



#agefriendlylondon - building on the power of older people

Report prepared for the Greater London Authority,
supported by the Tudor Trust, the John Ellerman
Foundation and Clore Social Leadership.

ABSTRACT

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is exploring how London can become more age friendly and the role of older Londoners in this process. This report considers what older change-makers, Londoners who are leading and mobilising others to make London more Age Friendly, feel could be improved. It concludes that if we are to develop better practice there is a need to share learning and support older people's organisations to strategise and organise. Currently people with lived experience of ageing are not part of the conversation. The voices are there, we need to make them heard.

Jane Scobie, January 2018

How can we build on success and older peoples agency to make London age friendly and a fantastic place to grow old in?

Introduction

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is exploring how London can become more age friendly and the role of older Londoners in this process. This report explores how, older change-makers - Londoners who are leading and mobilising others to make London more Age Friendly feel about living in London. What they think is going well, what could be improved and the opportunities they see for older residents to shape London as a good place to grow in. It is based on a series of interviews with 15 older change-makers and 8 individuals from organisations focussed on supporting older peoples voice to be heard in the capital. The author is Jane Scobie, a 2017 Clore Social Fellow who has been funded by the Tudor Trust and John Ellerman Foundation to bring creativity and new thinking into the older people's sector.

What comes through is the wealth of good practice that can be built on and expanded to reach all Londoners as they age. Principles of respect, social and civic participation are vital to drive age inclusive practice, alongside the provision of services to meet core needs. There is a demand for London to become more age friendly and to nurture intergenerational understanding.

If we are to develop future practice there is a need to find mechanisms to share learning and ideate around new solutions. Not just for the current generation of older people but for future generations. "currently people with lived experience of ageing are not part of the conversation." The voices are there, we need to make them heard.

Older leaders and older people together with business, academia, public and third sector organisations all have a role to play to boost London's age friendly credentials and build the resilience of all Londoners to age well.

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Context

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is developing Inclusive London: The Mayor’s Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to promote his vision for a diverse and inclusive city. Within this, he is keen to ensure that the needs of older Londoners are integrated across all policy areas. To support this integration GLA is exploring London joining the World Health Organisations (WHO), Age Friendly Cities Network, which supports councils plan holistically to address the issues of an ageing society. The WHO framework ([World Health Organisation, Global age friendly cities: a guide. 2007](#)), identifies eight policy areas

- 1: Housing
- 2: Outdoor environment and neighbourhoods: streets, buildings and parks
- 3: Transport
- 4: Social, cultural and civic participation: engagement and involvement
- 5: Employment, skills and income
- 6: Community support and health services
- 7: Communication and information
- 8: Respect and Inclusion

Recent reports relevant to this work include [The Economic Contribution of Older Londoners](#) commissioned by GLA in 2013; a report from Kings College “[An Age Friendly City – How far has London Come?](#)”, in 2015; [Ageing: the Silver Lining](#) published by the Local Government

Association in 2015 and [Older Londoners and the London Plan 2016](#) commissioned by GLA, which explores in detail how the Age Friendly City policy areas, related to planning could be further implemented.

All of these reports discuss the importance of older people’s contributions and agency. The WHO model is based on a citizen-based policy approach – described in the table below.

Medical	Care	Citizenship
Patient	Customer	Citizen
Focus on individual	Focus on individual family and informal networks	Focus on neighbourhood and city
Clinical intervention	Care interventions	Promoting social capital and participation
Commission for ‘frail-elderly’	Commission for vulnerable people	Age-proofing universal services
Prevention of entry to hospital	Prevention to delay entry to care system	Reducing social exclusion
Health (and Care system)	Whole system	Changing social structure and attitude

Source: Paul McGarry

This report draws on the experience of older change-makers to explore how older people’s expertise and capacity could be better supported in practice and the barriers that need to be overcome to increase their participation and inclusion. It complements GLA’s focus on active citizenship and concentrates on the strengths of older Londoners to effect change and create a better city for themselves and future generations of older Londoners.

Insights and opportunities for change

Eight key insights, highlighting what is going well, have been identified from the research findings. Under each insight opportunities for change are proposed, some of these are new proposals and some are developments of existing initiatives. The opportunities for change offer suggestions on how to create a more age-friendly London by growing the agency – the motivation, potential and power - of older Londoners. The proposals are presented as concrete ideas with specific outcomes.

1: Build out free London

Free public transport, museums, cultural and leisure activities make London a good place to grow old. The Freedom pass is a lifeline, reducing social isolation and encouraging social integration. Free access to London’s museums, parks and culture is highly prized. There is an opportunity to encourage more older people to use these resources. The concept of borrowing one resource, time or space, for another purpose is ripe for expansion. There are already many examples including borrowed shop toilets – for older shoppers, borrowed care homes for lunch clubs and playgroups, borrowed skills - for digital learning and from retired teachers to run Saturday schools for struggling children and borrowed bank staff

sharing finance skills. There is a huge opportunity here to harness the skills and capacity of older citizens and re-think how we use existing infrastructure.

New proposals

- A Cultural Freedom pass, encouraging the use of free transport to the capitals free museums, cultural and leisure activities, increases the diversity of Londoners who are aware of and who enjoy what is on offer.
- The London Borrow List provides live examples of borrowing, to stimulate replication and further action. Expanding the resource base available for age friendly and multigenerational projects.

Developments

- Improved signage, step free access and innovations to make the transport system easier to navigate so more Londoners have greater confidence to use it.

2: Make the gold standard uniform

The closeness and range of social activities and community, leisure and health facilities make London a good place to grow old. There are wide variations across the capital so the challenge is to deliver these benefits to all Londoners. Many organisations are struggling to reach those who are isolated and there is appetite to share experience and develop more effective ways to do this.

New proposals

- A charter benchmarking gold standard practice of the London Boroughs, driven and monitored locally by older people's organisations, ensures that quality improves across the borough.
- A knowledge platform and peer to peer learning programme builds understanding of practice and policy and makes available information more accessible
- As an Age Friendly City London exchanges best practice and ideates new solutions at borough, city and international level.

3: Strengthen leadership and co-ordination

The capacity and experience of older change-makers is not well supported in London. Older activists put a lot of effort into improving local and London wide provision but their efforts are dispersed and un co-ordinated. Older Londoners engage in policy formulation in a range of ways but their voice is not heard equally across all boroughs or united.

There is a keen sense that we need to create a different and more diverse story around ageing. "There is still only one image of old - a Zimmer frame, invisible and unimportant."

More structured debate on the diverse experiences of ageing would lead to better outcomes and innovation for future generations.

Older change-makers feel that prevailing negative attitudes impact on older people's agency and reduce their engagement in volunteering and civil society. "We need to stop stereotyping older people and normalising age discrimination." More should be done to ensure the lived experience of older Londoners is heard.

There are few opportunities to develop leadership and campaigning skills or to participate in peer to peer learning. There is no comprehensive mapping of organisations or a knowledge bank where organisations can find out what has already been learnt. Understanding of the information flows between agencies at local, borough and city level is limited.

Each borough has a separate local plan and it is difficult to understand the rights and obligations of the different players and monitor progress. Even London wide data is difficult to find.

More and more organisations – working in mental health, environment, arts, heritage and finance - as well as in health and care - are developing programmes to engage older people. There is scope to make these services more widely known and to expand collaboration.

New proposals

- The London Older People's Leadership Academy improves the sustainability, quality, inclusiveness and recognition of older people led action.
- An effective Older People's board advises on the strategy and implementation of Age Friendly London.
- Advocacy training and a small grants programme stimulates local social, cultural and economic action by older Londoners.

Developments

- Sustainable older people's forums are active in every borough acting as civic synapses, connecting small organisations to resources and best practice and promoting understanding of ageing policy.

4: Engage older people as active participants in new developments and outdoor spaces

Improved housing is critical for older people living in the social and private sector. The quality, cost and lack of choice are key issues affecting health and social networks. Many people have no options but to stay put in unsuitable accommodation because they can't afford alternatives, or there are no local options and they do not want to move away from friends and neighbours. Given the large number of older people who are home owners, and the need of younger workers and students for accommodation in the capita, there could be an opportunity for matching people in need of accommodation with older people interested in sharing their home.

Safe and pleasant parks and open spaces are highly valued and reduced access to these - because of crime, trip-hazards and fly-tipping - are things older people actively campaign against. There is concern that public spaces are disappearing because of new developments and privatisation and that new public developments do not involve older users early enough in the planning process. There is widespread support for actions that tackle air quality and congestion.

Many older people help to improve planning, housing and the built environment, as members of tenants, residents and community associations. While there are clear examples where older peoples voice has been heard some feel they are not able to effect change because they are brought in too late to the process or consultations are purely a 'tick box' exercise.

New proposals

- Celebrations mark the 50th anniversaries of London's estates, profiling older residents and building intergenerational networks.
- A task and finish team reports on options to grow suitable designed properties in all neighbourhoods including co-housing, co-operatives and "alms-houses" with opportunities for meals, socialising and independence.

Developments

- Older Londoners are empowered and equipped to engage with planners and designer and their built environment by scaling up successful programmes i.e. KOVE and Senior BEEs across London.
- A pilot scheme, teams up Airbnb with a Home share scheme to match up students and young professionals in need of accommodation with older Londoners who have extra space and want company and some support.

5: Bring age awareness to volunteering

There is a growing expectation from government that we care for each other. Investing in and growing existing mutual aid will grow the social capital needed to fill the growing gap between demand and supply.

Large numbers of older people volunteer formally and informally and the benefits of volunteering as a way of making friends and building networks is widely recognised. There is a strong feeling that people want to volunteer but cannot find the right opportunity. 'Volunteering websites seem to be aimed at young people, to help them gain experience for employment. They should be more inclusive and ask what skills people have'. "Volunteering roles that utilize people's skills work best."

The process of volunteering has become more formalised and while older people understand the need for checks and references, this can be a barrier. A new cohort of people wants to volunteer but cannot find the right opportunity. More could be done to

attract older volunteers and crucially make it easier for people to find out about opportunities where they can use their professional, work and life skills to good effect.

In addition to formal volunteering many older people carry out regular and vital informal volunteering often for older neighbours, without even naming it as such - for example shopping, popping in, preparing meals, accompanying friends to social and sports activities, caring for partners. They may do this for a number of people on a regular basis. This informal mutual aid should be recognised.

Smaller BAME charities and faith-based organisations often have street by street knowledge of who is vulnerable in their area. They may be below the radar when it comes to volunteering stats, but provide essential direct support to members of their local community - food, shopping befriending, many of the givers and recipients are older people.

People of all ages also volunteer to help older Londoners and more could be done to manage this resource more effectively, spreading the Christmas glut across the year and making these relations more reciprocal.

New proposals

- A London wide volunteering roadshow actively promotes volunteering to people 55+ and builds a new cohort of volunteers who find placements that fit with their skills and experience.
- Intergenerational schemes connecting volunteers to older Londoners are challenged to bring people together as equals and for a common purpose.

6: Build individual and community resilience and invest in preventive action

Much suffering is seen as preventable. For example, the impact of falls, depression, loneliness and hospitalisation can be reduced with early intervention. There is frustration that short term decisions are breaking up the infrastructure and networks that connect people and organisations at a time where there is more and more reliance on mutual aid, informal care and volunteers. Falls prevention programmes, community toilet schemes, well-being programmes and lunch clubs are important.

Preparation for retirement, beyond financial planning, is becoming more widespread and this is welcome but much more could be done to help Londoners visualise life beyond work and in older age. Services which help older Londoners find work or get back into work should also be extended. Flexible working should be much more widespread.

Bereavement was identified as one of the most challenging transition points but respondents also identified moving home for health or other reasons, leaving hospital and living with dementia as critical points when specific support is needed. At these point advocates and befriending schemes are crucial.

Developments

- Retirement planning is introduced for employees across all businesses giving people a chance to consider the changes in role, status, activity, finance and relationships that might come with retirement.
- Successful preventative well-being programmes are rolled out across all London boroughs to share the costs of developing programmes and to reach more people.
- Age awareness audits and training are developed and run by older people's organisations increasing understanding of ageing across business, public and third sector organisations.

7: Embrace life-long learning, arts and culture

London offers an amazing range of free or low-cost arts and cultural activities and museums. People appreciate efforts to improve access through out-reach and in-reach programmes for local groups including early entry to major shows and education programmes. Unsubsidised concerts and theatre are too expensive for most older Londoners. Adult education courses are valued but many are oversubscribed or too expensive. Finding out what is available, if you are not online, is hard. Libraries are well loved because they are multi-generational, welcoming, free and local.

Arts and cultural activities build community cohesion and interest, improve well-being, health and intergenerational understanding. Heritage focussed projects can be a good entry point for bringing together inclusive groups of neighbours. Stand out projects are free and accessible, with developed inclusion policies to involve all older people. Many local classes are multi-generational. The thirst for learning does not diminish as you get older and there is a strong demand for life-long learning opportunities.

London is home to many top-class arts forms and there are opportunities to explore ageing and intergenerational issues through art programming. Magic Me was recognised for its ongoing programme in care homes and with intergenerational groups, but also for its role in brokering relationships between artists and institutions.

New proposals

- Local walking and heritage tours run by older Londoners with the Museum of London provide income, strengthen social networks and document local history.
- A Free London Festival at the South Bank Centre, run with the Evening Standard and curated by an intergenerational team explores Londoners perceptions of ageing and puts London on the map as a city for all ages.
- Artists collaborate on a bereavement installation linking the Tate, Southwark Cathedral and City Hall, improving understanding of the impact this can have.

Developments

- The University of the 3rd Age concept – where by groups of like-minded people meet to learn topics of mutual interest from science to languages, gardening to bird-watching is developed to be more inclusive of non-professionals.

8: Cultivate intergenerational understanding

Older Londoners are stereotyped and patronised despite their life experience. Being respected and understood by other generations, businesses and service providers is essential.

The current media narrative of tension between generations is an unhelpful. There is a need to cultivate understanding between generations within the family, community and wider society. Proactive projects that bring generations together can reduce stereotypes and increase understanding where people of different ages come together as equals or with a common purpose.

Diverse ages are a strength. Language that excludes people of a particular age should be avoided. Opportunities to bring younger and older people together to understand what they share and how they differ should be expanded.

New proposals

- A cross-generational task and finish force reports on how London's youth sector and older peoples sector can learn from each other and work together more effectively.
- The '+1 your mum/dad' campaign builds understanding between generations of what people do on a daily basis

Case Studies of Older Change-makers

Tony, Enfield, mobilises action through establishing a forum; Chair of Enfield Over 50's Forum.

Tony is the chair of a 16-strong committee of socially minded older people who run Enfield Over 50s Forum. A metallurgist by training he joined in 1999 when he retired. "I am most proud of keeping over 6000 older people in the borough informed for the last 16 years. [When I joined] we had 300 members at that time and the funding for the Forum had just been withdrawn.

"People need to get out, make new friends and form their own social groups as they get older. Variety and locality are important, we run over 200 activities from three hubs across the borough. "

Tony credits a key element of their success to negotiating a reduced rate with leisure centres across the borough for their members. "People get together for exercise, afterwards

they might have a sandwich and a natter then they might form their own social group. If you get a nucleus it tends to spread. If they bump into a non-member they ask them to join.”

Over time this has “generated a large pool of people who are friends and ready to organise our events and clubs programme. As well as the clubs, we run 33 meetings a year on topics of interest to members on finance, health, falls, local plans etc.”

Another strategy that has worked well is persuading the Enfield Strategic Partnership to have an Older People’s Board that links the Forum formally to the Council. “This means we can influence decisions that impact on older residents. We are well aware the council are strapped for cash and we work with them.

“Important initiatives include our Community toilet scheme which we learnt of from Richmond Older Peoples Forum. Shops are given a small grant by the council to open their toilets: it makes a huge difference to people, helping them get out.

In addition, their “preventions agenda contributes to keeping people out of hospital. Now Enfield has one of the lowest admissions on falls.”

The Forum also helps people over 50 get back into employment. As local job centres are cutting back on what they offer this group, the Forum finds older people who are willing to help with networking, CV and IT skills. “We also run a drop-in clinic at the Dugdale Centre where people can find out what help is available. It might be a legal problem, financial planning, or a referral for hearing loss, this really helps catch issues at an early stage.”

Today the Forum has over 6000 paid up members and is virtually self-funding from subscriptions, gift aid and sponsorship. The Forum publishes a bi-monthly newsletter and prints 10,000 copies which are distributed via post, community centres and through GPs. It cost £9 for an individual a year to cover postage and newsletter. Paper copy information is seen as essential.

Tony sees a big opportunity to replicate this model and more generally to share experience across Boroughs on critical issues such as engaging isolated older people and tackling loneliness. “We could not find examples of how people address social isolation. We received a £10k grant to run a pilot project in Enfield to seek out older people living on their own. We used the electoral register and other data to identify people living on their own in 3 wards. We wrote to 1600 and gave them free membership for 2 years – as a result 80 people joined up.” Tony recognises that while not everyone wants to get involved, he hopes that this initiative becomes more widespread and there are London-wide opportunities for Older People’s Organisations to share expertise. “London is good place to grow old but we need more co-ordination to help people get engaged, there is a lot going on but it is difficult to pull it together.”

<http://www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk/>

Elizabeth, 69, Southwark, local campaigner on older people's issues; Member of Southwark Pensioners Forum

Elizabeth, 69, lives in Southwark with her husband who is 80. She is a member of Southwark Pensioners Forum and campaigns on local issues including health, mental health and the protection of public spaces.

"With any frailty, life starts to centre around blood tests and scans. For some they keep going, for others it becomes a chore and becomes too much hard work to keep going. Our Forum helps people manage their conditions and live independently. Through the Safe and Independent Living Project we are beginning to see reduced hospital admissions via accident and emergency. Prevention is working.

"The connection between making things better and more age friendly must directly involve older generations. I go to meetings, I speak out and I write. Older Londoners need to get involved more."

Elizabeth believes there is too much separation between generations. "The more we don't move, the more isolated we become. We should start with the ethos of hospitality and constantly widen access to every generational group."

"The best thing is the freedom pass. We use it so much now [that] we drive less and less. We can explore different places [in] hidden London. Recently, we visited little Venice. You can jump on a bus and take a little walk.

"In London, you can literally turn a corner and be in another world. This is a precious commodity: the civic, social, commercial and cultural altogether cheek by jowl. We need to challenge the pressure for social cleansing and to protect universal access - benches, toilets, open spaces."

Lynda, 69, Kilburn; local campaigner and volunteer; Treasurer of Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE)

"I was using the local lunch centre and noticed a project on well-being being run by KOVE, now I am Treasurer. I am concerned about the provision of benches and the state of pavements. I went out with a blind friend and mapped all the benches in disrepair and helped report this to the council. That led to the bench-to-bench walks, which have really taken off. We have produced a booklet and now it is a regular thing. The offer of tea and coffee and a sit down at the end makes all the difference."

Lynda now helps on walks every 2-3 weeks for between 8 and 18 people. Among people who join her walks are residents of a "very welcoming" Jewish Care home. "We have one man who is really slow and one lady who is very fast! Sometimes people take a bus for a stop or two, using their freedom pass".

Members suggest places to walk and sometimes local history talks are organised such as one at St. Pancras Cemetery. "It gives people a chance to talk and find someone who will listen. It's not really about the healthy walking stuff".

One innovative strategy KOVE has introduced is for their members to have iPads to record their experiences and surroundings. The focus is to illustrate the impact of difficult crossings, uneven pavements, litter and damaged benches can have on older Londoners.

“For a year I have been trying to get Camden to clean up my estate. I photograph rubbish around the estate which Camden should clear, but after 2 weeks I clear it because I get upset looking at it. People can't understand why I do it, but it's about feeling connected”.

Since then other people have followed Lynda's example and acted on her “little starters”. Neighbours take more care and some are developing their gardens. “I have tackled some tree roots that were a real trip hazard and cleaned the stairwells and paths round the estate. I want to get yellow edges painted on some steps for my blind friends”.

Lynda is encouraging tenants to report noise, gangs and litter to Camden. “The more reports the council get the less they will be able to ignore them. There is a problem with a gang hanging around in the stairwells and it puts people off from going out at night.”

Next May, Lynda's estate will be 50 years old so she is trying to rejuvenate the tenants' and residents' association and has been elected secretary.

“We have people who have lived here for 48 years. We organised a fun day in the summer and brought in local musicians from the institute of performing arts. I wanted to bring out the quiet older tenants [who] commented on the music but didn't come out. Next time perhaps they will”.

As well as volunteering with KOVE and sitting on her tenants and residents' association, Lynda volunteers with Guide dogs, runs community gym sessions at the local outdoor gym and a weekly swimming club for people with disabilities in Kentish Town. “It is very family orientated. Children come with their siblings, some people stay for years and suddenly progress. Or they stop for a while and then come back again”. Nothing seems to faze Lynda who is a powerhouse and an inspiration to Londoners everywhere.

<http://tonyellis.net/kove/>

Maggie, Waltham Forest, Campaigns for a better built environment for local older people; Member of the Senior BEES

Maggie was one of the first Senior BEEs, one of the older people's groups supported by The Building Exploratory Project that began ten years ago, following an exhibition in Hackney. “Being a member of the BEEs opens your mind, gives you a different impetus, nothing gets stale. You are always looking upwards at the different buildings you pass. When we go to borough planning meetings we can tell when we are being listened to and when we get invited back we see the changes. We have learnt a huge amount and participated in many projects. [For example] we worked with teenagers on plans for the Olympic legacy. At first, they were petrified of meeting us, but after a while we got talking and realised we wanted the same things”. Maggie has seen and played a part in the development and recreation of the Olympic park.

Pat, Hackney, Campaigns for a better built environment for local older people; Member of the Senior BEES

Pat returned from South Africa after 19 years abroad and the only people she knew in London were her Mum and Dad. “My Dad has passed away and now I care for my Mum who is over 90. I call the Senior BEEs my ‘respite carers’; it is an outlet to be with other people beyond my Mum.”

The BEEs have given Pat the opportunity to see many wonderful places and learn so much about her area. “We are a very diverse group from all walks of life, we all have opinions and we all speak our mind. I am most proud about contributing to the redevelopment of Narrow Way a medieval street that has been pedestrianised in Hackney. We made sure there were seats, I could not go up there with my Mum otherwise. When I was last there every seat was in use!”

Andrew, 73, Hackney, Campaigns for a better built environment for local older people; Member of the Senior BEES and Shoreditch Planning Forum

Andrew volunteers with the Senior BEEs and currently sits on the local panel responsible for planning the Future of Shoreditch. “We are nosey, we ask the local planners how do older people get there? Where will they shop? Where is the bus stop? On a recent trip to the site of a proposed sheltered housing in Stratford we pointed out that although the idea of a waterside view was nice the site was totally impractical, because it was too far from bus stops, shops or health services.” Although shy as a youngster, after years in an architect practice he has learnt to speak out, a skill he now employs to help planners understand and think about the needs of older Londoners. “Now we are regularly invited into meetings by borough planners.”

Over the years, the group has accumulated extensive knowledge from sitting on design forums and the feedback from designers testifies to the quality of their input and gives them confidence to represent what is going on. The BEEs thirst for learning has turned into friendships that has moved into other parts of their lives – strengthening their connection to each other, their community and to London.

The Building Exploratory Project currently runs in four boroughs and has been pioneering multigenerational community learning and involvement in London’s buildings and spaces for over ten years. The project builds on people’s own experience through site visits, walking tours, visits to architects and connects them to strategic advisory boards and area action plans so they can influence new projects in their neighbourhoods.

Currently, The Building Exploratory Project are advising on the Finsbury Leisure Centre, Kings Cross redevelopment and the Shoreditch Plan, The River Wandle Project in Merton and the Islington Heritage project which has over 50 volunteers at least 70% of whom are over 60 years old, some are over 80. They have a shared experience of living through change.

Such a successful project is just one of several shining examples that can be replicated with other groups over 50 to improve the age-friendly quality of buildings and outdoor spaces and wellbeing.

Senior BEEs - <http://www.buildingexploratory.org.uk/lifelonglearning/>

Methodology

The #agefriendlylondon project used Appreciative Inquiry methodology to map good practice and social network analysis to identify older ChangeMakers. The Appreciative Inquiry model is an asset-based approach to discovering the best of what is and creating a vision from this. Asset based approaches are increasingly adopted by leading councils in partnership with businesses and voluntary sector organisations.

Deficit approach	Asset approach
Starts with deficiencies and needs	Starts with assets in the community
Responds to problems	Identifies opportunities and strengths
Provides services to users	Invests in people as citizens
Emphasises roles of agencies	Emphasises the role of civil society
Focuses on individuals	Focus on communities and neighbourhoods
Sees people as clients and services users	Sees people as citizens and co-producers as something to offer
Treats people as passive and 'done to', 'Fixes people'	Supports people to develop their potential

(Wilton, C. and M. Broughton, An asset based approach, in LGA Task and Finish Group: November meeting. 2014.)

Interviews were conducted with 15 older change-makers - Londoners who are leading and mobilising others to make London more Age Friendly and 8 individuals from organisations focussed on supporting older peoples voice to be heard in the capital. The older change-makers have a broad range of backgrounds and incomes, about a third live in social housing in a range of inner and outer London boroughs. All have leadership roles, some within their community, others in their borough and many have represented their City in some capacity.

Initial interviews with members of the key stakeholder groups working on ageing across London (Positive Ageing London, Age UK London, London Older People Strategies Group, Greater London Forum for Older People) identified a group of older change-makers who then made further suggestions of who to interview.

Key insights from the interviews were developed into ideas for future consideration. Six case studies illustrating the range and impact of work by older change-makers from Enfield, Hackney, Southwark, Camden and Waltham Forest are included as well as four international case studies illustrating how older people's agency has been supported in other countries.

Areas of enquiry

1. What have been your best experiences of London as a good place to grow old? A time when... .. What made this possible? How is this particular to London/city living?
2. What local project led by and for older Londoners would you like to expand? Why this project? What made this possible? What impact has it had? Who does it target?
3. If you had three wishes to make London a better place to grow old in, what would they be? Why? What would make this possible? What impact would it have?
4. What achievements are you (and/or your group/organisation) most proud of? What made these possible? What impact have they had?
5. What are the best projects that support older Londoners at key transition points in their life (e.g. Menopause? Retirement? Bereavement? Moving out of their homes?), Why? What makes these possible? What impact have they had? Do you have examples of projects supporting Londoners over 80 years old?
6. What are the best projects that engage older Londoners in the Arts or culture? Why? What makes these possible? What impact have they had?
7. What are the best projects that build bridges between generations? Why? What makes these possible? What impact have they had?
8. Can you name 2 or 3 older ChangeMakers, individuals who are already leading and mobilising positive change for older Londoners? What are they doing? What impact have they had? Can you introduce me?

Summary of research findings

The responses to each question have been analysed and organised into themes. A short summary of answers to each question is provided, followed by a selection of sample quotes and key points from respondents.

Q1: What are your best experiences of London as a good place to grow old?

Excellent transport links and the Freedom Pass are identified as the main reason London is a good place to grow old. Other popular responses include free access to museums and culture, the closeness of community and social activities, the excellent medical care, the range of public spaces and the diversity of Londoners.

1. **Transport/Freedom Pass** mentioned 9 times.
 - “Lifeline reduces social isolation and encourages social integration”.
 - “Reduces risk of social isolation, loneliness, makes employment possible. Enables people to socialise, shop, work, volunteer, keep in touch with family and use services”.
 - “Allows people to travel more widely and confidently. Really unique to London”.
2. **Free access to museum’s and culture** mentioned 8 times.

- “Marvellous thing, is there is so much to do, London has amazing cultural opportunity’s”.
 - “99% of our group wouldn't leave London, we enjoy all that it offers, so many places to go, love the bustle and access”.
3. **Community, leisure facilities and social activities nearby** was mentioned 8 times.
- “Health, parks, community centres, leisure centres, everything is on your doorstep”.
 - “Free swimming for the over 60’s, absolutely changed my life when I was at a difficult point, gave me exercise and friendship, now I take a blind friend 3 times a week”.
4. **Medical Care** mentioned 4 times.
- “Excellent hospitals and doctors, close at hand”.
5. **Good public spaces** both civic and social mentioned 4 times.
- “Civic, business and residential living cheek by jowl”.
6. **Diversity** mentioned 3 times.
- “Mix of people is healthy and positive”.

Q2: What project led by and for older Londoners would you like to expand and why?

A diverse range of projects are identified. There common characteristics behind the projects chosen are:

- the projects recognise and cater for the diverse interests of the older population and lead to friendships beyond organised activity.
- they are inclusive, i.e. they are free, regular, held in accessible and welcoming locations at a time that suits older people and they are well publicised both on and off-line.
- many seek to tackle preventable problems by promoting well-being and resilience, for example, projects that strengthen social networks, provide information about falls or other health issues, campaigns to remove barriers that stop people going out such as lack of toilet facilities.
- a group of projects are identified because they build older peoples agency and connect different generations.

Recognise and cater for diverse interests

- “Choice brings people together around their own interests, so people [go on to] meet socially”.
- “Our thirst for learning, turned into friendships, and moved into other parts of [our] lives”.

Inclusive

- “Held in community spaces – leisure centres, libraries, community centres that are easy to get to and are welcoming, they ‘do not gate keep’”.
- Free – “London can be a place where people thrive but too many don't enjoy life or have access to what they need and a decent home. Some opportunities are only for the affluent”.
- Regular – “Open Age Westminster offers over 200 classes at £1 a class - creative writing, collage, drama, history, discussions on current affairs, regular classes, a stable programme you can rely on”.
- Well publicised through printed media and notices as well as on-line
- Run in the day-time, many older people do not go out in the dark.

Support well-being and prevent common problems

- “Falls workshops reduce risk of injury which can have long term consequences”
- “Get people out and doing something they are interested in, help to make new friends, learn new things and connect to neighbours”
- Target isolated groups e.g. “cricket matches to encourage West Indian men to get out”
- Community toilet scheme, “means people can get out”.

Build Older People's agency

- Enfield Older People's Forum runs a vast range of activities and keeps borough's older residents informed.
- AgeUK London runs a capacity building programme for older people's organisations.
- A number of programmes support older people to engage with businesses as well as policy and planning authorities e.g. The Building Exploratory, AgeUK London Age Allies programme.
- “We need to build the confidence of older leaders and grow their capacity through public speaking and campaign training.”
- “We need to build stronger older people's organisations and a broader older people's movement.”

Connect Generations

- South London Carers connects isolated older people and young professionals - who might also be isolated because they have recently moved to London
- Cocktails in Care Homes – organises parties for young professionals and older residents. “we want to change the perception of what a care home is, remove the taboo and feeling it is an unknown place.” A key benefit to younger volunteers is to socialise with each other as well as with care home residents.
- Community Choirs were highlighted as great projects that bring older and younger people together in equally shared space.

Q3: What policies and plans have been improved or developed with input from older Londoners?

There are clear examples where older peoples voice has been heard but often respondents feel they are brought in too late to the process or consultations are a tick box exercise. There are some good examples of campaigning around the built environment in some boroughs. In addition, many older people help to shape local plans as members of tenants and resident and community associations or as leaders of campaigns to keep local services such as libraries and health facilities.

The question brought out discussions on how older Londoners can engage in policy as well as what they campaign on. Older Londoners engage in policy and planning in a range of ways but their voice is not heard equally across all boroughs or co-ordinated. There are few opportunities to develop leadership or campaigning skills or participate in peer to peer learning. There is no comprehensive mapping of organisations or a knowledge bank where organisations can find out what is happening or what has already been learnt.

- **Borough level** – It was reported that many Older Peoples Forums have lost funding and influence in recent years. However, some remain strong i.e. Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Enfield. Enfield Older People’s Forum is self-sufficient raising funds from membership fees and has a strong committee and diverse membership. Enfield still has an Older People’s Board which advises the local council.
- **London wide** - currently there is a perception that there is competition rather than collaboration between key stakeholders in the London ageing scene. Neither London Older Peoples Strategy Group or The Greater London Forum for Older People are seen as totally effective.
- AgeUK London provide welcome policy input to GLA, rooted in service delivery and evidence, but are stretched, for example they are increasingly only able to share information online and a number of borough Age UKs have been merged, because of budget restrictions.
- AgeUK London have a capacity building programme supporting older people’s organisations both in terms of organisational development and thematic expertise and are in contact with around 500 older people’s organisations across London. Which “is the tip of the iceberg”. They would like to expand this work. The actual number of local older people’s groups is likely to be much larger. ‘Many BAME and faith groups work very locally in their neighbourhoods and we are not connected to them’. AgeUK London are supporting an increasing number of newer BAME groups e.g. Newham Chinese Association and LGBT groups i.e. Opening Doors London.

Campaigning

- Older Peoples Forums campaign on a range of issues including health, transport and housing. Older Peoples Forums work with Age UK London, Local councils and other service providers to run a range of public information sessions.

- There a number of older people’s organisations who campaign locally for improvements in the built environment for older Londoners e.g. **Kilburn Older Voices** has campaigned for better benches, traffic controls and toilets, the **Senior BEEs** working in Hackney and Islington have recently advised on the siting of sheltered housing in Stratford moving it from a position over-looking the canal to a better site where residents would have good access to public transport and facilities.
- As service users, older people’s input is invaluable particularly in health and transport consultations although there is concern that too often these are tick box exercises. “Consultations link service users and providers, we comment on housing repairs and transport and are linked up with Kensington and Chelsea Council. Feedback is really important.” Older transport users are involved in testing transport accessibility e.g. walking on buses, changing underground lines. Suggestions such as using painted lines to help people navigate which assist people with dementia and sight loss, and the need more hearing loops, step free access and better signage have been identified with input from older users. However more engagement of older users is needed particularly early on in planning and design process.
- Older People on tenants and resident’s associations, tackle rubbish clearance, broken pavements and bad lighting that pose particular hazards to older and partially sighted residents.
- Many older people are involved in local community campaigns to keep local services open e.g. Preston Park in Brent, Lewisham Hospital

Q4: If you had three wishes to make London a better place to grow old in what would they be?

There are a range of common themes and concerns. Being respected and understood by other generations, businesses and service providers is a key wish. Older change makers expressed concern that they were stereotyped and patronised despite their life experience. Action to support older people’s agency and multi-generational activities that bring different generations together as equals and for a common purpose is valued.

Improved housing is a critical for older people living in the social and private sector the quality, cost and lack of choice were key issues affecting health and social networks. Many people have no options but to stay put in unsuitable accommodation because they can’t afford alternatives, they are no alternatives or they do not want to move away from friends and neighbours.

There was recognition that in London, society is more fragmented and it can take time to get to know people and build relationships. Outreach programmes and multi-media marketing are essential. Many respondents have trialled different ways to reach out to isolated people with varying degrees of success and see this as an area for joint learning. Key moment events i.e. Silver Sunday serve to reach out to new partners and new people.

There is a vast range of activity and professional support available to older people and older leaders but this is currently difficult to access. There is no mapping of older Londoners organisations and limited understanding of the information flows between agencies.

Many health and cultural agencies offer support to older people's organisations and some businesses offer digital training. There is huge scope to make these services more widely known and to expand the range of businesses and agencies that engage with older Londoners.

For those surviving on the state pension there is hardship, weekly budgeting and very little to spare on anything beyond the basics. Paying bills weekly is necessary if you are on a tight budget but very difficult and time-consuming if you are not on line. Free transport and activities where people can share a hot drink and biscuit make all the difference. Those with additional pensions still monitor carefully what they can do and worry about the future.

Safe and pleasant parks are highly valued and reduced access to these - because of crime, trip-hazards and fly-tipping - are things older people actively campaign against. There is concern that public spaces are disappearing because of new developments and privatisation and that new public developments do not involve older users early enough in the planning process. There is also widespread support for actions that tackle air quality and congestion.

Large numbers of older people volunteer formally and informally and the benefits of volunteering as a way of making friends and building networks is widely recognised. More could be done to attract older volunteers and make it easier for people to find out about opportunities and to recognise and celebrate contributions. Targeting people approaching retirement or those recently retired is suggested. Many people also volunteer to help older Londoners and more could be done to manage this resource more effectively and make these relations more reciprocal.

Life-long learning, both formal and informal is identified as important. People would like to see the University of Third Age type of programme expanded and made more inclusive. In addition to keeping the Freedom pass, better signage, full step free access and interventions to make transport easier to navigate would further reduce social isolation and give people greater confidence to use public transport.

Wishes to reduce age discrimination and be better understood by other generations

- "Business and public-sector organisations need to take notice of older people and not just as patients. London is not good at noticing older people as workers and consumers other than as consumers of health services. Public Services and businesses need to understand older people's perspectives."
- "More respect – e.g. supermarkets treat older people with respect."
- "Respect - older people have a lot of experience, but feel that others think older people are past it, a nuisance."
- "Tackle ageism, there is disconnection because young people don't know any older people. Start intergenerational projects in nursery's. If you design for old you include all, if you design for young you exclude old."
- "Stop the stereotyping of older people and the normalising of age discrimination".
- "Change perception that older people are not busy, show greater respect, older people may not be in paid employment but they are busy."

- “We need to counter age discrimination and raise consciousness of age bias – we do not want to be blamed for living at a time when there was free university education and a windfall from housing price rises and social housing sales”.
- “We need better education for young people to stop and think for a minute what it is like to be old, young people are reasonably respectful, but they don’t have a clue why an older person maybe crawling along in front of them, unless they have grandparents.”
- “Older people are patronised and when they retire and are unpaid they are not of interest despite having extensive experience.”
- “Multi-generational community spaces with allotments, libraries, e.g. Age Exchange Blackheath – brings older people and young mums together”.
- “More opportunities for intergenerational befriending.”

Wishes for improved housing

- “Improve the housing situation – a lot of older people are stuck in unsuitable housing. More and more pension age people are living in the private sector on short term leases. Too many older people live in bad housing and can’t access support, damp affects their health – there is no information and little choice when it comes to moving.”
- “It should be a requirement for new homes to be lifetime homes. We need decent homes, nothing above the 3rd floor, no bedsits and room to be able have children or grandchildren to visit.”
- “We need better social housing.”
- Open up the doors of care homes, “to change the perception of what a care home is, open doors to the community, remove the taboo and feeling they are unknown places.”
- “Too often housing is seen as a young person’s problem. But after 50 years in my flat I cannot manage the two flights of stairs (there is no lift) but there is no affordable option to move to - retirement homes are too expensive to buy and I could not afford the ongoing cost.”
- “My friend lives in sheltered housing on an industrial estate, it is not near a bus stop and she can no longer shop for herself, she has to rely on friends. We need accessible flats in quiet environments near community facilities.”

Wishes relating to health and well-being

- “More help with health and social care and better quality of care. If you have nothing to look forward to, or you feel your problems are insurmountable you give up. Your mental health suffers. You may just sit at home all day dreading the arrival of the little brown envelopes on the mat.”
- “Person centred care - nothing is joined together, you are dealing with one person on one aspect and the next person comes along and doesn't know what the other is doing.”

- “Independent advocacy for older people, by people trained to work with older people to prevent problems escalating. Advocacy by Barnet Age UK is good but there is nothing in Greenwich.”
- “We need outreach and promotion of advocacy services. Our neighbourhood centre has tabs on all the vulnerable older people in the area.”
- “More time at the GP to discuss more than one ailment at a time, older people have complex problems - blood, diabetes, knees, at the moment we have to make an appointment for each problem, it is crazy.”
- “Local services need to be improved, basic needs are not being met, because of austerity measures.”

Wishes to tackle social isolation

- “Less isolation - by scaling up Silver Sunday and October 1st events to encourage people to meet and try new things. We should aim to make it as celebrated as Black History Month.”
- “More community spaces shared by different generations”. Society is more fragmented in London. Closing libraries is short term thinking. In London, it takes a while to get to know people and build relationships.
- “More integration, 144 languages are spoken in Westminster but it is not a global village, some cultures do not integrate and as a result older people can be isolated.”
- More outreach to tackle social isolation. A number of respondents have been engaged in initiatives to seek out people living on their own and encourage them to use services, but this is clearly not easy. Good neighbourhood schemes may not work because people don't want neighbours to know their business, strategies to reach the most vulnerable need to be shared. Referrals from social services, doctors and chemists, notices in libraries and word of mouth were all mentioned.
- “Free lunch clubs, if you are going through a bad time are excellent, regularity is important, now my lunch club is a café it is not the same”.
- “We tried a community connector scheme, but the stages took too long. The scheme aimed to connect people who could accompany others, who would go out if they had someone to go with. But by the time you had been paired up everyone's circumstances had changed.”

Wishes for better information and co-ordination

- “Better information, too often services are hidden”.
- “More co-ordination. There are too many parallel advisory groups and neighbourhood schemes e.g. street champions, health champions, money champions. Similarly, in the charity sector, Mind, AgeUK, Citizens Advice lack co-ordinated approaches”.
- “We need a digital platform to act as a central information point for shared information, learning and resources. Councils should provide information and advice but they don't, except on care homes”.
- “London is a good place, but needs more co-ordination so people get engaged, we have bowls clubs, walking and arts groups run locally and by national organisations. We need to share information”.

- “Establish Borough Older Peoples Forums who can run their own clubs, but also connect to national organisations e.g. National Trust, Rotary, MIND”.

Wishes relating to income

- “More pension, I find it very hard to manage on the state pension.”
- “Make food less expensive, particularly quality basics such as bread.”
- “More shopper buses, so older people can get the discounted rates offered by larger stores particularly on electrical goods and clothes.”
- “When I was working I was told, ‘you have to pay PAYE and NI so when you are not paying and old we will look after you’ – what happened to that promise?”

Wishes relating to the environment

- “Improve air quality, tax cars and vans, improve community and public transport.”
- “Reduction in congestion - bicycles, traffic and associated pollution.”
- Reduce noise and pollution, “at certain times you cannot walk on the pavements because of the fast-moving army of people on their phones, it is like Lowry on steroids.”
- “More public and community spaces and stop the privatisation of public spaces.”
- “Safety in parks, reclaim open space from criminals who use them for hiding knives and guns.”
- “Clean the air quality, so we can breathe more easily, walk more and improve well-being.”
- “Safe and pleasant parks – spaces are disappearing because of high rise developments.”
- “Pavement improvements to reduce falls, they are a barrier to going out.”
- “Deal with rubbish and fly-tipping e.g. mattresses – they are a real obstacle to movement especially if you are pushing a wheelchair. This is a greater problem in London as people move in and out more and there are a large number of multi-occupancy houses. In our borough, the council has stopped offering free rubbish clearance of large objects.”
- “Better designed public spaces: better lighting at stations and less hidden areas, more engagement of older users early on in planning. Often spaces do not feel community owned or led. To have a sense of ownership older people need to be involved early to ensure buildings are step free, have adequate toilets and hearing loops.”
- “A better physical environment and commitment to address cracked pavements, broken benches etc.”

Wishes relating to education

- “Increase digital training and know how, this is increasingly important as services move on line and to take advantage of modern technology.”
- “Free access to lifelong learning. The University of the 3rd Age (U3A) is amazing, especially if you are affluent because it caters for so many interests.”
- “U3A model good but it is not inclusive because it is based on self-organisaiton and hosting in people’s homes. Programmes like Open Age in Westminster, offer similar programmes at low cost in community settings.”

- “U3A model could be adapted to be more inclusive.”

Wishes relating to transport

- “Maintain the freedom pass.”
- “Even better public transport: improve signage, extend step free, make it easier to navigate, this would reduce social isolation and give people greater confidence so they can work for longer.”
- “Increase the number of shopper buses run by supermarkets and dial-a-ride schemes which take wheelchair users to school/day centres and then older people to shops. This would allow pensioners to shop at cheaper larger stores/supermarkets. Particularly useful for clothes and electrical goods, they also have instore pharmacies and eye clinics that are better value.”
- Accessible environment everywhere, both on public transport and in community spaces – we need common standards to improve inclusion. “Too often you can suddenly find yourself stuck for example in Elephant and Castle where there are lots of steps.”

Q5: What achievements are you or your organisation most proud of?

People identified achievements in 3 main groups. Achievements for which they had received recognition or that had stretched them as leaders in some way; achievements that had significantly improved the lives of others; and achievements with potential for scale up. Interestingly exchange visits with other pensioners organisations in Europe came up number of times and this activity clearly brought new thinking and energy into the organisations involved.

Stretch, recognition and leadership

- “I set up a local science group through University of the Third Age, I felt terrified at first but it has been hugely successful and now we have waiting list. Topics include global warming and climate change, hormones and how they work, speech therapy and how we learn to talk, History of Maths, DNA and genetics.”
- “We have been awarded the Liberty Charity Award – for our contribution to civil and human rights.”
- “The joint project and exchange visits with EU pensioners groups were a real eye opener.”
- “Our European Union exchange trip to contrast and compare how Older People are supported was a great achievement.”
- “I have served for 14 years as a trustee on Southwark and Lambeth Citizens Board, received two civic awards for good service and being a good neighbour. I am Secretary of the Taplow Tenants Residents Association on the Aylesbury Estate and I notify the council of repairs needed the state of pavements etc. I am a member of the British Legion.”

Positive impact on others

- “Our digital programme - using tablets that are much more accessible than computers - has had a real impact. Digitisation is a real barrier for some older people who cannot or will not do anything online.”
- “Keeping 6000 older people in the borough informed for 16 years!”
- “Our drop-in centre that offers referrals from solicitors to hearing aids.”
- “Our programmes to combat and prevent social isolation. We curate information of interest to older people and bring specialists in to talk about key issues. All this is run by older volunteers - Kensington and Chelsea Older Peoples Forum.”
- “The Safe and Independent Living programme – we have better integration of specialist medical care at community and primary level leading to prevention and reduced hospital admissions.”
- “The conferences I ran for older people with professionals on health, finance and safety and then on alternate years for people with dementia - Southwark Older Peoples Forum.
- “Befriending others, I remember one man, everyone said hello to him when he left his front door, but he was totally alone, he would not talk to others at the centre, I helped him organise his home so at least he had a surface to sit at.”
- “The knowledge our group has accumulated, the invitations we receive to sit on design forums and the impact we have had. The complements from designer’s and the confidence of our group to represent what is going on.”

Accelerate programme, take it to scale

- “Our programme of research and campaigns and engagement in policy. E.g. the Mayors consultations, research on transport and digital inclusion.”
- “Providing capacity building support to local AgeUK’s in London and a large number of small volunteer led local groups. They are often best placed to see local needs and pick up people not accessing even borough level services. They know what people in local communities need. A lot are BAME or faith led. They have knowledge of who is vulnerable and arrange direct support through members of their local/cultural/faith group - cooking, shopping and befriending.”
- “Silver Sunday – we put it on the map and it has been replicated in other boroughs and extended to become a regular event in some places.”

Q6: What are the best projects/policies that support older Londoners at key transition points?

Bereavement was identified as one of the most challenging transition points in life because it leads to loss of confidence. This could be the loss of a partner, a child or even the loss of yourself if you are living with dementia. Respondents also identified moving home for health or other reasons and leaving hospital as critical points when specific support is needed. At these point advocates and befriending schemes are crucial.

Key transition points relating to employment include redundancy and retirement. Many older people continue to work and cuts have reduced the support offered to people trying to get back into work, so some older peoples forums have set up schemes run by volunteers

to help with networking, cv writing and IT skills. Preparation for retirement, beyond financial planning, is becoming more widespread and this is welcome but much more could be done to help people see what life beyond work could look like. Volunteering opportunities, particularly those which utilise lifetime skills should be expanded. Services which help older Londoners find work or get back into work should also be extended.

Other transition points identified, where groups of Londoners require particular support include; enforced moving because of major regeneration programmes; moving into sheltered housing or care homes for members of the LGBT community and coming home from hospital if you live alone.

Bereavement:

- “Church based services, can be very important not just if you lose a partner but also a child, or if you get dementia – you can feel you are losing yourself. It is critical to get support to prevent physical and mental illness. GP referrals and NHS subsidised counselling is really beneficial.”
- “Bereavement is a critical time because people lose confidence. Impacted grief is a real issue – it starts when children leave the nest, then you no longer have a job, you lose status and have a drop-in income, your family home goes because you down (or right) size. People need support at the initial phase to stop grief getting worse.”
- “Why aren't people who are meant to be supportive e.g. NHS staff not doing this? you can easily slip through the net. We are a generation who don't ask. You only have to be let down once and you never ask again, you lose trust.”

Employment and Retirement

- Southwark Older Peoples Forum had recognised the impact of not planning or being laid off at 50 “it can be a real shock”, they offered a course to workers in local businesses but had no take up.
- “A mid-life MOT is part of it but we need to go further, we need to normalise skills for life and learning for life, budgeting and stress management are essential life skills everyone needs.”
- Many older people continue to work and cuts have reduced the support offered to people trying to get back into work, so some older peoples forums have set up schemes run by volunteers to help with networking, cv writing and IT skills.
- Age UK London have identified a growing number of older women in their mid-late 50's who are de-skilled and squashed between caring for young people and ageing parents, who lack confidence and can't afford to re-train. They face age discrimination in the work place.

Volunteering

- “Volunteering websites seem to be aimed at young people, to help them gain experience for employment. They should be more inclusive and ask what skills people have.”
- “Volunteering roles that utilize people's skills work best. For example, Pauline is a retired occupational therapist and treats people in an old people's home, another neighbour, who volunteers at the Imperial War Museum, recounts her experiences of WW2.”

- “CRB checks and references are understandable but can be intimidating, the culture of volunteering has changed.”
- “Volunteering is so important – we need a central agency to act as a market place that links with the boroughs, a volunteering fair.”
- “Volunteering programmes, brought together old and young around the 2012 Olympics, many older volunteers have stayed engaged and still meet up, some of these networks are an ongoing presence at major sporting events.”
- “We need to expand the volunteering role of older people – e.g. run more handy man services,” and ‘local walks led by older people.’”
- Talks and published stories on retirement by retired people illustrating options and linked to advice on volunteering was suggested.
- “It is important to recognise and celebrate the impact volunteers have, so they feel their time is valued and they are making a difference.”

Moving home

- “Can be especially difficult for some groups e.g. LGBT community.”
- “Regeneration programmes can mean people have to leave their homes. This is problematic for older people who do not want to be uprooted or moved to smaller flats because they will lose their social connections.”

Living with Dementia

- Alzheimer Society and Admiral nurses offer support to carers and sufferers, people often need advocacy support to access services.

Home from Hospital

- “This type of service is essential to enable people to leave hospital in the first place and once they are home, be able to stay at home - rather than going back to A&E – “it stops revolving door and frequent flier situations.”

Q 7: What are the best projects that engage older Londoners in the Arts and Culture?

There are a wide variety of responses and recognition that people enjoy the arts as audiences and participants both to meet new people and learn or progress skills.

Arts and cultural activities build community cohesion and interest, improve well-being, health and intergenerational understanding. Heritage focussed projects can be a good entry point for bringing together inclusive groups of neighbours. Ideally, they need to be free and accessible, with developed inclusion policies to involve all older people.

The main barrier is cost. Theatre and concerts in particular are inaccessible to many older Londoners. Outreach programmes and adult education courses are great but oversubscribed or too expensive. Examples of the range of activities mentioned are below. Lots of local clubs tend to be intergenerational which is seen as a positive thing.

- Community Choirs
- Music – diverse range and always something free in London
- Art class, colouring in, knitting, crochet – knit and natter clubs
- “it is not necessarily the fitness benefit or subject of the group that is the most important aspect, but the social aspect and the opportunity to make friends and connect up beyond organised activities.”
- Local history and heritage groups are an inclusive entry point for all sections of the community, often combined with walking tours.
- Organised and/or subsidised trips to theatre, exhibitions and places of interest, in and outside of London.
- Early entry or specialist outreach, to avoid the crowds, “as a visually impaired person the early entry offered by some museums e.g. British Museum is important. The Wallace Collection host life drawing for visually impaired people. The Portrait Gallery has a range of free talks which are often fully booked and St Martins in the field has free concerts.”
- “Learning departments of smaller museums and galleries are brilliant and have very good outreach for groups and care homes.”

Barriers

- Theatres and ‘block-buster’ exhibitions are prohibitively expensive. Royal Festival Hall and Barbican no longer offer concessions. “cost is an issue, I have some savings but have to watch what I spend”.
- “More people need to know about what is on.”

Professional Arts organisations

London is home to amazing artists across all art forms and there are opportunities to explore ageing and intergenerational issues through art programming. Magic Me was recognised for its ongoing programme in care homes and with intergenerational groups, but also for its role in brokering relationships between artist and institutions. They have a wealth of experience in building relationships with institutions, carrying out risk management, training etc. Other arts organisations mentioned who challenge how we think about age include

- Meet me at the Albany
- Punch Drunk
- Chicken Shed
- Entelechy Arts

Q8: What are the best projects that have built bridges between generations?

The urgent need for multigenerational, or all-age-friendly, approaches across all sectors – transport, planning, housing and the arts and sport were singled out. The need for proactive projects to bring generations together to break down stereotypes and increase understanding is also highlighted. The importance of all ages coming into a space as equals or with a common purpose was stressed.

Urgent need

- “We need to constantly widen the access to every generational group. We all bring different skills.”
- “I have little contact, no kids of my own, I would like to have more connection to understand what makes young people tick. Let them know that retirement is not all about cruises and grandchildren.”
- “We need to do SO much more, we have commodified and isolated ourselves.”
- “We need more opportunity for interaction between different ages, older people need to learn about being on line, young people need to understand more about the experience of older generations. Many youngsters don't regularly see their grandparents.”
- “Young people need to discover that older people are not a breed apart. Older people should not judge youth by appearances. Programmes need to be led by committed motivated facilitators, this can't be an add on.”
- “It is very important to learn from old and vice versa, old have history, young bring in ideas and new innovations – both can help create the future.”
- “We are not on our way to death when we get to 40, 50 or 60 years old, we need more dialogue, more all-age-friendly places, connections across London and shared common purpose.”

Examples of intergenerational practice

- “Use arts and cultural projects to start a conversation, it is very important to start a conversation so all ages come into a space as equals. Examples include arts outreach projects, heritage programmes and community choirs. Many community arts projects are also multi-generational.”
- Kensington and Chelsea are exploring ongoing programmes with businesses around fundraising and isolation working with staff at Peter Jones, linked to their businesses volunteering scheme.
- Many Older People’s Forums and Age UK London offer digital training run by businesses in workplaces and community settings.
- “Schemes, such as Home share, where by students and young professionals live with an older person in return for 10 hours work a week seem to be a good fit for London where we have lots of young people coming for work, a chronic housing shortage, and an older population with extra space.”
- “North and South London Cares brings together young professionals and isolated older people.”
- “Linking up older people’s organisations with art, hairdressing and beauty students through colleges, can be successful.”
- “Many employers offer volunteer days to their staff, these are often taken at Christmas and we get a massive overload of donated time and gifts. We could manage this resource better.”

International Case Studies

The following examples of Age Activism illustrate how older people's agency has been supported in other countries. The Global Age Watch Index illustrates how benchmarking can drive quality and support older citizens and policy makers monitor what is going well and where improvements need to be made. It also demonstrates how public debate on ageing can be stimulated. The case study from New York illustrates what can be done in a diverse city similar to London, by adopting an age-friendly city approach.

Age Activism

There is a growing older people's movement, led by older activists particularly in North America where the [radical age movement](#) has taken off, but also across Asia, Africa and Latin America. For some activists, the focus is on intergenerational solidarity and the need to build a society which does not judge you by how old you look, for others the focus is on challenging discrimination in older age. The World Health Organisation, (WHO) is planning a ten-year campaign to challenge ageism.

[Age Demands Action \(ADA\)](#) is a global networked campaign that trains older people's organisations across the world in evidence-based advocacy. ADA has mobilized tens of thousands of citizens and an external evaluation in 2012 estimated that at least 10.2 million people could benefit from new or improved policies as a result of the campaign.

Age Demands Action runs in over 60 countries and has contributed to increased and expanded pensions schemes, improved older people's access to drugs, doctors, legal aid and transport and challenged persecution and violence against older women. Older ADA campaigners have led calls at the United Nations for a Convention on the rights of older people and for the Sustainable Development Goals to meet the needs of people of all ages. Increasingly campaigners have chosen to campaign on intergenerational platforms for age friendly societies for all from 0-100.

annually. (<http://www.helpage.org/get-involved/campaign-with-us/>). The ADA methodology is based on 4 community organising principles

- Respect Older People
- Trust Older People
- Empower Older People and
- Listen to Older People

Local and national campaigns are decided by citizen's groups based on their knowledge and experience of what needs to change in their communities. Global campaigns co-ordinated by HelpAge International are synchronised around specific International dates i.e. October 1st the UN International day of older people.

[AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities](#) is a website dedicated to support the development of age friendly communities in the USA, it supports older peoples' agency through, resources, motivational actions, peer to peer learning and a liveability index which

allows you to rate your neighbourhood and initiate conversations on age-friendly communities.

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/an-introduction.html>

[The Global AgeWatch Index](#)

The [Global AgeWatch Index](#), was the first index to measure the quality of life of older women and men across the world. This Index and associated website provides analysis of ageing, enabling activists and policy makers to access key data in a visual format and benchmark their countries. The Index has increased public debate on ageing and was instrumental in ensuring that older people's needs are addressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with 8 out of 13 targets referencing ageing. The Index anticipated the 'data revolution' and emphasises the need for better and more democratic use of global data sets to monitor international agreements and local policy implementation.

When it was first launched in 2013 The Global AgeWatch Index achieved more than 3000 media hits in 92 countries on news websites, with a combined traffic of over 3 billion unique users per month – equivalent to advertising worth more than £900million. On top of this the potential reach for TV, radio and newspapers audiences was over a billion views and 55,000 copies of the report were downloaded in four languages.

The Global AgeWatch Index continues to stimulate broad public and governmental response and now spans 123 countries. Government and civil society organisations in a range of countries have developed this concept and produced their own national indices to benchmark progress on ageing and compare regional and other differences including in China, Pakistan, Iran, Colombia and in the UK, [Age UKs Wellbeing Index](#)

[Age-Friendly New York City: A Case Study](#)

Authors - Lindsay Goldman, Shauneequa Owusu, Caitlyn Smith, Dana Martens, Meghan Lynch

Over 1 million New York City residents, or 12 % of the total population, are age 65 or older, a number projected to increase by 40.7 % over the next 20 years (U.S. Census Bureau [2013a](#); New York City Department of City Planning [2013](#)). Age-friendly New York City (Age-friendly NYC), an initiative launched in 2007 by the New York Academy of Medicine, the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York, and the New York City Council, works to make the City the best possible place for older people to live through improvements to policies, practices, and programs. Age-friendly NYC asks older adults about their daily lives and uses their feedback to develop creative, low-cost solutions to reduce barriers to maximum social and economic participation. Some of the improvements made by Age-friendly NYC include a reduction in senior pedestrian fatalities by 21 %, increased walkability through the addition of public seating, new programming for older people at parks, educational and cultural institutions, and a better consumer experience offered by many local businesses. One of the founding members of the World Health Organization ([2007](#)) Global Age-friendly Cities Network, Age-

friendly NYC utilizes a “top-down and bottom-up” approach that allows for both citywide and neighbourhood-specific interventions. Making this engine for change work requires a repeated cycle of direct consultation with older adults, documentation of best practices, development of tools and resource materials, support for institutions and communities implementing innovative ideas, translation of such ideas into program and policy changes, and sustained communication with stakeholders, policy makers, and the public at large.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following people for participating in the research.

Nicole Crockett
Gordon Deuchars
Kathleen Egen
Karen Elmes
Emily Georgiouh
Zara Ghods
Andrew Green
Phoebe Grudzinskas
Pat Head
Frances Holloway
Jane Hopkins
Irene Kohler
John Miles
Richard Norman
Charlotte Norton
Maggie Reeves
Elizabeth Rylance-Watson
Bridgit Sam-Bailey
Lynda Stuart
Pandora Varrakalion
Carol Vincent
Rhiannon Watson
Tony Watts
Chris Wilkinson

Cover photograph: Twiddle mitts by Preston Community Library knitters group

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