2 local dementia friendly neighbourhoods have been established
7. A strong, informed, representative and united voice for older people has been established and developed through Greater Belfast Seniors Forum and 6 area based local older people's forums supported through Engage with Age, North Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum and Volunteer Now
8. 14% of people aged 65 in Belfast are in receipt of domiciliary care services to support them to remain independent in their own home. Since the establishment of the reablement team all suitable new referrals for domiciliary care now receive a period of reablement before any domiciliary care is put in place
9. Investment in early intervention/prevention has been established through the development and implementation of Connected Community Care Hubs in Belfast
10. The development of Age-friendly Belfast has influenced the ageing strategy for NI and specifically its vision of Northern Ireland being 'an age-friendly region where people as they get older, are valued and supported to live actively to the fullest potential; with their rights protected and their dignity protected'
11. The Belfast Agenda is Belfast's first community plan and it represents a joint commitment to work together for the good of everyone in Belfast. Whilst all 4 priorities 2017- 2021 are relevant to older people, supporting younger and older people is specifically identified as a key aim under the living here priority which recognises the need to ensure an Age-friendly Belfast.

## Age-friendly Belfast challenges

1. Older people in Belfast are consistently asking for more and better placed seating and toilets, and improvements in pavements. This will help older people remain active and involved in their local neighbourhood. It is important that these issues influence Belfast City Council's Local Development Plan and introduction of Belfast Rapid Transit
2. Transport remains a key priority for older people in Belfast. Widespread communication on new transport developments and increasing provision of accessible transport have been highlighted as important to older people
3. Awareness of future housing options remains limited for older people in Belfast with 46% not being aware of housing options as they get older. Consultation on the Belfast Agenda also highlighted the need for a particular focus on access to suitable housing.
4. The incidence of fuel poverty in Belfast has reduced significantly (24 percentage points from 2006 to 2016), but households headed by older people are much more likely to be living in fuel poverty; in particular 38% of those aged 75+
5. Although respect for older people is rated quite well in some areas, there are persistent issues with regards to older people being given more time and having better communication with service providers. Older people also express the desire for more intergenerational programmes. Further development of the Age-friendly Charter is needed, with a focus on ensuring good standards of customer care through mystery shopper exercises by older people
6. The general recorded crime levels for those aged 60+ in Belfast shows an increasing trend people and 21% of older people are affected by some level of financial abuse in Belfast
7. There is increasing evidence that both isolation and loneliness have major effects on older people's health and wellbeing. The 'Have Your Say Belfast' survey in 2017 found that 25.5% of those aged 50+ had been treated for anxiety or depression in the past 12 months and the Wave 1 NICOLA study indicates that nearly one in five older people (18%) do not have any close friends. This is higher for men (22%) than women (16%), and for those in the oldest age group (27%)
8. One of the five key priorities for the next Age-friendly Belfast plan is to improve information and connections for more isolated older people. We need to provide more information to frontline staff who visit people's homes, develop local information champions and review the Seniors Info directory. Digital communication is used more frequently by older people in Belfast than in more rural areas, but 51% of people aged 65+ years in Belfast have never accessed the internet
9. Despite improving figures, Northern Ireland has the second lowest employment rate of older adults in the UK with just over one third of those over the age of 50 in work. Currently there are low levels of economically active over 65s in Belfast compared to the NI average and other rural and urban areas
10. Physical activity participation levels in older people remain low, with only 15.2% of older people in Belfast meeting the recommended chief medical officer's physical activity guidelines. In order to reduce the effect of inequalities on older people in Belfast there is a need to target key healthy lifestyle programmes such as smoking cessation, physical activity, healthy eating, substance misuse and emotional resilience programme to older people living in areas of deprivation in Belfast. These programmes need to take into account the low levels of health literacy in older people
11. A city wide health improvement focus needs to be maintained and developed in falls prevention, supporting people living with dementia and work to reduce the risk of older people becoming lonely and isolated
12. Older people in Belfast have prioritised improving access to health and social services for the next Age-friendly Belfast plan with an overall recommendation of working on a co-production approach.

## Appendix 1 Data Sources and strategies

Age-friendly Cleveland Summary, 2016, The Centre for Community Solutions

Age-friendly Belfast Survey, 2014 and 2017, Age-friendly Belfast/ Belfast Strategic Partnership

Age-friendly Profiles and Infographic Report, 2017, NISRA/NINIS

Belfast Residents Survey, 2014 and 2017, Belfast City Council

Creating Age-friendly Environments in Europe: a handbook of domains, 2017, WHO Europe

Engagement with Hard to Reach Groups -focus group report, 2017, Age-friendly Belfast/ Belfast Strategic Partnership

Housing Condition Main Report 2016, Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Have Your Say Belfast Survey, 2016, Belfast Strategic Partnership

Mapping Loneliness and Isolation Amongst Older People in Belfast, 2016, Queens University Belfast

Northern Ireland Labour Market Report, February 2017, NISRA

Northern Ireland Housing Statistics, 2016-17, Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The Belfast Agenda, Your Future City, Belfast Community Plan, 2017, Belfast City Council

Travel Survey for Northern Ireland, 2014-2016, Department for Infrastructure

Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2015/16 Annual Bulletin published December, Poilcie servcoe for Northern Ireland

Walking Belfast: Older People's Views, Report on developing a walkability assessment tool October 2016, Belfast Healthy Cities

YouGov survey for Age@work Partnership, 2017, Business in the Community and Age NI