

Shaping the age friendly city centre: The experiences of older consumers, employees and employers in Manchester

The rising rates of population ageing and urbanisation have led to a growing movement to create age friendly cities that will improve health, security and participation for older people. However, to date the majority of research on age friendly cities has focussed principally on the built environment. But city centres, such as Manchester, are also important social environments for older people. They act as a hub for social interaction, shopping and recreation, as well as being places where people work and run businesses. This project will look at the social interactions and the attitudes of, and towards, older people that help to make a city age friendly. We will look specifically at three groups of older people: older people as consumers, older employees and older business owners/entrepreneurs.

The project will employ an interdisciplinary, mixed-methods participatory approach to explore the experiences and attitudes of older people as they shop and work in Manchester city centre. The project brings together researchers from Manchester, Swansea and Liverpool and builds on two similar studies in Swansea and Merseyside. A key feature will be the active involvement of older people in all stages of the research process. Data will be collected using a combination of a short survey, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. This project aims will enable us to:

- Highlight the social challenges and opportunities for older people as they work longer in later life, travel further and have ever increasing shopping opportunities in the city.
- Look at how older people can regenerate economic growth in the city centre through their role as shoppers (i.e. the grey pound) and entrepreneurs.
- Explore how the city includes/excludes certain groups of older people through the attitudes of shop managers and workers etc.
- Identify good practice examples for discussion with Manchester City Council to develop an age friendly city.