

## TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

### Involving older people in co-producing knowledge about age-friendly neighbourhood interventions

#### BACKGROUND

Developing what has been termed 'age-friendly' cities has become a significant issue for public policy. By 2030, two-thirds of the world's population will reside in cities, with - for urban areas in high income countries - at least one-quarter of their populations aged 60 and over. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 'Age-Friendly Cities' project (2007) emphasises the theme of developing supportive urban environments for older citizens. The WHO established in 2010 the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities (AFC) to assist implementation of policy recommendations arising from the project. Currently, the network has a membership of 287 cities and communities across countries in the Global North and South. The AFC model has been influential in raising awareness about the need to **prioritise the role of older people** in developing research and action plans to improve the age-friendliness of their neighbourhood. To date, however, there is inadequate conceptualisation of models of co-production relevant to this area of work. This project directly addresses this research gap and aims to:

- Highlight the social **challenges and opportunities for older people** as they step beyond the traditional role of consultee to that of interviewer and researcher in examining age-friendliness.
- Promote activities that involve **older people as co-researchers** into mainstream social science thinking on urban development in a range of disciplines, including the arts, architecture, sociology, health sciences, and urban planning.
- Work with an existing group of older co-researchers, who were previously trained by the PI to examine the age-friendliness of their neighbourhood, to **translate research** findings (data collected by the co-researchers) into **practice and policy recommendations** that can help improve the quality of life of older people in urban neighbourhoods.
- Develop, showcase and disseminate a **model of coproduction with older people** which prioritises the role of older people in all stages of a research project, including the planning, design and execution phases, and ultimately, the translation of research-based evidence into policy and practice.

The project builds upon previous work which resulted in a *Guide to Working with Older People as Co-Researchers* [ISBN: 978-0-9576682-2-5] and a short film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXELgwHQ34o> which have been mentioned as best practice examples, and promoted by the United Nations, WHO and Age Platform Europe.

#### METHODS

The project will utilise a **participatory research approach**, working with 18 **older people** who were trained as **co-researchers** to examine the age-friendliness of their neighbourhood. This was part of an EU-funded Marie Curie Fellowship. As part of this project, the co-researchers have been involved in the planning, design and conduct of 64 interviews with older people experiencing isolation and poverty in the community. **This new project will work with the older co-researchers to analyse and translate research findings into practical and policy recommendations to improve the age-friendliness of neighbourhoods. The co-researchers will work with the project team to translate the research findings into co-produced outputs such as policy briefings, project summary leaflets, a practitioner-oriented article and a public engagement event**

#### OUTCOMES

The proposal presents a unique opportunity to link interdisciplinary academic research with practitioner and policy expertise to make a substantial difference to the quality of life of older people in cities. **Outcomes will include:**

- **Co-producing** (together with the co-researchers) **2 project summary leaflets presenting key findings** from the research, one focusing on physical environmental and one focusing on social environmental issues – these aimed at the **local research areas**.
- **Co-producing** (together with the co-researchers) a **policy briefing**, jointly branded by Age UK and Manchester City Council, focusing on practical and policy recommendations in a style and format accessible to politicians and lay audiences.
- **Co-producing a collaborative visual work emerging from an exploration of arts and heritage practice**, empowering the co-researchers to convey their own narratives of memory and spatial experiences. Using photography and written-narrative work, this element will aim to extract and highlight some of the ideas/concerns expressed in the research. This will form part of the dissemination, but this output will also explore the use of arts methods in a process of self-reflection (and communication), on the part of the co-researchers.
- **Providing evidence-based support to strategic commissioning of services in the city of Manchester** that have an impact on the quality of life of older people

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