REBUILDING A CITY FOR ALL AGES

A STRATEGY FOR AN AGE-FRIENDLY BRISTOL

2022

AGE-FRIENDLY BRISTOL

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

BRISTOL ONE CITY

age UK Bristol

An age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

World Health Organisation

This strategy is for anyone interested in the experiences of older people living in our city. It sets out how council departments and local organisations are planning to improve the experience of ageing in Bristol in the future, and how Age-Friendly Bristol will measure those improvements over time. Please see our accompanying Action Plan for more detail on who is responsible for the delivery of each of the numbered actions against each age-friendly domain.

Contents

Foreword

<u>Age-Friendly Strategy 2022: Why Now?</u>

Changes brought about by COVID-19 have altered every person's life and society as a whole. The concept of an age-friendly city has become very different from the context in which our 2018-2022 strategy was set. This has prompted us to refresh what an age-friendly Bristol could look like.

While age emerged as the most measurable disparity in health risk, lasting changes such as the move to more flexible working in many sectors offer an opportunity for older workers. Furthermore, the city's response to people in need of neighbourhood support has helped form new bonds of social cohesion.

Front and centre of the One City approach is reducing inequalities in areas such as housing, air quality, transport, food access, health and employment, with cross-city work to ensure voice and influence for marginalised communities.

The adjustments many residents had to make during lockdown, such as reducing car journeys to work, meeting friends in outdoor public spaces, and spending extended periods of time at home have made people of all ages more aware of the restrictions and difficulties that an 'age-hostile' environment can create for people in later life.

Ideas such as liveable neighbourhoods – limiting traffic and creating more spaces for neighbours to sit and children to play, and fifteen-minute neighbourhoods – ensuring residents can access daily needs within a safe short walk, benefit people of all ages and have garnered public and political support in Bristol. They also align with the World Health Organisation's identified features of age-friendly cities.

Building a more inclusive social infrastructure and supporting a diverse local economy has the potential to support intergenerational solidarity that would improve the health of all our city's residents during post-pandemic recovery. Dismantling ageism isn't just about being kinder to our elders; it's about recognising the value older people bring to our communities. Whether it's the proven positive impact to younger workers who have colleagues over 50, or the 'social glue' they provide through caring and volunteering roles, encouraging people to see the older members of our society as valuable rather than vulnerable benefits us all.

Our Manifesto

Age-friendly Bristol's nine **visions** set out in 2018 remain the same. What has changed is the environment in which we can achieve those visions. We have adjusted our actions and goals to this new environment to harness the best of the age-friendly work done over the past two years and to maximise the positive side effects of the city's crisis response. This will enable a return to a 'new normal' in which Bristol is an even better place to grow old.

In Bristol, we commit to:

Offer meaningful, accessible ways for older people to have a say in decision-making that affects their lives

Enable older people to access the work and volunteering opportunities they want

Support older people to stay connected and able to access the information they require

Create person-centred, age-inclusive health, social care and wellbeing services

Develop housing plans that meet older people's individual needs

Maintain public spaces and buildings accessible to all ages

Ensure that older people are respected and included in city life and connected to their communities

Provide and support activities available where and when older people want

Work to ensure older people in Bristol have access to all available forms of transport and are confident in getting around the city

CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT

Visions

Older people in Bristol feel heard and have a say in decision making on things which affect their lives
Older people in Bristol can access the work and volunteering opportunities that they want

Context

Employment

Some older people work and volunteer because they enjoy it and value the social connection; others need to carry on working as a financial necessity. 78% of Bristol areas have a healthy life expectancy below retirement age[1]. It is important to bear in mind that even a stable job, which an older person wishes to stay in, may become challenging to continue with until they are eligible for their pension.

The number of 50-64 year olds in England who are out of work rose by more than 175,000 between March 2020-21 [2]

Older workers were also equally as likely as those aged 25 to 49 to work in sectors shut down during the pandemic, such as travel, tourism, retail and hospitality, which are anticipated to struggle to recover in the coming years. People aged 50+ who lose their job are more than twice as likely as other age groups to be long-term unemployed[2]. Coupled together, this puts a significantly larger number of older people at risk of pre-retirement poverty than before the pandemic.

Older people working in low income jobs – such as cleaning, care and manual labour – are six times more likely to stop working before state pension age due to ill health or disability. [3]

It is clear that work needs to be done to improve working conditions and to offer alternative roles to workers whose health is making their current job untenable.

Influencing local decisions

Feedback from both the Quality of Life Survey and Bristol Older People's Forum (BOPF) members indicates that a large majority of older people do not feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area or council services.

This confidence has been decreasing over the last three years, despite notable recent examples of citizen engagement such as the Citizens' Panel and Citizens' Assemblies.

Volunteering

The proportion of older people regularly volunteering or helping out in their communities is higher than that for all age groups, although this has fallen by a significant margin over the past three years.

In the 2020/21 Quality of Life Survey, 52% of respondents aged 50 and over volunteered or helped out in their community at least three times per year. This decreased to 49% for those aged 65 and over.

As in previous years, both of these figures are above the average for all age groups in Bristol (47%). The proportion of respondents over the age of 65 who stated that they lacked the information to get involved in their community (17%) was nearly half that of the proportion for all age groups (31%).

The only factor that disproportionately affected older people was accessibility, at 3.9% compared to 1.8% of all ages. This probably reflects the crossover between this age group and the Disabled respondents, for whom 16% faced accessibility barriers to volunteering.
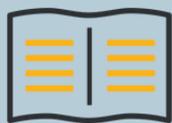
Goals

- There are more opportunities for older people from all backgrounds and communities to contribute to local decision-making

- Older people are able to find fulfilling ways to contribute to their community through volunteering or informal neighbourhood support

- Older people are offered the right support around employment and earning issues

- Older people's health and wellbeing at work is protected

Actions

1 Promote volunteering opportunities, particularly those suitable for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

2 Promote co-delivery of community projects through community development work

3 Establish the Bristol Older People's Forum Advisory Group within the City Office

4 Offer targeted employment support for older jobseekers

5 Offer guidance to employers to improve their retention and support for older workers

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of over 50s enrolled in employment support programmes who find a suitable job within six months, compared with all age groups

☞ Number of over 50s claiming unemployment-related benefits

☞ Number of employers in the Bristol Chamber of Commerce with strategies to improve age diversity in recruitment and retention

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who volunteer or help out in their community at least three times per year

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Vision

Older People in Bristol are able to stay connected and access relevant information that they require

Context

Digital exclusion

In the 2019 survey of Bristol Older People's Forum members, 61% of respondents reported that they accessed the internet - a 7% increase since 2018, with most using it daily or at least once per week.

However, a majority of those not online stated that they had no interest in doing so. Quality of Life Survey data shows that the likelihood of being uncomfortable using digital services increases with age.

While just 2.2% of over 50s answered that they could not afford home broadband or equipment, this was higher than the Bristol average of 1.6%. Given that the older age group was least likely to state that they found it 'difficult to manage financially' overall, it may be that a monthly payment for broadband is a cost that older people are unused to. Younger people would be more likely to see as an essential rather than a luxury.

Print media

In our conversations with older people, many wanted the option of accessing information in hard copy as well as online. However, individual flyers from service providers and businesses were not encouraged, aside from on communal noticeboards, community information points or shop windows; many older people noted that they would prefer printed copies of the information that they needed but did not want to be swamped by paper or junk mail.

The importance of individual printed adverts, available in public places, was highlighted by analysis of the routes through which participants found Bristol Ageing Better projects. Only 5% found out about activities through a website, while 13% had come across a leaflet or poster which prompted them to get involved. This was more than the number of people referred by a GP or through adult social care.

Information by phone

With information hubs such as community centres, libraries and local businesses being closed during lockdown, many of the sources of information that digitally excluded people had relied upon were unavailable.

However, some of the crisis response from businesses and public services has shifted from a digital-only model to being available by phone; with many local suppliers of essential groceries taking orders and payment over the phone, and Morrison's, with two stores in Bristol, offered telephone shopping.

Two phone lines were set up in response to the pandemic. The We Are Bristol Freephone support line, managed by the council and available during office hours, provided residents with trusted information and advice on coronavirus, and signposting to services. The Support Hub for Older People, set up by Age UK Bristol in March 2020 and comprising over 45 partners is also available for signposting, advice and guidance and referrals for specialist services. This is manned by staff and volunteers, many of whom are older people themselves.

Goals

- Older people are supported to feel more confident getting online

- Organisations have collectively coordinated a central directory of groups, organisations and services available for older people

- Information is provided in an easily accessible format and available from a range of sources and older people have input to its development

- Information aimed at older people, and their depiction in local news stories, is positive and empowering and avoids a narrative of helplessness

Actions

1 Promote Bristol Ageing Better's age-friendly business and neighbourhood toolkits

2 Set up an action group to improve communication and information for older people in Bristol, led by older volunteers

3 Social Housing Broadband Pilot to improve the accessibility and affordability of broadband

4 Ensure sustainability of helplines for older people in Bristol

5 Produce 'What's On' guides promoting social activities aimed at older people in north, south, and central & east Bristol respectively

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Bristol Older People's Forum members and Quality of Life survey respondents who have access to the internet at home – specifically a decrease in the percentage of BOPF members who respond 'no but I would like to'

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who feel uncomfortable using digital services

☞ Evaluation from Age UK Bristol's Communication & Information Action Group

COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

Vision

Older people in Bristol have access to appropriate health, social care and wellbeing services

Context

Health Inequalities

In the 2011 Census, 44% of respondents aged 50+ reported having a limiting long-term illness. In the 2020/21 Quality of Life survey, 17% of people over 50 and 23% of people over 65 said poor health prevented them from getting involved in their community.

This is a slight increase since 2017, reflecting the growing number of people living with more than one long-term condition. Engagement in health-promoting behaviours has a significant impact on the prevalence of these conditions, however it should be noted that engagement in such behaviours is largely socially and environmentally determined, with deprivation strongly correlated with poor health.

Social prescribing models

From 2017 – 2020, Bristol Ageing Better funded the Community Navigators service to offer free signposting and support to people over 50 who want to feel less isolated and more involved in their community. Clients could self-refer, or be referred through friend, family or community services.

The commitment in the NHS Long Term Plan (2019) to recruit 1,000 new social prescribing link workers over the next three years is welcome. However, there are unique benefits of community-based models that are not attached to a GP practice. Any model needs to ensure adequate resources to avoid Navigators having to take on intense case work, and check that the VCSE-led social activities being prescribed have capacity for new people [1].

Accessing Services

Healthwatch England found that between March and December 2020, 54% of GP appointments were conducted face-to-face, while during the same period in 2019, 80% of consultations were in person. The report suggested that while the digitalisation of services has benefited some, many people are now struggling to access care.[2]

Food insecurity

People with significantly life-limiting disabilities have five times the levels of food insecurity than those without. Those classified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to COVID-19 are over twice as likely to be food insecure. [3]

Severe malnutrition in older people is often due to prolonged food insecurity. [4] The Food Foundation found that food insecurity was caused by not having enough money in 55% of cases, with isolation accounting for 31% and lack of supply – areas often referred to as 'food deserts' – at 23% [5]

Mental Health

20% of people over 65 living in the community and 40% of older people living in care homes are affected by depression. [6]

The Mental Health Taskforce's five-year forward strategy for mental health (2016) noted that diagnosing depressive symptoms in older people can be difficult. Research suggests that some clinicians believe treatment for depression is less effective in older people. [6] Older people have low uptakes of psychological therapies; ways to increase this include group-based therapy at community venues. [7]

Goals

- Older people in Bristol can access the right level and type of support required at the right time

- Older people's independence and self-care is promoted

- Older people are empowered to influence their health services to adapt to identified needs

Actions

1 Develop a strengths-based approach to supporting people, ensuring personalised, preventative care to maintain independence

2 Ensure all older people in Bristol have access to a social prescribing style service

3 Develop work that supports older people leaving hospital to regain their independence

4 Apply learning from Bristol Ageing Better wellbeing and talking therapies projects

5 Ensure Bristol's One City Food Equality Strategy is embedded across organisations supporting older people

6 Ensure Bristol's One City Food Equality Action Plan tackles the causes of food inequality among older people

7 Update Active Ageing's Healthy Ageing Directory annually

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who report that poor health prevents them from getting involved in their community

☞ Uptake of psychological therapies among older people with symptoms of mental ill health

☞ Rates of malnutrition and physical deconditioning among older people

☞ Rate of social prescribing referrals from GPs and community services

HOUSING

Vision

Older people in Bristol have suitable accommodation that meets their individual circumstances

Context

Quality

Work undertaken by the Centre for Ageing Better and Care and Repair England found that over two million people aged over 55 are living in a home that endangers their health and wellbeing. Of the 4.3 million homes classed as non-decent (hazards such as excess cold, or potential for a fall), almost half are occupied by someone over the age of 55.

It is estimated that the cost of poor housing to the NHS alone is £1.4 billion a year, and a £4.3 billion investment to repair all non-decent homes would be repaid in just eight years [1].

Bristol Older People's Forum's 2020 Housing Report found that 66% of older people felt that 'feeling safe and secure in your home' was the most important feature of an ideal housing situation. [2]

Independence and autonomy

What is clear from both the voices of older people in Bristol and global research into age-friendly housing design is that meaningful involvement from residents is vital to success.

Many Bristol Older People's Forum members felt separated from the decisions affecting their living situation and unable to make a change. [2]

Adaptations and maintenance

More than 90% of older people in England live in mainstream housing, rather than specialist housing or residential care.

There are both financial and psychological barriers to making the relatively small changes needed to make people's homes suitable to live in as long as they choose to, such as ramps and grab rails. While the lowest standards of housing are found in the private rented sector, older homeowners often struggle to afford necessary repairs and adaptations - a symptom of being 'asset rich, cash poor'.

Older renters may be concerned for the security of their tenure if they ask their landlord for adaptations to their home [3], which will be a particular concern in a crowded rental market such as Bristol's.

Housing and social wellbeing

BOPF's housing survey found that the most important aspect of respondents' housing situation was the area surrounding their home, with 69% citing location – specifically access to local amenities and proximity to friends and neighbours - as their key priority. Many older people also expressed a desire to live in an environment with intergenerational social mixing.

Housing options

In our 2018 consultation, professionals and older people reported that they lacked information about different housing options, but were also unsure where to find it.

Rising house prices and gentrification also pose barriers when it comes to allowing older people to live where they want.

Goals

- Older people know what housing options are available and how to access them, and share this information in their community

- More provision is offered to enable people to live in their own homes for as long as they choose to

- Older people living in communal housing sites or HMOs have a distribution of communal and private living areas conducive to good social wellbeing

- Older people living in social or sheltered housing feel included in decisions that affect their day to day lives

Actions

1 Ensure all older people can access support and information to make an informed choice about moving home and/or making adaptations

2 Develop materials covering home adaptations and hiring tradespeople

3 Develop & implement Housing Policy Statement and Housing Action Plan

4 Form a Task and Finish group to work on options for an improved warden service

5 Develop Age-Friendly Standard for Housing

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who feel they can stay in their home as long as they choose to

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who report being satisfied with the cost of heating their home

☞ Number of permanent admissions to residential or nursing care

OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Vision

Older people in Bristol can access outdoor spaces and buildings that meet their needs

Context

Equity of distribution and access

47% of the 2020/21 Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ said that they visit Bristol's parks and green spaces at least once per week.

Several older people whose closest green space was a small park or nature reserve have told us there is a lack of stable walking routes or incomplete perimeter paths. Not being able to take a circular walk makes visiting public spaces for fresh air and exercise less appealing, and in some cases unsafe.

Paths which regularly flood force people to walk across mud, while narrow paths make it difficult to avoid cyclists and scooters. Several people mentioned obstructions from other users of parks' recreational facilities; while many older people we've spoken to do enjoy the presence of areas such as skate parks, where skateboarders and those playing ball games cross over walking paths it stops others from safely getting from one side to another.

Seating and toilets

Older people have also told us that seats and benches are often set out in parks and near views but that sometimes more practical seating would be useful, such as halfway up a steep road or close to shops, ensuring people can stop and rest when running errands. Being unable to get to a toilet is another barrier to using public spaces such as local high streets. Better provision would reduce the number of older people having to instead drive to a supermarket further away.

Pavement clutter

This has been a recurring theme in conversations with older people. Obstacles on the pavements such as cars, bins, A-boards and low hanging branches often mean people are forced to step out onto the road. Pavements could be kept in much better condition and many would like to see more dropped kerbs or continuous footways.

Changes in light of COVID-19

Behavioural changes among people of all ages as a result of the pandemic have the potential to improve the age-friendliness of public spaces. As observed in The Loneliness Lab's 2020 report 'Using Design to Connect Us', the three primary types of space present in the built environment– residential spaces, work spaces, and play spaces – have overlapped:

The pandemic has seen these distinct places merge, and is likely to shape the way we interact in these spaces for years to come. [1]

The concept of fifteen-minute neighbourhoods – where residents have all of their daily needs within a short walk or cycle from home – has increased public interest and support. The pandemic has also greatly accelerated growing changes on the high street, and while the economic downturn has negative connotations for jobs and for people who do not make online purchases, the combination of empty retail spaces and people of all ages spending more time in their local area gives the potential for new community hubs.

Goals

- Older people benefit from improved access to public spaces, events and activities in the city

- Buildings and spaces are developed considering the needs of older people

- Older people benefit from improved access to facilities that will help them navigate the city, such as toilets and benches

- High street planning takes into consideration the physical and social needs of older people

Actions

1 Improve awareness and coverage of the community toilet scheme

2 Capture the views of older people on use of public outdoor spaces and buildings

3 Identify and tackle physical and cultural barriers to older people enjoying their local park

4 Support residents' groups to raise awareness of pavement obstacles

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents who visit a park or green space at least once per week

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who report feeling safe when outdoors during the day or after dark

☞ Number of benches in public spaces in the city

☞ Awareness and use of the Community Toilet Scheme

☞ Number of complaints made about pavement parking and clutter

RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Vision

Older people in Bristol are connected to their local community; they are respected and included in society

Context

Stereotyping and ageism

In the 2020/21 Quality of Life survey, 68% of respondents aged 50+ agreed that people from different backgrounds get along well together in their neighbourhood – slightly lower than the all-ages average and average for 16-24 year olds at 71%.

A 2020 report from Centre for Ageing Better found that prescriptive age stereotypes have a tangible effect on people's autonomy. When people violate social norms, for example by working beyond traditional retirement age, or are seen to consume too many shared resources, they can experience backlash that limits the tasks they engage in. [1]

Ageism is also intersectional, and systemic inequalities between privileged and marginalised groups widen with age.

The coupling of sexism and ageism means that women experience ageism earlier, more frequently and more severely. [2]

Systemic racism means that older BAME people face greater inequality in housing tenure; nearly half of White people in their 50s and 60s (47%) own their home outright compared to 33% of Asian people and just 13% of Black people. [3]

Neighbourhood support during lockdown

While the increase in neighbourhood solidarity through community responses such as mutual aid networks has been rightly celebrated, it's important to note that not all older people

benefitted from this and attempts to build upon the positive effects of the crisis need to focus on equity. A striking finding from the Centre for Ageing Better's research into the pandemic's effect on communities found that:

A majority of people aged 50-69 who were struggling financially didn't feel a greater sense of belonging to their local area, become more aware of voluntary groups, or know more neighbours to say hello to or whom they could count on to help them out, while those comfortably off overwhelmingly did. [4]

This tallies with the findings from a study UWE conducted between April and June 2020 into neighbour support in Bristol during the first lockdown. The results from 539 respondents (self-selected, with younger people overrepresented) found that those from more deprived areas were less likely to strongly agree that neighbours were supporting each other well. [5]

Cultural inclusion & engagement

The three-year research project (2021-24) *Connecting through culture as we age: digital innovation for healthy ageing*, led by University of Bristol alongside VCSE partners, aims to pinpoint why cultural engagement drops dramatically in older populations, particularly among those with other protected characteristics. The project will also to identify ways in which digital technology can be used to diversify arts audiences and reduce social isolation, and share these models with cultural institutions.

Goals

- Older people are aware of all the ways in which they can use their existing skills to be a bigger part of society and are involved in decision-making at all levels within the city

- Older people feel included and supported in their community

- The portrayal of older people in marketing and local media is unprejudiced and promotes positive ageing

Actions

1 Promote asset-based models to improve older people's awareness of opportunities to be more involved in all aspects of civic life

2 Develop long-term plans for Community Hubs

3 Communication & Information Action Group to make recommendations to local media outlets

4 *Connecting through culture as we age* to identify ways in which digital technology can be used to diversify arts audiences and reduce social isolation

5 Support cultural events and institutions in Bristol to adopt Family Arts Campaign's Age-Friendly Standard

6 Deliver monthly Challenging Ageism Workshops

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who agree that people from different backgrounds get along well together in their neighbourhood

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who feel they belong to their neighbourhood

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Vision

Older people in Bristol can access available activities where and when they want

Context

Social activities

Bristol Ageing Better asked participants (all aged 50+) about their level of social activity. Between 2016–2020, 66.4% of 2,918 respondents reported being a member of a club, organisation or society. When asked about their levels of social activity compared to other people their age, 51.2% of 2,007 respondents reported feeling that this was less than most, 29.0% reported it was about the same, while 19.8% reported that they took part in social activities more than most people their age. [1]

When they first started an activity, 39% of participants scored as 'intensely lonely', 23.9% 'moderately lonely' and 37.1% 'not lonely'. At follow-up, participants showed a statistically significant improvement on loneliness. Participation was also shown to positively affect other aspects of people's social lives, including social contact with family and non-family members; participation in formal groups; participation in social activities; and ability to influence decisions. [1]

Structured and intensive 1-1 projects (such as social prescribing and talking therapies) tended to have greater impacts on health and emotional isolation. Group-based projects such as community development and community-based activity projects showed greater effects on social participation, co-design and influence on local decision-making. [1]

Barriers

There is a decreasing number of free activities in Bristol and cost can be a barrier for those on fixed incomes.

Social isolation triggers that can arise in later life include events such as bereavement, retirement and being a carer, and health and mobility changes. People can also encounter feelings of social exclusion due to ageism or its intersection with racism, homophobia, transphobia or ableism.

Barriers can become greater the longer someone is socially isolated. This is a particular consideration in 2021, with people over 70 the age group most likely to have spent upwards of a year with very little social contact outside of their household or bubble.

Diversity of social opportunities

Many older people do not feel that something aimed at 'older people' is for them, preferring to participate in social events and spaces without an age categorisation or branding. As one attendee at a Challenging Ageism workshop remarked, 'why are people always trying to force us to do activities?'

While opportunities need to be age-friendly in terms of accessibility and cultural sensitivity, it is important that people have ample chances to increase their social contact with people of all ages, without feeling that they are restricted to activities for over 50s once they cross that age threshold, or to socialising at times when younger people are at work.

The popularity of events such as the Friends Ageing Better disco nights (attended by people under 50 as well as the target audience) suggests that more evening and weekend events with less of a formal structure would be welcomed. Festivals such as the Harbour Festival and Upfest, are often seen as catering to young people, and could take steps to be more inclusive.

Goals

- Activities in Bristol are as financially, culturally and physically accessible as possible

- Everyone in Bristol has the opportunity to be active in later life

- All-age activities and cultural events across the city take into account the needs or older people

- People are supported to regain their confidence and preferred level of social participation when legal limits on social contact are removed

Actions

1 Increase visibility of small local opportunities, including those led and coproduced with older people

2 Age-friendly neighbourhoods project to support people of all ages to increase intergenerational participation

3 Develop an Active Ageing Well strategy

4 Provide transparent and accessible ways for community groups to access funding

5 Set up peer support projects to help older people to build up their confidence and re-engage with local social opportunities

6 Continue to offer virtual and telephone-based social activities for older people once coronavirus restrictions end

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who report that they rarely or never feel close to other people

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents who report participating in cultural activities at least once a month

☞ Number of small grants given to groups to start their own projects and social activities

TRANSPORT

Vision

Older people in Bristol have access to transport and are confident in getting around the city

Context

Public transport information

Older people commonly say that there is a lack of clear, accessible information regarding all forms of transport. This includes timetables and routes of public transport and how to book community transport.

Information is often available online, but it can be difficult for those who are not confident or do not have internet access.

Community transport

For some, community transport services are not only essential where a bus stop is too far; they allow people to spend time with others during the journey and build social relationships. Community transport is regularly cited as being difficult to navigate, with the large number of providers with different geographic remits not being joined-up; a comprehensive service map would help.

Cars and traffic

64% of 2020/21 Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ felt that traffic congestion was a problem locally. High pollution can make it inadvisable for those with respiratory illnesses to travel in the city, compounding loneliness and having a knock-on effect to all community members. However, action to reduce car journeys must be taken in a way that does not isolate those who depend on their cars.

Buses

There are a large number of buses in the city centre, which work well for those who live nearby and without mobility difficulties. For those who are able to use public transport, the city is well connected to many other locations, enabling some people to travel between neighbourhoods and beyond Bristol fairly easily. However, for those in the suburbs, bus infrastructure is more of a barrier, with fewer routes and less frequency.

61% of respondents aged 50+ in the 2020/21 Quality of Life survey said that they were satisfied with the bus service – a significant increase since 2019/20.

Many older people we have spoken to were not aware of 'safe journey' cards to indicate they need additional support; greater availability would allow this initiative to reach its potential.

Walking

In the 2020/21 Quality of Life survey, 72% of respondents aged 50+ and 74% of respondents aged 65+ felt it was convenient and safe to walk in their neighbourhood. According to data gathered in 2020 by campaign group Transport for Greater Bristol, residents of all ages take far more journeys by foot than by bus, bike or train.

Taxis

Many older people rely on taxis for regular journeys, such as day centres, visiting family, or attending public forums. The increasing dominance of app-based companies has caused challenges for people who would rather be able to call a trusted individual driver or who prefer to pay in cash. The Age-Friendly Transport Action Group suggested a charter or accreditation for accessible taxi providers and those easily bookable by people without smartphones or who do not pay by card.

Goals

- Older people know what transport is available to them and how to use it

- Service providers consider the needs of older people in the design and development of transport services and give older people the opportunity to inform decision making

- Older people feel confident to cycle in Bristol

- There are reduced barriers to walking in the city

- Air pollution does not prevent older people from getting out and about

Actions

1 Introduce Liveable Neighbourhoods

2 Identify and implement ways to make active travel more accessible and attractive to older people

3 Introduce trial mobility hubs across the West of England Combined Authority to make it easier for older people to use public transport and switch between different kinds of transport

Key indicators

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who feel it is convenient and safe to walk in their neighbourhood

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who report being satisfied with the bus service

☞ Percentage of Quality of Life survey respondents aged 50+ who report that inaccessible public transport prevents them from leaving their home when they want to

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