

## World Health Organization Global Network of Age friendly Communities and Cities Annual Update 2020/2021

### Purpose

To provide a summary of the age friendly work undertaken by the New Zealand Government's Office for Seniors (the Office) for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

### COVID-19

New Zealand has pursued an elimination strategy for the COVID-19 pandemic. While our country has not experienced a full lock-down during the last year, we have had several periods of Level 2 and 3 regional restrictions in place. The Government provided significant support to New Zealanders including a range of initiatives that supported older people.

These included:

- wage subsidies for all workers
- the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme for workers who could not go to work because they had to self-isolate and were unable to work from home
- small grants to support community groups and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)
- additional funding for elder abuse services
- implementing [Community Connector roles](#) which are being funded for two years and working with NGOs. A small number of these are specifically supporting older people.

We have been continuing to engage with and advocate for older people (and the organisations that work with them) across government and other agencies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We have provided feedback to ensure that messaging targeted at and about older people and COVID-19 is affirming and provides appropriate information. More recently our attention has been focused on the roll out of the national free vaccination programme which commenced in February and is expected to continue for most of 2021.

## The Better Later Life He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 Strategy

The [Better Later Life, He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 Strategy](#) (BLL strategy) was launched in November 2019 and guides the age friendly work of the Office. Its vision is ‘*older New Zealanders live valued, connected and fulfilling lives – kia noho ora tonu kaumātua.*’

To help achieve this vision we are working on top-down cross-government actions as well as supporting local bottom-up age friendly approaches under each of the action areas identified in the BLL strategy. These five interlinked action areas are:

- Achieving financial security and economic participation
- Promoting healthy ageing and improving access to services
- Creating diverse housing choices and options
- Enhancing opportunities for participation and social connection
- Making environments accessible.

The BLL strategy is a call to action for central government, local government, non-government organisations, communities, whānau, families and individuals. The Office is responsible for implementing several of the BLL strategy’s initial actions and we have continued to work on these over the last 12 months. Some of the initial actions include developing BLL indicators, implementing the Digital Literacy Training Programme for Seniors, and working with local and central government to prepare for and respond to population ageing. Over the last year, we have also been developing the first action plan to implement the BLL strategy. The three-year action plan is expected to be finalised in August 2021. The action plan will focus on cross government actions that support the BLL strategy’s vision and its broader age friendly objectives. The three priority areas for the action plan are housing, employment and digital inclusion.

We are monitoring our progress with each of the BLL strategy action areas by developing a set of outcome indicators ([the BLL indicators](#)) which will evolve over time. We started reporting quarterly on a set of [initial BLL indicators](#) in July 2020 and have also developed a [set of supplementary indicators](#) to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of older people over the medium to long term. These have also been published quarterly from July 2020.

## Achieving financial security and economic participation

Since the BLL strategy was launched, many older workers (aged 50+) have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has compounded existing issues for these people such as higher rates of un and underemployment compared to younger people. We continue to engage across government to advocate for older workers and have supported the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment to develop and promote the use of the Mature Workers Toolkit.

As part of our BLL action plan work, we are engaging with government and non-government organisations (NGOs) to develop the Older Workers' Employment Action Plan, led by the Minister for Seniors as part of the government's broader employment strategy. It is due for completion in late 2021/early 2022 and will contain actions that help to address a range of issues that older workers experience.

## Promoting healthy ageing and improving access to services

### Healthy Ageing Strategy 2016

The Office is responsible for the delivery of priority actions to help implement the Ministry of Health led Healthy Ageing Strategy 2016. These actions include promoting age friendly communities and providing advice and tools to support older people, local government and others leading the establishment of age friendly communities.

### WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity

We are part of a cross government working group contributing to the development of the New Zealand Government's response to the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity. The group is taking a life-span approach to this work and it provides an opportunity to influence central and local government policy and action to improve the older people's participation in physical activity. There is also an opportunity for us to promote actions and policy that encourage intergenerational initiatives to improve physical activity levels of all ages and other social wellbeing outcomes.

## Creating diverse housing choices and options

Housing is a priority area for the first BLL action plan. We are working with other government agencies to identify and agree actions that will help to improve access to housing for a range of older people and their whānau as part of the BLL action plan. We continue to grow our relationship with key government agencies such as the Ministry for

the Environment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban development to help influence central government policy that impacts on housing for older people and their whānau.

### **Providing feedback on applications for expedited planning consent**

The Minister for Seniors has been invited by the Minister for the Environment to comment on several applications for expedited resource consent to construct new retirement villages through the COVID-19 (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 process. We have prepared advice for the Minister about these applications and provided feedback about the applications' impacts on older people.

### **Better Homes, Cities and Towns National Science Challenge**

We have continued to support a national multi-university collaborative research Programme, the Building Better Homes, Cities and Towns National Science Challenge. We have been directly involved with a project investigating building solutions for affordable, functional housing in ageing and changing communities. This project assesses the implications of changing housing tenure among older people.

## **Enhancing opportunities for participation and social connection**

### **Elder Abuse Awareness**

To mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15) the Office carried out a two-week campaign to shine a light on Elder Abuse and promote the Elder Abuse Response Service. The campaign focused on the hidden nature of elder abuse and breaking down misconceptions about elder abuse. The messages were that elder abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of their background and that 'It's ok to help'.

The campaign included advertising across radio, print, and social media, using audio stories, illustrations and animations based on actual case studies to challenge preconceptions of what elder abuse "looks like". [Resources developed for the campaign](#) have been made available to all agencies and partners to help promote awareness of elder abuse.

We have also been collaborating with the government's cross-agency Joint Venture for Family Violence and Sexual Violence (the JV) to help guide the elder abuse components of their work. We have supported the work that they are leading on the development of a national strategy and actions to eliminate family and sexual violence by organising and participating in a series of regional workshops that focussed on forms of abuse that impact older people.

## **Digital Inclusion**

### *Cross government engagement*

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the issues that some older people face when they are not able to use the internet to connect with others or carry out other essential tasks such as shopping and paying bills. The Office is part of a group working on the Digital Inclusion component of implementing the *Digital Strategy for Aotearoa* with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Internal Affairs.

### *Digital Literacy Training for Seniors*

Following a procurement process in 2019, two digital literacy providers (Digital Inclusion Alliance Aotearoa and the 20/20 Trust) started delivering the [Digital Literacy Training for Seniors programme](#) from mid 2020 for three years. This programme has been a success with an evaluation demonstrating that participants are improving their digital literacy and participation as a result of the course. The programme also won the Education section of the IDC Smart City Asia Pacific awards in May 2021.

Digital Inclusion Alliance Aotearoa uses its partner network, including libraries, and community organisations, to teach computer and internet skills. The 20/20 Trust works at the grassroots level to provide digital literacy training to the most vulnerable in the community. It is delivered at local churches and in the participants own languages. Together, the programmes are helping to support digital inclusion and accessibility for all.

### **Developing a collaborative approach to improving digital literacy**

Over the last year we have been working to agree a shared approach to digital literacy training for older people with the wider sector. This includes creating a shared [outcomes framework](#) and developing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU). So far, we have agreed one MoU with SeniorNet and are working towards agreeing similar MoUs with other organisations. We are also exploring the possibility of private-public partnerships (for example with retail banks) to expand the Digital Literacy Training for Seniors programme.

### **Ageing Well National Science Challenge**

We are supporting the Ageing Well National Science Challenge and are directly involved in work that aims to identify the pathways that lead to social isolation for older Māori and Pacific people and the development of a peer-support programme that focuses on social connectedness and wellbeing for kaumātua.

## Making environments accessible

### Accelerating Accessibility

We are involved in the Accelerating Accessibility programme led by the Minister for Disability Issues to make New Zealand accessible through a legislative framework supported by education and information. We will continue to provide input and feedback into this programme of work as it progresses. A decision about how this work will progress is expected in September.

### Making urban places work for older people

The Office for Seniors is developing the '*Making urban places work for older people*' resource to help local councils implement the New Zealand Government's [National Policy Statement on Urban Development](#) (NPS-UD). The NPS-UD was released in August 2020 and aims to improve how our cities respond to growth to enable improved housing affordability and community wellbeing. It gives high level direction to local councils about how local planning regimes must respond to urban growth but there is also a need for more detailed guidance to help councils implement the policies.

A range of stakeholders with backgrounds including planning, urban design, transport planning, te ao Māori, and housing helped us to develop this resource which will be published on our website soon. We also worked with the Ministry for the Environment and Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and have been using some of the insights gained from this work to influence ongoing development of government policy around housing and urban development.

### Accessible streets and transport

We have continued to work with Waka Kotahi (the New Zealand Transport Agency) and to provide feedback about the Accessible Streets Package, a proposed regulatory tool which aims to encourage a shift away from private vehicles to low carbon and healthier modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

We have also continued to provide feedback on Waka Kotahi's development of an updated *Pedestrian planning and design guide* and have been identifying possible areas for collaboration such as the [Innovating Streets for People](#) programme.

## Promoting and supporting age friendly approaches

### Website and rebranding

We plan to have a new Office for Seniors' website live in August. The new website will provide greater functionality and make information accessible for users. It will also enable us to refresh how we present our age friendly resources in the future, so they are more relevant, engaging and up to date.

### Age friendly engagement and promotion

The Age friendly programme continues to promote age friendly principles and practices through the Office including:

- regularly posting communications on the Office for Senior's website, Facebook and Twitter accounts
- sending a bi-monthly e-newsletter to over 350,000 older people
- sending a monthly e-newsletter to 800 Office for Seniors' stakeholders
- publishing articles in national advocacy organisation newsletters and releasing media statements for national and regional outlets.

### Presentations and conferences

There have been fewer opportunities to present to groups or conferences in the last year. However, we were still able to present participate in several, national and local events to promote age friendly approaches and our BLL strategy work. Notably we led a webinar in August for local government officials on our Age friendly programme and participated in the first regional age friendly forum in November 2020 attended by 80 representatives from local councils.

We have also participated in two Let's End Loneliness workshops organised by Age Concern New Zealand as part of a multi-NGO collaborative aiming to address social isolation and loneliness.

### Age friendly Business

In October 2020 we published an [Age friendly Business toolkit, framework, self assessment and implementation guide](#). This is based on work that we supported the Ready for Living programme to develop with their community. The Ready for Living programme is an age friendly programme based in the Gore District and a variety of the district's older people, local businesses and service providers worked collaboratively with the Ready for Living team on this work.

The resources were designed to be adapted for use in other places. Age friendly business programmes may be set up locally or across a national business chain with communities taking ownership of coordinating the programme in their area or across their business chain.

### **Community Connects programme grants**

The Community Connects programme (Community Connects) is a small grants programme run by the Office. Grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 are available to organisations developing an age friendly strategy or implementing a project in support of an age friendly plan. There is up to \$100,000 per annum allocated for grants. Grants for the 2020 round were awarded in December and seven age friendly projects received funding of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 each.

Successful projects include the development of three age friendly community plans, one to be jointly developed with local iwi in Rotorua and another will be created with older Pacific people in the Hutt Valley near Wellington. Other projects funded include projects to enable ethnic seniors to participate in wider community activities for older people and development of a rural connection plan for older people in the Tasman region of the upper South Island.

### **Review of Community Connects**

A review of Community Connects for the period of May 2018 to December 2020 was completed in April 2021. Findings from the review show that the programme has been working well overall, and [a report](#) has been published on our website.

The review recommended continuing Community Connects and making improvements to increase the reach and impact of grants by reviewing the eligibility criteria and other parameters of the programme. It also recommended changing the name of Community Connects to the Age friendly Fund to better reflect our commitment to supporting communities to become age friendly.

### **National Age friendly Expert Advisory Group**

In 2019, the Office for Seniors established a national Age friendly Expert Advisory Group (the advisory group) to help guide the Age friendly programme. The advisory group's membership includes a variety of stakeholders including representatives from advocacy, research, Māori, and local body groups. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted plans for most of the 2020 advisory group meetings but these have now resumed. We have had two virtual meetings in the last 12 months, one in October and one in April and an in-person meeting is planned for July.



## Engagement with other jurisdictions

The Office has developed a good working relationship with colleagues in the Australasian Ageing Policy Network and participates in the group's quarterly teleconference.

New Zealand continues to contribute to regular Global Network of Age friendly Communities and Cities Affiliate meetings each month to share news, lessons learnt, and other ideas with international groups.

## Future development

Over the next 12 months, we expect to see the actions agreed in the BLL action plan being implemented by central government agencies including the Office. We will also continue work on ways to support and promote locally led action to make Aotearoa New Zealand's communities age friendly.

We have been developing a national Age friendly Network (the Network) with input from people leading local age friendly programmes. The Network will provide a community of practice for those developing and implementing age friendly strategies and plans across Aotearoa New Zealand. We expect to hold our first virtual meeting in August 2021 and intend to organise an in-person forum in the first half of 2022.

Some of the opportunities we have identified to develop the Age friendly programme in the next 12 to 18 months include:

- creating a framework that provides us with a clearer picture of how different districts and regions across Aotearoa New Zealand are preparing for an ageing population. This will enable us to monitor the outcomes of the Age friendly programme and to prioritise our work programme
- developing an age friendly framework that works for all New Zealanders that is informed by matauranga Māori and reflects a te ao Māori worldview
- developing a better understanding of how we can learn from and support iwi, hapū and kaupapa Māori organisations with age friendly initiatives as part of a holistic approach to community wellbeing
- exploring the options for improving the impact and reach of the Age friendly Fund.

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12 July 2021