

Collaborating towards an age-friendly Northern Ireland

7th October 2014, Belfast City Hall

This workshop brings together practitioners, policy makers and researchers to explore how we can work together to create an Age-friendly Northern Ireland. During the event, practitioners and participants will discuss their experience of intergenerational and age-friendly working across Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England and USA. It is intended that these presentations will inform our discussions in the afternoon's policy forum.

Briefing Paper for participants

The global population is ageing. Both the proportion and numbers of older people on our planet are rapidly increasing. This is a cause for celebration. In part it reflects our successes in dealing with childhood disease, maternal mortality and in helping women achieve control over their own fertility (WHO, 2014). It is a demographic change that is unprecedented in human history.

Estimated Population Projection for Northern Ireland

Year	Under 25	Over 50
2006	612,000	525,000
2021	596,000	699,000

Source: www.nisra.gov.uk

World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Age-friendly Network

One of the ways that the WHO has responded to this is to create a **Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**. This initiative was launched at the World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2005. Through a process of extensive global consultation, WHO developed eight indicators which can be used to develop and measure age-friendliness:

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings,
2. Transportation,
3. Housing,
4. Social participation,
5. Respect and social inclusion,
6. Civic participation and employment,
7. Communication and information; and
8. Community support and health services.



Defining Age-friendly

The International Federation on Ageing describe an age-friendly world as a place which:

- *enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities*
- *treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age*
- *makes it easy to stay connected to those around you and those you love*
- *helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages*
- *helps those who can no longer look after themselves to live with dignity and enjoyment*

Marjan Sedmak, Age Platform Europe (AGE) President said at the launch of EY2012 that:

“Creating an Age-Friendly European Union means fostering solidarity between generations and enabling the active participation and involvement of all age groups in society while providing them with adequate support and protection. This cannot be achieved through isolated initiatives. It requires a commitment and a common vision”.

Age-friendly closer to home

The European Union has set a goal for Europe to be Age-friendly by 2020. The **UK Age-friendly Cities Network** was launched by the UK Urban Ageing Consortium in September 2012, with The Beth Johnson Foundation as a leading and founder member. The UK Age-friendly Cities Network consists of 12 cities, including Belfast. In 2013, this network received affiliation to the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

In 2013, **The Dublin Declaration** was signed by over 40 Mayors and elected representatives from over 60 municipalities from across Europe. This declaration is a statement of intent to become an Age-friendly city and/or community. We believe that there are almost half of the local councils in NI signed up to this declaration and we are optimistic that this declaration is the beginning of their age-friendly intention.

Belfast is the first place in NI to produce an Age-friendly action plan ‘A City where Older People live life to the full (2014-2017)’. The team in Belfast have worked alongside Linking Generations NI in developing the intergenerational elements of their plan, which include an intergenerational toolkit and supporting LGNI to develop an age-friendly school in the city.

The draft Active Ageing Strategy for Northern Ireland (consultation closed in May 2014) has recognised the global age-friendly movement and states ‘*Our Vision is that Northern Ireland is an age friendly region in which people, as they get older, are valued and supported to live actively to their fullest potential; with their rights and dignity protected*’.

Useful websites:

<http://agefriendlyworld.org/en/>

<http://afeinnovnet.eu/>

http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_network/en/

<http://www.bjf.org.uk/age-friendly/about-age-friendly>

The ARK Ageing Programme is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, Queen’s University Belfast and University of Ulster. For more information, visit www.ark.ac.uk/ageing

Linking Generations is the Northern Ireland programme of the Beth Johnson Foundation. For more information, visit www.centreforip.org.uk/northern-ireland