

The Friendly Communities Project



An Independent Evaluation
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Introduction and Background

“Time to Shine shares Leeds City Council’s ambition for Leeds to become the best city for people to grow old in. We want Leeds to be a place where older people are valued, feel respected and appreciated, and are seen as the assets that they are.”

The Friendly Communities project began in April 2019, building on earlier work by Time to Shine programme in 2015. It brings together Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly initiatives to support the ambition for Leeds to be the best city to grow old in.

The Friendly Communities project is made up of several strands and elements. The five key strands of activity are:

1. Age Friendly Steering Group
2. Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP) Group
3. Age Friendly Ambassador
4. Age Proud Leeds Campaign including Wise Up To Ageism (WUTA) sessions
5. Age and Dementia Friendly Organisations / Businesses
6. Other (e.g. Contributions to Shine Magazine, Friendly Communities Newsletter)

The Friendly Communities project works with partners across the city, including Leeds City Council and the Centre for Ageing Better, to address the age and dementia friendly priorities.

What is an age friendly community?

The Age Friendly Charter sets out the beliefs and actions that will make Leeds an Age Friendly city. An age friendly community...

- enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age;
- is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people that are important to them;
- helps people of all ages stay healthy and active;
- offers support and assistance so that everyone can join in;
- adapts its structures and services to be accessible to all older people.

Why is it needed?

- Leeds has an increasing ageing population. According to the Centre for Ageing Better ([The State of Ageing in Leeds report](#)), around 1 in 3 people in Leeds were aged 50 and older in 2020 (approximately 254,000 out of 800,000). 161,000 were aged 60 and over, and just over 34,100 were 80 and over. The fastest growing population group in Leeds is people aged 80 and over and this group is set to grow by half (from just over 34,500 to just over 51,000) by 2044). The city will need to think how it continues to respond to this demographic change and enable larger numbers of older people to live independently for as long as possible.
- There is a need to raise awareness of ageism and change negative attitudes towards ageing and older people.
- There is a need for organisations to commit to becoming Age and Dementia Friendly and respond effectively to our ageing population.
- There is a need to support communities to become and remain age and dementia friendly and to keep people connected and to be less ageist and more age-positive.
- There is a need to reduce loneliness and social isolation amongst older people to minimise damage to health and wellbeing and increase connections to and within communities. Fewer than half (47%) of people living with dementia feel a part of their community (Alzheimer’s Society, 2013), and 28% said they have given up even getting out of the house.



Methods

We used a mix of methods to gather and evaluate information about the Friendly Communities project. Our overall aims were to find out (A) what different people thought about the project and (B) what differences are beginning to be made to the lives of older people and people living with dementia in Leeds.

- **Reviewing project documentation:** We looked at 40 project documents provided by the Friendly Communities Team. These included meeting notes, project plans, monitoring reports, survey responses and feedback from events. Reviewing these helped to widen scope of the work, identify questions to ask in interviews, and provide evidence.
- **Group and Individual Interviews:** We spoke to 30 people including (a) 25 older people involved in various elements of the programme and (b) 5 strategic partners who worked for other organisations. The interviews were semi-structured (using questions as a guide) and done online or by phone.
- **Data analysis:** We designed and used thematic framework which shaped the interview questions and how we analysed all the information. The themes were:
 - Achievements: Successes /strengths
 - Outcomes and impact
 - Outputs
 - Challenges/what makes thing hard?
 - What helps?
 - Progress towards aims
 - Progress towards objectives
 - Sustainability
 - Legacy/the future

Consent / use of data: We gave participants information about the purpose of evaluation and how their information would be used. We asked permission to record the interviews and the recordings and transcripts were stored securely. These will be deleted at the end of the evaluation.

Findings

The Friendly Communities project is successfully moving Leeds closer to being a great place to grow old in.

In this section we bring together evidence from different sources and answer the following questions:

- **What has been happening?** – An overview of the different Friendly Communities project activities;
- **How are activities meeting aims?** – Some key examples;
- **What do people think about the project overall?** – ‘In the words of...’ Some voices and views from key groups involved in the project;
- **That difference has it made?** – Measurable and unmeasurable differences;
- **How well have things worked?** – What helped the project and what made things hard;
- **What needs more attention?** – Some tricky issues that still need thought or attention;

What has been happening?

The Friendly Communities project has been involved in a huge amount of activity. You can see an overview of activities here. There is further information about these activities throughout this section.

Key strands of activity	Summary of what has been happening
Age Friendly Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people recruited and supported to become Steering Group members • Older people involved in and leading age-friendly campaigns and activities (see below) • Older people involved in external consultations
DEEP Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with dementia recruited and supported to become group members • People with dementia involved in steering dementia-friendly and age-friendly campaigns and activities (see below) • People with dementia involved in external consultations • Carers of people with dementia also involved
Age and Dementia Friendly Ambassador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassadors recruited from a wide range of organisations, plus AFSG and DEEP • Dementia friends sessions for Ambassadors (also available to businesses) • Wise Up To Ageism (WUTA) sessions for Ambassadors • Quarterly 'get together' support sessions for Ambassadors • Wide range of individual actions in communities and workplaces, carried out by Ambassadors
Age Proud Leeds Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wise Up To Ageism (WUTA) online session • The Age Proud Launch Event – October 2019 • Age Proud Festival – September 2021 • Postcards to Your Future Self Campaign • 'Ey Up' Campaign • 'Tell us one good thing about ageing' campaign • 'Celebrate an older person' campaign • Challenging stereotypes and other resources • Other developments ongoing
Age and Dementia Friendly Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing up businesses to become age and dementia friendly • Producing business guide • WUTA sessions for businesses • Dementia friends sessions for businesses • Come In and Rest Campaign
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to Shine Magazine • Friendly Communities Newsletter • Older people contributing to Shine magazine, blogs and other publications

Some of this work was done in partnership with other groups and organisations, particularly the wider Time To Shine programme hosted by Leeds Older People's Forum. It was not always clear which activities 'belonged' to which projects, because everyone worked together to reach more older people and people with dementia, and to achieve better results.

Ambassadors have an important role in helping to make Leeds more age and dementia friendly, and they have been particularly active. Ambassadors' individual activities and actions are so varied that it is impossible to include them all. The groups we spoke to said they were most likely to have done these things (in order of most likely):

- Shared information about dementia with someone
- Pushed for changes in their own neighbourhood
- Attended a meeting in their Ambassador role
- Put up a poster
- Pushed for changes in their workplace

Some individual Ambassadors have done an enormous amount.

"I have become a lay researcher for the Frames Project (on trying to prevent falls in hospitals); tried to get Friendship benches planned in Leeds; written for Shine Magazine; been a volunteer listener for Time to Shine and participated in that evaluation. I joined in the Preservatives Group and I'm helping with a film on ageing and hopefully the Age Proud Festival at Leeds Museum in September. I have attended various meetings for the Age Friendly Steering Group".



How are activities meeting aims?

Overall, the project is meeting its 6 key aims.

The Friendly Communities Project has 6 key aims, which contribute to the overall ambition to make Leeds the best city to grow old in. You can see these in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Friendly Communities Rainbow of Aims



We can confidently say that, overall, the project is meeting its aims because:

- (A) We found clear examples that show how each aim is being achieved; and
- (B) All the five key groups we spoke to agree, including older people and people living with dementia in Leeds.

All of the main project activities contributed towards more than one aim.

Aim	Activities contributing to this aim
1. Access to information	Publications; Digital inclusion; Campaigning; Wise Up To Ageism
2. Community contribution	Age Friendly Ambassador; Campaigning; Dementia Friends; The DEEP Group; Age Friendly Steering Group
3. Meaningful lives	Organisations making changes; Work, help and enjoy – older people involved outside the project (limited evidence found ¹); Age friendly Steering group; DEEP Group.
4. Increase understanding	Dementia Friends; Business guide and advice; Age Friendly Steering Group; DEEP Group; Age Friendly Ambassadors; Campaigning; Publications; Digital Inclusion; Age Proud Leeds
5. Challenge stereotypes	Wide Up To Ageism; Age Proud Leeds Festival; Publications; Dementia Friends; Business Guide; Age Proud Leeds; Age Friendly Steering Group; Age Friendly Ambassadors; Campaigning; Organisations making changes
6. Engage and include	Age Friendly Steering Group; DEEP Group; Age Friendly Ambassadors; Organisations making changes; Digital inclusion; Age Proud Leeds.

However, **we cannot say how far each aim is met**. This is because “making Leeds the best city to grow old in” is a long-term ambition, and the six aims are also long-term and open-ended. We can see improvement, but we cannot say how close they are to being complete – in most cases, they will take years to be achieved. (It would also need further work to compare Leeds with other cities, to see if it was ‘the best’).

¹ We found evidence that older people were involved in activities that are meaningful and important to them **inside** the project, but we found only limited evidence of their work, volunteering or other activities **outside** the project. This was because we did not actually look for external evidence; it is likely older people are doing these things, but we did not see it. We could not produce a key example summary for how older people lead meaningful lives through working, helping and enjoying.

We identified key examples that clearly show how each aim is being met. You can see an overview of these in Figure 2 below, and you can read the examples themselves on the following pages.

Figure 2: Friendly Communities Key Examples



1

1. Access to Information

The publications are a key example showing how aim 1 has been achieved.

It also supported these other aims: increase understanding, challenge stereotypes.

Keeping older people informed and updated

The newsletters and magazine are clearly key mechanisms for older people to access information and find out what is happening in Leeds.

Shine magazine provided an opportunity for older people to contribute and share their stories.

There is some potential overlap between the different newsletters produced. Issues of digital exclusion may also mean some older people are unable to access online resources.

Publications

A monthly Friendly Communities newsletter is created and issued to 800 contacts by email and shared on social media. Time to Shine and LOPF newsletters are also circulated. The newsletters contains news and information, details of events and opportunities to get involved and links to relevant resources.

Shine magazine is a monthly Time to Shine publication featuring opinions, memories, life-stories, health tips, information and details of useful organisations. The Age Friendly Steering Group has a regular feature in it.

A range of other age and dementia friendly resources developed by Friendly Communities are also available on the website.

What's happened

Monthly Friendly Communities Newsletter.

Shine magazine produced monthly. Older people contribute content.



"Shine has a lot of information in it that's very useful for the community."

"The Age Friendly updates keep us in the loop."

1

1. Access to Information

Digital inclusion is a key example showing how aim 1 has been achieved.

It also supported these other aims: increase understanding, engage and include.

Enabling older people's access to the online world

Barriers to the online and digital world include a lack of skills, confidence and suitable equipment.

Working in partnership with specialist agencies such as 100% digital and Age UK has enabled more older people to learn about and access the online world enabling them to stay connected and access information.

Digital Inclusion

A 'Let's Connect' event, co-produced with the AFSG and partners, was held as part of Leeds Digital Festival. The aim was to increase digital engagement by providing tech support to older people and bringing services together. The event was attended by 20 older people.

Friendly Communities has worked with 100% Digital via Memory Cafes and community hubs to help get more people online, keep people connected and reduce social isolation.

What's happened

'Let's Connect' event held as part of Leeds Digital Festival event.

Work with 100% Digital Leeds and Age UK Leeds to increase digital inclusion for older people.



"If you want to live well- you have to be digitally included. People need support to get online."

"It can be like learning a new language. It's so important there's peer support and groups for people of similar abilities to be able to learn together."

"100% Digital Leeds made crucial contributions to digital inclusion during the pandemic."

2

2. Community Contribution

Campaigning is a key example showing how Aim 2 has been achieved.

Campaigning also contributes significantly to other aims, especially: challenge stereotypes, increase understanding, access to information.

Older people and campaigning

In many ways, the Friendly Communities project is one big campaign! It brings together Age Friendly Leeds and Dementia Friendly Leeds - and organises actions that aim to change the Leeds and make it the best place to grow old in.

In Friendly Communities projects, older people are partners and activists - they *do things*, rather than having things done to them.

Campaigning

Campaigning is an important way for older people to contribute to their communities and make Leeds the best place to grow old in.

Older people are playing a key role in changing Leeds' communities for the better, by promoting and participating in campaigns like Age Proud Leeds, Wise Up to Ageism, Ey Up and Come In and Rest.

"People's attitudes towards their own ageing and towards older people have been impacted and changed as a result. Hopefully that will have further impact on the people in their lives".

What's happening?

100s of older people have been actively involved in...

- The Age Proud Leeds campaign.
- Challenging ageism through sharing tips, the Wise Up To Ageism & 'Ey Up' campaigns.
- Writing blogs and articles in Shine magazine.
- Signing up businesses to become age-and dementia-friendly.

See aims 1 & 5 for further information.



"I'm active in the 'come in and rest' group - going into businesses to give them a sticker and make sure they have a chair."

"I think that our move towards getting people to provide seating in more places is a vital thing."

"The foundations, the roots are getting in there. And we need to keep going with it."

(Ambassadors and other older people)

2

2. Community Contribution

The Age Friendly Ambassadors are a key example showing how Aim 2 has been achieved.

The Ambassadors also contribute significantly to these other aims: increase understanding, challenge stereotypes, engage and include.

Understanding Ambassadors' contributions in communities

Ambassadors have clearly played a key role in connecting and supporting their communities, especially during the pandemic. However, because there are so many individuals all fulfilling their Ambassador role in different ways, it is difficult to unpick and measure their overall impact. Communities have rich networks of connections and a huge variety of things going on, so it is not surprising Ambassadors respond in so many different ways. The complexity is necessary!

Age Friendly Ambassadors

The Ambassadors take action to spread the Age Friendly message to others, helping to make Leeds the best place to grow old. They promote Age Friendly Leeds anywhere in their community, including with family and friends, in their workplace, sports team, place of worship or study.

Ambassadors take part in Friendly Communities activities, especially campaigns like Age Proud Leeds, Wise Up to Ageism and Come In and Rest.

Crucially, each Ambassador chooses what they will do personally to connect, inform and help older people in their own communities, or to campaign and challenge stereotypes. A resource pack gives Ambassadors the information and tools to work this way.

What's happening?

203 people are now Age Friendly Ambassadors in Leeds.

Ambassadors take independent action to connect, inform and help older people in their own communities, in a wide variety of ways.



"Ambassadors have been involved in delivering food during Covid and chats at the door step."

"When lockdown happened, I set up a WhatsApp group including some older people and others who live alone, so people stayed connected."

"I feel like I am a link for my community."

3

6

5

3. Meaningful lives

Organisations making changes is a key example showing how Aim 3 has been achieved.

The changes organisations make also contribute to other aims, especially: engage and include, challenge stereotypes.

Some changes so far:

- Having Age Friendly Ambassadors in the organisation.
- Helping older people develop digital skills and loaning tablets
- Giving age/dementia friendly training to new staff.
- Adapting signs.
- Fitting an induction loop.
- Keeping more natural light.
- Keeping pathways clear.
- Escorting passengers rather than giving directions which may be hard to follow.
- Using large fonts in writing.

Organisations making changes

Organisations need to make changes so that older people and people living with dementia can do things that are important to them. This is beginning to happen in Leeds, thanks to Friendly Communities projects.

One major initiative asks organisations to sign up to become 'age and dementia friendly'. They use the Age & Dementia Friendly Guide for Businesses and Organisations to identify actions and make changes. Some businesses are also taking part in the Come In and Rest campaign, displaying a sticker and providing chairs for older people.

What's happening?

46 organisations have signed up to become age and dementia friendly.

Many have already made changes (see left). The pandemic has stopped some organisations making changes so far, but they are planning them now.

Staff and volunteers are participating in age and dementia friendly training.



“We have definitely been more proactive with approaching customers, especially those with lanyards.”

“We’ve adapted our website to allow ‘cash on delivery’ as we realised some of our most vulnerable customers had no banking facilities.”

“We have been carefully watching when customers need help.”

(Businesses)

Note: We think that the second example of how older people live meaningful lives is ‘Work, help and enjoy’. However, evidence for this would have require further research in the community, so there is no Key Example.



4

4. Increase Understanding

Dementia Friends is a key example showing how aim 4 has been achieved.

2

It also supported these other aims: community contribution, challenge stereotypes.

5

Helping people living with dementia

Increasing awareness and understanding of people with dementia through Dementia Friends sessions has helped individuals, organisations and businesses become more dementia friendly.

Dementia Friends are key to the wider Dementia Friendly work.



Dementia Friends

An Alzheimer's Society initiative

Dementia Friends

Dementia Friends sessions have been delivered to 277 people. Some sessions were open to the public and others were for organisations e.g. Opera North, Leeds BID, Canal and Rivers Trust, White Rose Shopping Centre, LCC Sheltered Housing, Leeds Rhinos. Bus drivers in Leeds have also received dementia friends training as part of their standard training. 181 organisations have signed up as members of the Dementia Action Alliance.

Over 30 workshops or presentations have been delivered to local and national groups and events to highlight the work of the project and raise awareness of Age and Dementia Friendly work.

What's happened

- 277 Dementia Friends trained.
- 181 organisations signed up to Dementia Action Alliance
- 30 workshops or presentations delivered of Age / Dementia Friendly work.



Dementia friends is an initiative established by the Alzheimer's Society. A Dementia Friend is somebody who learns about dementia so they can help their community and people living with dementia by taking actions- both big and small. Example actions can range from visiting someone you know with dementia to being more patient in a shop queue. Dementia Friends can also get involved with volunteering, campaigning or wearing a badge to raise awareness.

"Dementia Friendly campaign is massive, and so heartening to see its effects."

4

4. Increase Understanding

The Business Guide is a key example showing how aim 4 has been achieved.

5

It also supported other these aims: challenge stereotypes, meaningful lives.

3

Making organisations more age and dementia friendly

The business guide and related resources were designed to help organisations and businesses become more age and dementia friendly by removing barriers and being more accessible. Physical environment, information and communication and attitudes are all part of this.

The Pandemic has impacted on take up as some organisations and businesses have had restricted trading hours and needed to ensure social distancing measures were in place.

Business Guide

In 2019 The Friendly Communities team created a guide for organisations and businesses on 'How to become age and dementia friendly'. This guide was created in partnership with stakeholders across Leeds. It is made up of 5 sections and provides information, a checklist, signposting and case studies around Age and Dementia Friendly work. A 'quick guide' for those businesses who have limited time is also available.

A sign up opportunity was created for businesses and organisations to sign up, commit to take action and receive recognition for Age and Dementia Friendly work. One action many have taken is to sign up to the 'Come in and rest scheme'. [see aim 6].

What's happened

- Business guide produced and issued to over 200 organisations.
- 'Come in and rest' scheme established.



Come in and rest.

"Hopefully.. these organisations have changed some of the way that they do things, and are now more accessible, more friendly for older people and people with dementia in Leeds."

5

5. Challenge Stereotypes

Age Proud Leeds is a key example showing how aim 5 has been achieved.

3

4

It also supported these other aims:
Increase understanding
Meaningful lives

Raising awareness and challenging attitudes

The promotion of the APL key messages, resources, activities and WUTA have combined to create a strong partnership campaign which challenges ageism through a number of different angles (providing information, encouraging people to celebrate ageing, encouraging people to call out ageism and giving them the tools to do so, provoking conversation and debate etc) and reaches people directly and through wider media.

See also Campaigning example in Aim 2.

Age Proud Leeds

Age Proud Leeds (APL) is a campaign which aims to raise awareness of ageism and change negative attitudes by challenging how older people can be viewed. APL is led by Leeds Older People's Forum with the Leeds Age Friendly Partnership, Leeds City Council, NHS, Centre for Ageing Better and voluntary sector organisations. An APL Launch event was held at the Playhouse in Oct 2019, attended by 150 people.

In Sept 2021, an APL festival took place over 10 days. The festival involved a wide range of activities and events for older people. The festival was a platform to showcase the city of Leeds as a community focussed city with lots to offer older people. A place where people can feel involved and valued.

What's happened

Age Proud Launch event 2019.

Age Proud festival 6th- 17th September 2021.



Age Proud campaign: five key areas

1. Let's talk about ageism
2. Ageism affects people of all ages
3. What does it do to us?
4. Older, different, equal
5. Time to feel good about ageing

"I will be more positive about the advantages and opportunities of old age... it should rightly be seen as a 'Time to Shine!'"

"Age Proud Leeds... shines a light on the many positive benefits of ageing."

"Fantastic! Brought together lots of people and exposed older people to other services they could access."

5

5. Challenge Stereotypes

Wise up to Ageism is a key example showing how Aim 5 has been achieved.

1

4

It also supported these other aims: access to information, increase understanding

Challenging attitudes

Challenging ageism and negative attitudes was a key part of this aim. WUTA participants reported their attitudes to older people and ageing were more positive following the session and that they felt more confident in identifying ageist beliefs/ behaviours and describing the impacts of ageism. They were also more confident in describing the positive aspects of ageing and positive contributions made by older people.

Project staff are considering developing a related training package that could be shared and used nationally.

Wise up to Ageism

As part of the Age Proud Leeds Campaign, an ageism awareness session was developed by the Friendly Communities team. Wise Up To Ageism (WUTA) is a 90 Minute online, interactive session (or 1 hour webinar) which aims to encourage people to find out more about ageism, discuss its impact and consider how they could challenge ageism in everyday life. The session content is based on the five key messages used during the APL campaign.

The WUTA training has been well received and demand is high. 17 sessions have been delivered to 380 people in Leeds. Some sessions were open to the public and others were for staff in specific organisations.

What's happened

17 WUTA sessions have been delivered to 380 people.

One hour webinar version of WUTA created.



"WUTA is absolutely fabulous...just amazing training - really helping people to understand older people and promoting positive images."

"I will challenge anyone who used ageist language or shows ageist attitudes"

"I will always keep in mind the negative effects of unconscious ageism"

6

6. Include and Engage

5

The Age Friendly Steering Group is a key example showing how Aim 6 has been achieved.

3

4

The Group also contributes significantly to these other aims: challenge stereotypes, meaningful lives, increase understanding.

Understanding barriers to older people's inclusion

Understanding barriers and how to reduce them was a key part of this aim. Group members identify many issues that may exclude them, such as poor transport, lack of information and social isolation.

The Group is beginning to think about how older people from black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities can have more voice and influence, but there is still work to do.

See also: In the words of... The Age Friendly Steering Group.

The Age Friendly Steering Group

The Age Friendly Steering Group is a key way for older people to get involved in planning for the Friendly Communities project and have a voice more widely. Members have commented on plans throughout the project, and played an active role in making decisions and in running project activities and events, such as the Age Proud Leeds campaign. Some of them are Age Friendly Ambassadors.

Members have also taken part in other consultations, giving older people wider voice and influence in Leeds. For example, they gave feedback on the bus station renovations and the town centre regeneration - making sure there are more benches to sit on across the city centre.

What's happening?

34 older people have joined. Monthly meetings with 10-16 members attending regularly.

Older people are included and engaged in the project, and have a voice in other developments in Leeds, like the town centre regeneration.



"It's very important to give older people a voice. I feel this steering group does give us all a voice."

"You need to listen to us because actually, we do have some wisdom and sense that you need to be hearing!"

(AFSG members)

6

6. Include and Engage

2

The DEEP Group is a key example showing how Aim 6 has been achieved.

3

4

The Group also contributes significantly to these other aims: community contribution, meaningful lives, increase understanding.

Understanding barriers to including people with dementia

Understanding barriers and how to reduce them was a key part of this aim. DEEP group members feel strongly about being involved and included in everyday life in their communities - and said that they often aren't.

They identified some important barriers, particularly a general lack of awareness about dementia, which means other people often do not know how to include them.

See also: In the words of... DEEP Group members.

The DEEP Group

The Leeds DEEP Group aims to empower people with dementia to make positive changes locally, and to have a stronger voice. Carers of people with dementia are also involved. It is a forum, bringing together many different people with lived experience of dementia.

Members are involved in planning for local dementia-friendly work - for example, agreeing the priorities for Dementia Friendly Leeds. Some of them are Age Friendly Ambassadors.

DEEP Group members have also been involved in some local consultations, particularly for the bus station and train station regeneration projects, helping to make public transport more friendly and accessible for people with dementia.

What's happening?

Meetings every 6 weeks, and online every 2 weeks during the pandemic.

People with dementia and their carers are included and engaged in the project, and have some voice in other developments in Leeds, such as local transport developments.



"It's brought lots of different people together. It's good to meet other people with completely different lives experience and see how they deal with things".

"It helped me with my self confidence, that my views were being listened to and respected".

(DEEP Group members)

What do people think about the project overall?

Overall, all groups are very positive about the project and think it is making a difference to the lives of older people in Leeds.

Voice and views are a central part of the Friendly Communities project – especially the voice and views of older people. We spoke to 5 key groups of people to find out what they thought about the project overall:

- The Age Friendly Steering Group
- The DEEP Group
- The Ambassadors
- The Project Team
- Strategic Partners

All groups (30 individuals) were very positive about the project overall. Members of the Age Friendly Steering Group, the DEEP Group and Ambassadors also talked about some of the differences it had made to them personally, as older people or people living with dementia in Leeds. The Project Team, the Strategic Partners and a few older people who are involved in strategic groups also talked about some differences the project was making to organisations and the way they work together in Leeds.

We have summarised the key views of each group on the following pages.



In the words of the...

AGE FRIENDLY STEERING GROUP

"We've helped in laying the foundations to make Leeds the best city to grow old in"

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

To maintain and expand on the Age Friendly steering group with more diversity of members.

Many practical barriers still to be addressed e.g. Lack of public toilets, poorly maintained pathways, services not joined up.

"The council wants Leeds to be 'age friendly' - a nice soundbite. But it has to be more than a soundbite. We have to have the right networks and engage with people who are over a certain age, on committees and steering groups"

The Age Friendly Steering Group makes important contributions to the Friendly Communities overarching aims, especially Alm 6 - Engage and Include.

6

See Key Examples.

"The roots are getting in there."

The Age Friendly Steering Group is a group of older people from across Leeds which has a role in advising and steering the work of the Friendly Communities project and age friendly work more broadly across the City. The group is a key mechanism for older people to have a voice on a range of issues.

"The fact that we're being recognised as a group to come to for consultations is really, really important in terms of how we impact on local policy"

What has been achieved?

AFSG members are most proud of their role in influencing and involvement in consultations e.g. train station renovations. Members were also proud of the practical changes made which make Leeds more age friendly e.g. more benches installed. Members also saw their role in getting messages out and raising awareness of ageism - for example, contributions to Shine magazine.

"It was good to get that recognition. People were hearing and recognising what we're saying."

What has helped?

The support and skill of the Time to Shine staff team. The strong VSC Sector in Leeds, including the Neighbourhood networks who were seen as an 'essential backbone to provision of services for older people'. Some AFSG members were also Age Friendly Ambassadors which helped to spread the age friendly agenda.


What has been hard?

Ensuring genuine participation in the AFSG and reaching a diverse range of older people.

Sharing and replicating pockets of good practice across the city.

In the words of...

THE DEEP GROUP



“We want things to do gently that we enjoy doing, and that would connect with people”

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Leaflets about dementia in bus and train stations, libraries, hospitals and other public places
- Local radio programmes including people with dementia
- Services that consult feeding back about what they have changed.

IMPORTANT TO CARERS

One carer explained how important the DEEP Group is to carers too: “It does help me. I get just as much out of it”.

The DEEP Group makes important contributions to the Friendly Communities overarching aims, especially Aim 6 - Include and Engage.

6

See Key Examples.

“There’s a lot of power in this group!”

The Leeds Dementia Engagement & Empowerment Project (DEEP) Group aims to empower people with dementia to make positive changes locally, and to have a stronger voice. Group members feel they are working well, though they also recognise some challenges.

“I think that the people in this group are helping to make Leeds more dementia friendly by being brave enough and committed enough to keep talking openly about dementia, because that’s the only way that things will change”.

What has been achieved?

DEEP Group members are most proud of taking part in consultations and forums, and helping to make sure the voices of people with dementia are heard. They look forward to hearing back from services about what influence their views have had.

“I’ve been involved in a forum regarding changes to my local railway station. And also the Leeds railway station, the bus station, and I felt good that I was giving my view to each issue”.

What has helped?

Lived experience and supporting each other are highlighted as key strengths of the Group: “When we support each other to advise services and companies, that’s coming from the lived experience of the members of this group. And without that, we wouldn’t be making the changes that are happening in Leeds”.

What has been hard?

A key challenge is lack of awareness about dementia. Its varied and changing nature makes providing information more difficult: “A lot of people don’t know what dementia is”.

Also: “We don’t get to receive feedback or see what the companies have put into practice”.

In the words of...

AGE FRIENDLY AMBASSADORS

"So many things as ambassadors we do, but add it all up, with over 200 ambassadors speaking up all the time – it gives older people a voice."

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

"Engaging older people and getting their voices heard...bringing people together, asking how older people are involved."

More work with private businesses to become age / dementia friendly.

"I've changed my attitude – I'm much happier that I'm getting older."

The Ambassadors make important contributions to the Friendly Communities overarching aims, especially Aim 2 - Community contribution.

2

See Key Examples.

Championing and challenging

There are 203 Age Friendly Ambassadors in Leeds. Ambassadors take part in various Friendly Communities activities, e.g. Age Proud Leeds and Come In and Rest. Some are Ambassadors as part of a paid job role and others as volunteers.

What has been achieved?

Ambassadors have a key role in raising awareness of age friendly Leeds and challenging ageism (e.g. on local radio, informally with friends and family). Many report their own attitude changes and increased ability to challenge perceptions and share positive images of ageing. Ambassadors promote the involvement and voice of older people thought raising awareness and influencing opportunities e.g. 'take a seat' campaign, initiating the Leeds LGBT+Q consortium, writing a blog about bus passes, supporting changes in their workplaces. During lockdown Ambassadors helped reduce loneliness and isolation, through food parcel delivery, door step chats and helping people get online.

"It's a great role for people to be able to be active in their community and to encourage that sort of grassroots activism"

What has helped?

Support from the Time to Shine staff team and being linked to LOPF; *"They stand behind you when you need to challenge effectively"*, *"Push and motivation from them is really inspiring ... people are very skilled and supportive"*. The Age Friendly Steering Group and Age Friendly updates *'kept us in the loop'*. Having tangible and practical examples of what individuals are involved in was also helpful.

What has been hard?

Lack of resources and time. *'sometimes we can get stuck and feel we aren't doing things'* The complexity of the age landscape means it is hard to reach everyone Impact of COVID-19 on activities and older people's well-being. Ongoing prejudices and ageism. The complexity of health and social care system.

In the words of the...

FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES PROJECT TEAM

"Providing platforms and opportunities for older people to represent themselves rather than have others speak for them."

LEGACY AND IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

Develop 'Active Voices' work - groups of older people from different communities of interest readily available for consultation.

Develop the AFSG to ensure more diverse membership.

Develop a face to face delivery and a train the trainer model for WUTA sessions.

Recruit Ambassadors from younger age groups. Consider including children as ambassadors in primary schools.

Increase business sign ups: *"Would love to see the age friendly / dementia friendly stickers be a common sight"*

Engaging, supporting, co-ordinating

The Friendly Communities staff team are based at LOPF and are responsible for co-ordinating and supporting a wide range of activity linked to the Friendly Communities project. This includes recruiting and supporting Ambassadors and AFSG members, planning and delivery of APL and WUPTA.

What has been achieved?

The team expressed pride in many areas of the work. Aspects that were seen as particularly successful were; the Ambassadors *"it's engaged people from all different walks of life...and raised awareness of the Age Friendly agenda"*; Age Proud Leeds and Wise Up to Ageism had been well received and improved partnerships across the city.

"What WUTA and Age Proud brought us collectively is a stronger connection, stronger partnerships within the council and others"

The role of the AFSG was also seen as a key success in enabling the voices of older people to be heard and to have influence.

"Organisations listening to the voices of older people and then coming back and saying, 'This is what you've said, This is what we have done', so that there was a real impact of their voice on simple things that will make a massive difference."

Some strengths

Working collaboratively and in partnership - helpful in rolling out citywide schemes and getting people on board.

Genuine involvement of older people. Making time to do engagement meaningfully and respectfully.

Some challenges

The time it takes to do meaningful engagement. Having enough time and resources.

Impact of COVID-19 and inability to do face to face work.

Developing the business guide and challenges of engaging businesses who feel that there is a 'catch'.

In the words of...

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

"It's a social movement to make Leeds a better place to live if you're older or living with dementia".

PARTNERS' IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Inter-generational & educational work with young people
- Champions in key roles and organisations
- Involving councillors
- Work with the Integrated Care System (perhaps through an Equity Fellowship) to spread learning and good practice across the region
- Streamlining some different groups to avoid duplication
- Mainstreaming age-friendly work within neighbourhoods

WHAT ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES DO THESE PARTNERS HAVE?

- Local authority commissioner, older people's services
- Chair of the Dementia Friendly Steering Group
- Chair of the Leeds Older People's Forum
- Chair of Time to Shine Partnership
- Age Friendly Leeds Partnership Board members
- Public Health lead for older people
- Partnership manager, Centre for Ageing Better

Sending ripples, changing conversations

The strategic partners are involved in other work with older people, and bring wider perspectives that help us understand the role and potential of the Friendly Communities projects. The core purpose is seen as "embedding age-friendly work in communities across Leeds". Partners think the work is successful overall and say very positive things about parts of it, like "great work", "really vital", "genius" and "absolutely fabulous".

What has been achieved?

Partners believe these projects have changed how work with older people is seen and discussed: "It's much more acceptable now to talk about age-friendly work."

Some partners see other important strategic impacts, for example raising the profile of age as a protected characteristic, and addressing health inequalities for older people.

There have been no set targets for this work - it is developmental. But as well as the main projects, partners described a range of tangible achievements, including: support for older people's groups during and after the pandemic; an audit of dementia-friendly activities; partnership work with the hospital trust; and linking disconnected older people with the support they need.

All partners see the work as long-term: "There's no short-term fix. You've got to keep on it".

Some strengths

Sharing information/good practice.

Understanding pandemic impacts and helping people re-emerge.

Including people who have not been reached before (e.g. Chinese community)

Statutory partners benefitted from [TTS] "flexibility, skills, experience & supportive challenge".

Some challenges

The broad remit: "it's about everything in people's lives".

"The key risks are funding shortages and therefore understaffing".

Health restructuring may make it harder for health partners to look outwards & work collaboratively.

Key leaders and staff moving on.

What difference has the project made?

The project is already making a difference to the lives of older people and people living with dementia in Leeds.

We found evidence² of this in the documents we reviewed (see appendix X), including surveys completed by the Ambassadors and businesses signed up to be age/dementia friendly, and also the conversations we had with the key groups of people.

Measurable differences

The table below shows the **measurable differences** we can see. These are all new activities and achievements that have had some impact on the lives of older people and people living with dementia in Leeds.

Some measurable differences made by the Friendly Communities project

Measurable differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 203 individuals signed up and acted as Ambassadors• 46 businesses signed up and became age and dementia friendly• 200 target businesses are beginning to think about ageism• 34 older people joined the Age Friendly Steering Group (16 regular members)• 4 people with dementia and 1 carer joined the DEEP Group• An Age Proud Launch event was held (2019) 150 people attended• Partnership working delivered 10 days of events during the Age Proud Festival (Sept 2021)• 17 Wise Up To Ageism (WUTA) sessions ran• 380 people took part in WUTA sessions, increasing their understanding about ageism and how to challenge it• 277 people took part in Dementia Friends sessions, increasing their understanding about dementia• 51 different resources were created (postcards, posters, podcasts, films, etc.)• 32 blog posts were written by/with older people and/or about tackling ageism• The Shine Magazine was published monthly• The Friendly Community Newsletter was published monthly and distributed to 800 email contacts, plus via social media• 30+ other presentations about age and dementia friendly work were given by Friendly Communities project members to other organisations
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² This information was difficult to review because: there were so many different sources; documents came from different points in time between 2019 and 2021; there were some contradictions; there was some repeated information; and some points that were unclear. We have included only differences we are sure of, and some may be missing.

Differences that are not measurable or hard-to-measure

Many differences are not measurable or hard-to-measure. You can see some of these in the table below and others in the Key Examples on pages 11-16 above.

Some hard-to-measure differences relate to changes in attitudes and some relate to what people say, think or have seen, but cannot prove. Some of the things that people think have made a difference may not actually have done, or may have made a difference in other, unexpected ways. Many people talked about how they had been involved in the project and the difference this had made for them personally. Personal impacts are anecdotal, very varied and difficult to measure, but they can be really important for the individual.

In other cases, it was difficult to know **who** benefited – older people or people with dementia, the wider community, organisations and the system, or several of these. The evidence also showed some further possible changes that had been planned but that had not necessarily been completed; we have not included these. Further research in communities would be needed to find out more about these not-measurable or hard-to-measure impacts and benefits.

Examples of differences made by ambassadors that benefit other people

- Raising awareness about ageism and older people's needs and lives, e.g. through events, campaigns, sharing resources, writing articles
- Providing information that helps other people
- Pointing people to information, help or advice
- Making changes to their own workplace
- Helping to develop a local Recovery Hub and other neighbourhood health and wellbeing projects for older people
- Making streets age friendly
- Helping people get online
- Improving housing for older people
- Improving accessible transport
- Having a strategic influence

"I don't know what difference I have made but I know that being able to share this information I have definitely pointed people in the right direction for help and or advice".

"I have talked to local businesses and encouraged sign ups. I have encouraged more people to become ambassador and shared age proud resources for others to see and use. It has been more important to me than I expected".

"I worked with the lead nurse to develop my ward in to age and dementia friendly environment".

"I included ageism as something to be included in the Adults and Health Directorates Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme".

Examples of differences made by ambassadors that benefit themselves or their family

- Increased confidence or sense of personal power
- Changing the way they talk about older people
- Gaining knowledge and understanding
- Advocating for older relatives

“I have been speaking up at events, holding events, supporting my 96 year old mother just diagnosed with dementia, gaining knowledge and understanding on matters”.

“I have become involved as a lay researcher for the Frames Project and become increasingly aware of mental and physical health...and how all ages can be affected and benefit”.

“People are taking notice of what I say”.

“In my personal life, I have been communicating with the manager of the Care Home where my father is resident, to enable them to meet his needs better”

Examples of differences made by businesses that benefit other older people and people living with dementia

- Identifying and training staff to be dementia friends
- Websites updated to provide better information for older people and people living with dementia
- Changing signs to make them more dementia friendly
- Using large fonts and changing colours
- Running ‘dementia cafés’ and other social events for people with dementia and their carers
- Changing offices/shops/premises to make them more age and dementia friendly – eg removing trip hazards, changing colours, using hazard tape, changing lighting
- Providing escorts rather than verbal directions
- Introducing DBS checks for front-line staff (eg delivery drivers)
- Making more time to talk
- Joining the Come In and Rest scheme and providing a chair
- Supporting digital inclusion

“Our drivers are particularly skilled at delivering to people with dementia. They ensure that food is put away in the freezer and follow any instructions put in place by carers and family”.

“We are updating lighting throughout our building to LED to ensure it is well lit. We have private toilet facilities should anyone require assistance from a carer. Seating is available in our building for anyone that needs it. We can provide a quiet space for someone if needed”.

“We are helping older people to develop their Digital Skills by loaning them a computer tablet with a pre-installed data sim card, so that they are able to access the internet at home and develop their interests and hobbies, as well as training them on how to use the web to book GP appointments and access health services”.

Indirect impacts

Participants also reported some impacts that may or may not have been directly related to the Friendly Communities project. These are important because they suggest that Leeds is becoming more age and dementia friendly generally. Here are some examples:

Examples of other differences observed by Ambassadors or AFSG/DEEP Group member, which suggest Leeds is becoming more age and dementia friendly

- Improvements to support available for older people and people with dementia
- Improvements in local businesses
- Improvements in public transport

“I've noticed more support for older people within the council housing system to place bids [to apply for council housing]”

“The local hub where I volunteered helped with shopping in the lockdown”.

“The Dementia Friendly campaign is massive, and so heartening to see its effects eg when we go to our Building Society”.

“Bus drivers are receiving dementia friends training as part of their standard training. Community benches are to be provided. Local businesses are signing up to be age and dementia friendly”.



What has helped and what has been hard?

We heard about many of the strengths of the Friendly Communities project and things that have helped its success, as well as things that got in the way or were challenges.

What has helped The Friendly Communities project be successful?

- Older people have been actively involved in all parts of the project.
- Older people have been agents, actors and activists in the project – their assets as well as their needs are central.
- Challenging stereotypes has been very powerful.
- A variety of strands and activities, giving more opportunities for more older people to get involved.
- It is reaching people from a wider variety of backgrounds.
- TFC Staff team is seen as very skilled and supportive.
- Staff build good relationships, connections and engagement with older people.
- Staff have had enough time to think, plan and do.
- Being part of a bigger older people's agenda, through Leeds Older People's Forum, Time To Shine and the Age Friendly Board. This created a balance between 'acting locally' and thinking and planning strategically nationally and strategically through campaigns, etc.
- People within the project build good relationships and work well together. The project is seen as a 'trusted voice' by statutory partners.
- A strong diverse community sector in Leeds has helped, particularly the Neighbourhood Networks and voluntary organisations such as Forum Central, Voluntary Action Leeds and LOPF.

"Enabling people to see what they CAN do, and in a way that means they take ownership, rather than telling them what they shouldn't do or criticising".

"Great networks and great connections across all sectors". "Gave it a bit more strength and a bit impetus".

"Very talented support has helped people have the confidence to participate... It so easy to feel judged or inadequate and then give up".

What has been hard for The Friendly Communities project?

- Designing a project that suits everyone is difficult because older people are all individuals who have different strengths, interests and needs.
- Reaching all older people in the city – many still do not know about the project, and therefore some passion and energy is lost, as well as some needs being left unmet.
- It takes time, skills and effort to make sure older people can really be involved.
- The older people’s agenda is a very broad remit – it’s “about everything in people’s lives”.
- The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges, particularly moving to online work and loss of face to face work. This was especially challenging for people with dementia.
- The pandemic also meant that becoming dementia/age friendly was not a priority for many businesses and organisations.
- There have been some changes in the wider system, disrupting decision-making and leadership.
- Reliance on individuals and groups in local neighbourhoods means that levels of support/activity can vary over time as key individuals and local groups may not always continue.
- Health Inequalities are high in some sections of the Leeds population.
- Stereotypes about older people persist, and these can be hard to challenge, even for people who recognise them.

“We need to be able to reach out to the hardest groups that find it most difficult to access this sort of stuff”.

“There's not always the same set up in each place, no blueprint to move from one to another.”

“Life expectancy is going down for women in certain parts of the city”.

“Poor knowledge and assumptions get in the way. Prejudice and ignorance. It’s very upsetting to see students locally dressed as old people with inflatable zimmer frames for a joke on the Otley Run. I’m very ashamed to say I don’t challenge”.



Issues for further discussion

Some complex issues may need further discussion.

Many things can either help or be hard, depending on circumstances. For example, involving people can take time, energy and skills... But when done successfully, it brings additional new additional time, energy and skills! In this section, we present some of the more complex issues that people raised but did not necessarily agree about.

Changes in the way services and support are organised in Leeds have created problems and opportunities

There are some big, ongoing changes in Leeds, especially relating to health and care. There are new local care partnership groups and Primary Care Networks organising health and care in local areas, as well as the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Partnership which organises health and care across the region. This can feel confusing and frustrating for many on the outside. Some people worry that health partners have not been as fully engaged as they needed to be, and that the project has not had all the support it deserves and needs. However, they also recognise the enormous potential in the new arrangements, and can see some improvements already.

“Health and social care in Leeds is so complicated and difficult to interact with.”

“The local care partnerships in Leeds have meant that statutory and voluntary sectors talk to each other - we're talking a lot a lot more effectively with GPs and other people. And the Leeds health and wellbeing strategy has helped clarify the role of the voluntary and community sector. Strategic developments have helped as strategies [relating to older people] have got clearer”.

“Shifting agendas and focus on priorities may mean the age and dementia friendly work may get lost.”

“I think the whole restructure of health and the move to the local care partnership and to place based approaches could potentially get in the way. Until we kind of know, well, people have got their heads looking inwards at themselves, so they need to be looking outwards as well. It's a worry”.

Collaboration is difficult but powerful

Friendly Communities is (by definition) a partnership project. Collaboration with key stakeholders and agencies has been strong and valuable, but also takes up time and resources. Complex systems (see above) make collaboration more difficult. There are concerns about duplication and missed opportunities. It can be hard to see the impact of individual actions or projects, because good collaboration deliberately brings many people together to work, so that many people contribute to ‘cause and effect’.

“It feels soft and intangible sometimes, because you are not sure if you are making a difference”.

“There may be a risk that a lack of collaboration will result in duplication of efforts and dilution of resources”.

Strength-based and locality-based approaches may work best in areas with more wealth and other assets

Strategic partners and older people involved in strategic work were very aware that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model for any work in communities. Local differences make it harder to spread good practice across the whole of Leeds. There is concern that different communities have different assets, particularly volunteer time, and that some communities need more support. In areas with fewer existing community groups, there are fewer opportunities for older people to get involved. Lack of investment by policy-makers means that older people’s assets are not recognised or mobilised.

“Grass-roots activity often needs an organisation to lend some capacity”.

“There's not always the same set up, in each place. It's not like you could have a blueprint to move from one to another”.

“There is a lack of ambition and drive in this area of work by policy makers, and [lack of] resources including time, energy, money and coordination of the exceptional skills and energy that are out there in the over 60s in our community”.

Older people identified a number of challenges for older people that are still to be addressed

The project has helped raise awareness about many issues but has not necessarily solved them. The people we spoke to were clear about the very many challenges still facing older people. Outstanding issues included:

- **Inadequate public facilities and services** - e.g. lack of public toilets, poorly maintained pathways, housing issues and public transport.
- **Digital exclusion** - including need for increased skills and confidence, and the costs of equipment and Wi-Fi & data.
- **Ongoing prejudices and ageism** – lack of awareness, and particularly a lack of knowledge about dementia and few people living with dementia in the public eye.

“Bus passes are a very poor deal compared with other parts of the country”.

“Some older people are having to make a choice between heating their home or connecting with their family”.

The project has become more complex as it has responded to its complex environment, but this causes some confusion.

The Friendly Communities project has a big ambition and a large reach. It has grown and changed to respond both to needs and opportunities. Some of its complexity reflects the strong collaboration, the many different people involved, and their different interests and strengths. However, we also saw some apparent duplication and confusion. For example, it was not always clear what work was part of the project and what was part of Time To Shine or the Older People’s Forum. There are different groups and roles with very similar names (e.g. Dementia Friends are different from Dementia Friendly Champions, who became Dementia Friendly Ambassadors, who are different from the Age Friendly Ambassadors).

“Could you look at the steering group, the ambassadors the age friendly Leeds partnership, but rather than have three things, have one of it altogether? Does that work? to avoid duplication and effort. Because you also have like, somebody at the Council sending out an Age Friendly Bulletin. And then there is a bulletin for ambassadors.... There's a lot of overlap. It might be stronger if it was one. It might have a bigger voice”.

Efforts have been made to reach diverse groups and communities, but there are gaps in knowledge and work still to be done

We noticed a difference between what people said was happening to involve people from diverse backgrounds, and the tangible evidence to show this. Notably, people told us that the project had reached communities that had never been reached

before (e.g. the Chinese Community in Leeds) but there is no race/ethnicity monitoring in any of the project activities that allows us to see this. Similarly, there is no monitoring of disability that would show whether, or how many, physically disabled, deaf, blind or learning disabled older people are involved. As a result, the project lacks important insights about reach, equity and intersectionality, and cannot know exactly how successful it is being in reaching all of Leeds' many different communities.

Change takes time and the scope of the project is huge – the work is never 'done'

The ambition and scope of the project are (as we have already said) huge. It is impossible to do everything and involve everyone. Although there have been significant achievements, some people talked about further potential for celebrating success and doing more.

“More publicity for all the good work that has been achieved here in Leeds”.

“Sometimes [there is a] lack of involvement of the passionate people who want to make change. We should promote people more for what they do”.

What next for Friendly Communities?

Summary conclusions

The Friendly Communities project has been effective in contributing to the overall ambition to make Leeds the best city to grow old in. Everyone involved, including strategic partners, is keen to see it continue.

“I hope the next year will find some stability and help older people build back. I hope they get more funding”.

“Nourish the roots so you can get organic growth but end up with a well-planned, tidy garden!”

The project has delivered and been involved in a huge amount of activity, and overall is meeting its 6 key aims which contribute to the overall ambition. We found clear examples showing how each aim is being achieved. The project strands which have had the most tangible impacts on older people’s lives are the Age Friendly Ambassadors and work with businesses - and these are often closely linked with other elements of the project.

The voice and views of older people and people living with dementia are central to the Friendly Communities project. There is evidence of very strong engagement by older people and people living with dementia. The project is more strengths-based in its approach than many other similar projects. The support and approach of project staff is particularly valued by older people.

The project is already making a difference to the lives of older people and people living with dementia in Leeds. Members of the Age Friendly Steering Group, the DEEP Group and Ambassadors also talked about some of the differences it had made to them personally. The Project is also making some differences to organisations and the way they work together in Leeds. Some differences are measurable and some are not; unmeasurable or hard-to measure differences are often crucial, and relate to how people feel and therefore their trust of organisations, engagement with services and involvement in communities.

We noticed some differences which may or may not have been directly related to the Friendly Communities project. However, these are still important because they suggest that Leeds generally is becoming more age and dementia friendly.

We looked at what helped the Friendly Communities project be successful and what made things hard. We identified some complex issues that are likely to need further discussion. These all help shape the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The findings of this evaluation present a number of opportunities for the Friendly Communities project or whoever takes this work forward.

- 1) Continue to deliver, develop and promote those elements which are successful, particularly the Ambassadors, Wise Up To Ageism (WUTA), Dementia Friends, Shine magazine.
- 2) Explore further ways in which Ambassadors can have more involvement (if they want), for example, delivering Wise Up To Ageism or training.
- 3) Create opportunities for Ambassadors to share their enthusiasm, ideas, expertise and approaches with other older people to inspire new activity.
- 4) Review the membership and diversity of steering groups. The Age Friendly Steering group and DEEP group are engaged, active and making a difference but not representative of all communities across Leeds.
- 5) Further extend the age and dementia friendly businesses work to recruit more businesses across the city. If sign up doesn't increase following the pandemic, it may also be useful to explore barriers to businesses' engagement.
- 6) Make the most of opportunities for collaboration in a changing strategic environment paying particular attention to strategic health partnerships.
- 7) Review and refine project activities to avoid duplication and overlap with what other organisations are doing.
- 8) Review how the project is described and understood to reduce confusion.
- 9) Review monitoring systems to include collecting data on additional categories (e.g. ethnicity, disability).
- 10) Consider a stronger, more explicit focus on equity and health inequalities given the gaps between areas across the city.

Fiona Weir and Sarah Frost, March 2022