

Belfast

# Age- friendly Belfast

A city where older  
people live life to the full

Summary plan 2014-2017



**Belfast Strategic  
Partnership**  
supported by  
Belfast Health Development Unit

## Context

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide.

***An Age-friendly City is defined as an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active ageing.<sup>1</sup>***

In 2012, Belfast City Council All Party Reference Group on Older People provided the initial leadership to explore Belfast becoming an Age-friendly City. Subsequently, in May 2012, the Lord Mayor signed a declaration committing Belfast to this process.

Many of the key voluntary, community and public organisations providing services for older people are members of Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP). This partnership identified healthy ageing as a priority within its Framework for Action to reduce life inequalities in Belfast. It was therefore agreed that BSP should lead the age-friendly process supported by the existing Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP).

An Age-friendly City must:

1. Establish mechanisms to involve older people throughout the age-friendly process
2. Develop a baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city under eight domains;
  - outdoor spaces and buildings,
  - transportation,
  - housing,
  - social participation,
  - respect and social inclusion,
  - civic participation and employment,
  - communication and information, and
  - community support and health services.
3. Develop a 3-year city-wide action plan
4. Identify measurements to monitor progress against this plan.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Conference on Aging, March 21 & 22, 2011, Bermuda

## **Involving Older People**

HASP works closely with Greater Belfast Seniors Forum, a representative group of older people in Belfast. Age Partnership Belfast (APB) supports this Forum and a network of numerous forums and groups, which play an important role in involving older people throughout the age-friendly process.

Considerable consultative work with older people was conducted during 2013. Our aim was to place older people from diverse backgrounds at the heart of this process. This was achieved through an age-friendly survey, consultation events and focus groups with equality groups. This consultation involved over 700 older people.

## **Developing the baseline assessment**

Having consulted and established older people's views, these were used together with statistical data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Services (NISRA/NINIS) to develop a baseline assessment for Belfast.

## **Developing a Vision and an Action Plan**

A series of briefings and workshops were held throughout the year involving a wide range of organisations, service providers and older people's representative's. These considered the baseline assessment and developed the vision, key themes/priorities and Age- friendly action plan. We also held a 6 week consultation on our proposed plan for Age-friendly Belfast ending 21st February 2014. This consultation endorsed the approach outlined below, with organisations highlighting additional actions that would link to the plan and the importance of using an intergenerational approach in particular priority areas such as age-friendly neighbourhoods and environments.

***Our vision is that Belfast will be a city where older people live life to the full.***

## **Key themes**

- **Age-friendly Image** - creating a positive view of ageing.
- **Age-friendly Lives** – reducing life inequalities and isolation.
- **Age-friendly Neighbourhoods** - creating friendly places to live in.

## Age-friendly image

### **We aim to:**

Create and promote a positive view of ageing.

### **We have secured commitment for:**

Belfast City Council with the support of Belfast Strategic Partnership to coordinate and lead on the development of a positive ageing campaign through the development of positive and diverse images, a community awareness campaign and a yearly calendar.

Belfast Strategic Partnership with the support of Business in the Community, Belfast City Centre Management, Age NI and Alzheimer's Society will develop an age-friendly charter and quality standards.

Belfast City Council and Belfast Police and Community Safety Partnership should champion intergenerational work and deliver a coordinated city wide approach building on the success of work between relationships through a city wide project between Belfast City Council Youth Forum and Greater Belfast Seniors Forum.

### **We will build on extensive work already underway, including:**

- The provision of dementia friendly awareness workshops by the Alzheimer's Society
- Research and public awareness by the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland on the positive contribution of older people to Northern Ireland
- Intergenerational practice promoting positive working relationships between generations supported by Linking Generations NI and other organisations
- The development of child-friendly communities led by Belfast Healthy Cities working with partners and synergising with the age-friendly approach
- Implementation of the new ageing strategy for Northern Ireland through the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFMDFM)
- Development of a Lifelong Learning City Charter for Belfast through Belfast Strategic Partnership

## Age-friendly lives

### **We aim to:**

Reduce life inequalities and isolation, and to encourage participation.

### **We have secured commitment for:**

Business in the Community will support employers to plan better for age diverse workforces and encourage businesses to support older workers to remain in work if they wish and support employment opportunities for older people.

Belfast Health Development Unit, Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency to develop a tool kit to reduce the impact of poverty in Belfast (focusing on benefits, nutrition and fuel poverty), this will be age-proofed and its use promoted with older people.

Belfast Health Development Unit in conjunction with the Public Health Agency and Belfast Local Commissioning Group to provide financial support to local community and voluntary groups to reduce the health impact of social isolation.

Belfast Strategic Partnership together with Belfast City Council to host an annual Age-friendly Convention and circulate a quarterly Age-friendly Belfast Update.

Belfast City Council to develop an annual Older People's Art Festival connecting with the Public Health Agency's regional Arts and Older Peoples' Programme delivered through Arts Care and the Arts Council.

Belfast City Council, with the support of Volunteer Now, to deliver a comprehensive Age-friendly Older Volunteer Awards programme.

## **We will build on extensive work already underway, including:**

- The promotion of fuel stamps and winter warmth events through Belfast City Council.
- Belfast City Councils free home safety check scheme.
- Initiatives to improve the income level of older people through Age NI Advice and Advocacy service and the Make the Call Campaign through the Department of Social Development.
- Support for over 50s to get back into work through GEMS NI.
- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust implementation of the Reablement programme and work through the Reablement Stakeholder Network to help people live independently.
- Public Health Agency's work with community and voluntary organisations to counteract social isolation and put people in touch with local support and services.
- Age Partnership Belfast provision of community hubs to increase the participation of isolated older people.
- Age Partnership Belfast's support and development of older peoples groups in Belfast.
- Big Lottery funded Reaching Out Connecting Older People projects.
- Tailored physical activity programme for people who have had a fall, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer or lung disease through the Healthwise programme led by Belfast Strategic Partnership Active Belfast Team.
- Age Sector Platform Pensioners Parliament.
- Good Morning Network across Belfast who provide community based telephone support service for older and vulnerable people.
- Belfast City Councils Investment Programme 2012-2015 commits the council to providing work placements and the potential to work in partnership with older peoples groups to assist with employability initiatives.
- Volunteer Now Befriending and Time-banking Initiatives.
- Provision of IT training for older people.

## Age-friendly neighbourhoods

### **We aim to:**

Create age-friendly neighbourhoods where older people participate, get active, feel safe, influence local decisions and where there are no barriers to active travel.

### **We have secured commitment for:**

Belfast Healthy Cities to develop an age-friendly walkability toolkit promote results and work with Belfast Strategic Partnership and local community groups to improve local neighbourhoods.

Belfast Strategic Partnership Active Belfast team to work with Age Partnership Belfast to develop and implement an Active Ageing plan to increase older people's participation in physical activity.

Belfast City Councils Leisure Transformation will improve leisure provisions and centres across the city.

Belfast City Council to increase older peoples usage of parks and open spaces by improving the facilities, management and activities available in their parks.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive to work with Greater Belfast Seniors Forum and local areas forums to explain current provision/options on housing for older people in Belfast and to discuss issues that will influence future planning.

Translink and other transport providers to work with Greater Belfast Seniors Forum to evaluate the impact of driver training to ensure that older people are treated with respect and dignity.

Belfast City Council to ensure that older people are involved in community planning in their local areas.

The Policing and Community Safety Partnership to build on work taking place on feeling safe and intergenerational relationships in local neighbourhoods.

The Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership will continue support and development of older peoples groups by organisations as an integral part of the age network in Belfast.

**We will build on extensive work already underway, including:**

- Work on dementia –friendly design taking place through the Dementia Centre NI and with advice from Age NI.
- Use and promotion of the Just a Minute Card (JAM).
- Actions on transport resulting from the Accessible Transport Strategy, Consumer Council Surveys, Translink focus group, IMTAC surveys and Greater Belfast Seniors Forum mystery shopper surveys.
- Promotion of Shop Mobility Hubs for older people with disabilities.
- Ensuring that older people are involved in developing Belfast Strategic Partnership Active Travel Strategy for Belfast.
- Implementation of the Department for Social Development’s Housing Strategy and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s Homelessness Strategy.
- Implementation of Belfast City Council Public Toilet Strategy.
- Development of a pilot handyperson scheme by Bryson Care.

**In order to add to what we know about ageing in Belfast, we will need to take forward the following areas of research:**

- Update the Age-friendly Profile on the NISRA/NINIS website annually,
- Work with the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers and other age-friendly cities and communities to develop the database of information held on the Age-friendly Profile on the NISRA/NINIS website <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Home.aspx>,
- Carry out a robust HASP age-friendly survey to address key gaps in the baseline assessment and collect indicators identified for evaluation,
- Identify and research the needs of older carers in Belfast,



- Identify and research the current and future needs of black and minority ethnic, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender older people in Belfast,
- Work with the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) and the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFDMDFM) to review current research and develop future research on age-friendly cities and communities and,
- Collaborate with Belfast Healthy Cities, the World Health Organisation and other age-friendly networks to learn from best practice and international innovation.

**We will know we are making a difference by measuring the following improvements:**

- More older people feeling that they are treated with respect and dignity,
- Older people having greater access to good social networks,
- Increased feeling of wellbeing and control by older people,
- A reduction in the current level of fuel poverty among older people in Belfast (currently 53%) and an increase in benefit uptake,
- Increased participation in local parks and physical activity by older people,
- Improved usage of public transport and specialist transport services by older people,

We will develop indicators for each of the eight age-friendly domains and will regularly report on progress in the implementation of the 3 year age-friendly action plan.

## Making it happen

Leadership and governance for Age-friendly Belfast will be provided by Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP), which is a collaborative multi-sectoral partnership that aims to reduce life inequalities in Belfast.

The Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) will co-ordinate delivery of the 3-Year Age-friendly Belfast Plan. It will submit a detailed action plan to the World Health Organisation (WHO) with agreed targets over time, and indicators. HASP will periodically monitor and publish progress against the action plan and report to BSP. After three years HASP will evaluate the project, identify successes and areas for future improvement. The evaluation report will be submitted to BSP and subsequently to WHO. The HASP Age-friendly team will also provide specific support for the development of the positive ageing campaign, age-friendly charter, intergenerational work and the Age-friendly Convention.

Lead organisations as identified will oversee the delivery and performance management of relevant aspects of the age-friendly action plan and report progress to HASP.

HASP involves the following organisations:

- Age NI
- The Alzheimer's Society
- Belfast City Council
- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- Belfast Healthy Cities
- The Department of Regional Development
- Engage with Age
- Greater Belfast Seniors Forum
- The Health and Social Care Board/Belfast Local Commissioning Group
- North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- The Public Health Agency
- Volunteer Now

Finally we would wish to thank all the many contributors to the plan, especially the older people of Belfast who volunteered their time and offered their views and experiences. We would encourage everyone, of whatever age, in Belfast to work with us on this plan.

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