



How to be an **Age-friendly Business**

A framework for
customer-facing settings

About the Centre for Ageing Better

Everyone has the right to enjoy a good life as they get older and our whole society benefits when they do. But far too many people face huge barriers that prevent them from doing so.

As a result, many older people are living in bad housing, dealing with poverty and poor health, and being made to feel invisible in their communities and society.

The Centre for Ageing Better is pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone.

Its key areas of work include challenging ageism and building a nationwide Age-friendly Movement, creating Age-friendly Employment and Age-friendly Homes.



Contents

About the Centre for Ageing Better	02
Contents	03
Background	04
Introducing the framework	06
Why would a business want to be age-friendly?	07
Who this framework is for and how to use it	08
A framework for customer-facing settings	10
Your people	12
Your premises	19
Your communications	24
Your offer	30
Your place within the wider community	36
Summary	42
Acknowledgements	43
Methodology	44
Source materials	46
References	47

Background

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In the next 40 years the number of people aged 65–79 is predicted to increase by nearly a third (30%) to over 10 million, while the number of people aged 80 and over – the fastest growing segment of the population – is set to more than double to over 6 million (1). The fact that many of us are living longer is to be celebrated, but it is vital that, as a society, we invest in ways to help people age well.

‘Older adults are an asset to communities through contributing to the local economy, taking community leadership roles, contributing skills, experience and expertise in a variety of ways, volunteering, offering care of grandchildren, taking part in democratic processes, being active community members, caring for others, making and creating, being active consumers and having full, active lives?’

Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2023:
health in an ageing society, November 2023 (2)

Customer-facing businesses and organisations, such as shops, cafes, leisure centres, libraries and arts venues, are vital components of local communities with a huge role to play in our day-to-day lives. The accessibility and inclusiveness of these settings has the potential to impact our physical and mental health and wellbeing at every age. With even the smallest of changes, such businesses can support more of us to live a good life as we get older.

i Definitions

Age-friendly

By describing something or somewhere as age-friendly we mean that it supports and enables us all to age well, and to live a good life when we are older, recognising that there is great diversity in older age groups – in capacity, backgrounds and circumstances, as well as in needs and desires.

Business

In the context of this work, the term business is used to describe an organisation or enterprise carrying out professional activities, with a particular focus on those with customer-facing, physical premises. It encompasses places we use in our day-to-day lives, and includes for-profit, non-profit, charitable and public service organisations. Examples include shops and cafes, leisure centres, libraries, cinemas, theatres, banks, hairdressers and supermarkets.

Framework

A framework is a basic structure or set of ideas composed of different parts. Frameworks are intended to serve as a support or guide and can be used to help someone make plans, deal with problems or decide what to do.

Older people

‘Older’ is a relative term and should not be confused with ‘old age’, which people think begins, on average, between 58 and 60 (3), although both 50 and 65 are widely used as the age at which being older begins (4). We all age in different ways and at different rates, so chronological age is not always a good measure of someone’s age-related needs. In this document we include references to over-50s and over-65s, mindful of the limitations of a specific number.

Introducing the framework

We have developed this framework as a logical structure that sets out the steps any business can take to become more age-friendly. We believe these steps are not only good for older customers, but for all customers. They could also benefit staff and volunteers, along with the wider community, and enhance organisational sustainability, growth, and innovation.

The framework maps out five interconnected areas to consider if you want your business to be age-friendly: your people, your premises, your communications, your offer and your place within the wider community.

‘Being age-friendly is an inclusive approach that can improve life for everybody in the community because environments, services and systems which suit older people also benefit everyone else.’

Towards an Age Friendly Stadium, Age Friendly Ireland, April 2022 (5)

This is not about being perfect, it’s about making improvements. All progress is beneficial and even the smallest of changes can make a huge difference to how older customers experience your business.



Why would a business want to be age-friendly?

It's good for business: The population is ageing and so is your customer base. Right now, 21 million people in England are aged 50 or over – nearly 2 in 5 people (1) – but the older population is often overlooked in terms of its spending power. A business that understands and responds to this will also be well placed to succeed and thrive. Many age-friendly practices are also good business practices that are likely to appeal to a broad range of potential customers.

‘By 2040, it's predicted that 63p in every pound spent by consumers in the UK will be spent by someone aged 50 or over: it's estimated that total spending by this group will be worth £550 billion.’

Money well spent – Overcoming barriers to spending in later life, International Longevity Centre UK, June 2023 (6)

It's good for society: By making it easier for people of all ages and abilities to use and engage with your business, more people – whether as customers, staff or volunteers – are able to stay in work and contribute to their communities for longer, and to spend their money locally. In turn, this can support local economies, enable independent living, reduce social isolation, improve mental and physical health, and increase wellbeing.

‘Everyone loses out when older people are prevented from bringing their talents, expertise and experience to workplaces and communities.’

The State of Ageing 2023–24, Centre for Ageing Better, November 2023 (7)

To comply with the law: Businesses and public sector organisations have a legal duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to identify and consider the impact and potential impact of their activities in terms of equality. It is now unlawful to discriminate based on age, although there are some exceptions set out in the Equality Act 2010.

i GOV.UK Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 includes provisions that ban age discrimination against adults in the provision of services and public functions. The ban came into force on 1 October 2012 and it is now unlawful to discriminate on the basis of age with some exceptions. You can read more about the act and access guidance here: www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

The National Equality Standard (NES) is the UK's leading Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) standard. Find out more here: www.nationalequalitystandard.com

Who this framework is for and how to use it

While this framework is primarily aimed at business owners and managers as the key decision-makers, it is also relevant to other people who engage or work with customer-facing businesses and in community settings, for example:

- Staff and volunteers
- People working in local authorities and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector
- Customers.

The information provided here aims to help people recognise what is already being done well and where improvements can be made.

It provides a starting point for conversations between business owners and managers and their staff and customers, and to recognise and value the role these businesses play in people's lives and the local community.

How relevant and feasible the recommendations are will vary depending on the size and scale of a business, and the type of activities, services and products it offers. The level of commitment and willingness of the key decision-makers will also influence what is possible. Some content may align with business goals and values or relate to work being planned, such as building renovations or staff training.

Ways you could use this framework:

- To identify and make one change within your business today.
- To facilitate discussions with staff and volunteers to help raise awareness and understanding of what it means to be an age-friendly business.
- To review any existing business policies or codes of practice and ensure age-friendly approaches are included. Examples might include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies, volunteering schemes or contracting practices for freelance workers.
- As a basic structure to develop localised guidance and checklists, accreditations or awards that support and encourage businesses within the area to become more age-friendly (see the information box on the next page for examples).
- As a reference for conversations and planning at a strategic level, for example, with Business Improvement Districts.

i Local age-friendly business awards and recognition schemes

There are many places across the UK that have already set up their own age-friendly business awards or recognition schemes. Some examples of these include:

- Age-friendly Business Award scheme run by YMCA Lincolnshire
www.lincs-chamber.co.uk/ymca-lincs-age-friendly-business-awards
- Age Friendly Standards in Salford
<https://agefriendlysalford.org.uk/age-friendly-standards>
- Brighton & Hove's Age and Dementia Friendly Business Recognition Scheme
www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/support-age-well/age-and-dementia-friendly-business-recognition-scheme
- Age Friendly Banbury Pledge www.agefriendlybanbury.co.uk/the-pledge
- Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme in Ireland
<https://agefriendlyireland.ie/age-friendly-business>

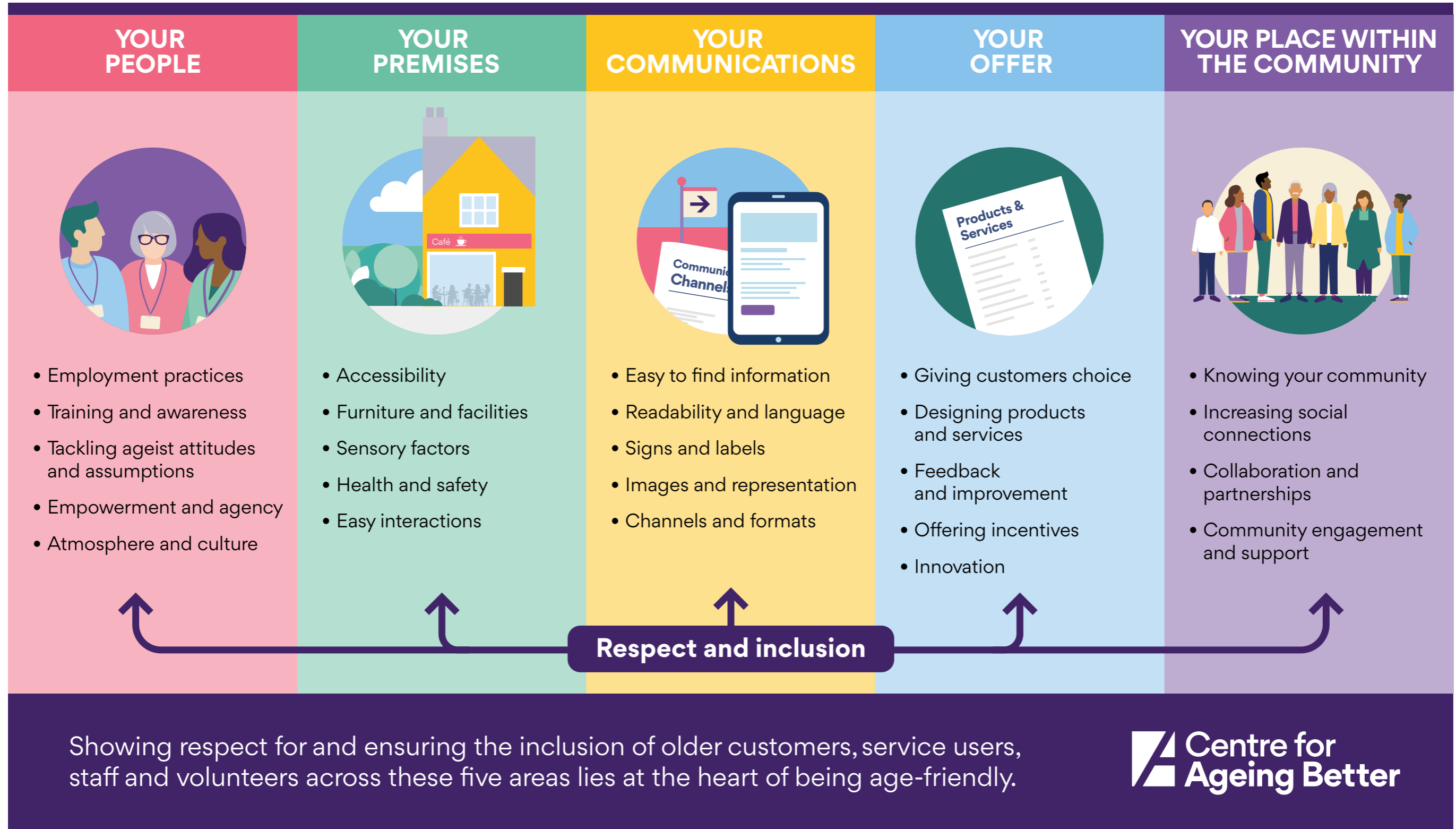
This framework may also encourage the public to speak out, whether in recognition and celebration of good practice or to suggest that improvements are needed.

Being age-friendly is good for your business, good for people of all ages and good for our wider society.

Please note: None of the information or guidance provided within this framework replaces existing access recommendations, legal guidelines for public buildings, or any regulations that may be relevant to a specific business.

A framework for customer-facing settings

The framework is made up of five core, interconnected areas that all customer-facing businesses and community settings should consider if they aim to be more age-friendly.





Your people

By adopting age-friendly and inclusive work practices and processes, a business recognises the importance and value of the older staff and volunteers in its workforce, as well as the pivotal role these people play in providing a service that attracts and retains customers of all ages.

Being an age-friendly business is also about treating people with respect, not making assumptions based on age, offering appropriate levels of support, and providing important social interaction – including online and over the phone.

The experience older customers have with the staff in a business is so important that it can often mitigate other barriers.

Employment practices

‘Supporting people to work for as long as possible can improve employee retention, reduce recruitment costs, and increase productivity and revenue.’

Dementia-friendly retail guide, Alzheimer’s Society, 2019 (8)

The presence of over-50s improves workforces, making them more innovative and productive (9). Happier employees make for happier customers (10), but as people get older many experience workplace discrimination based on age – or face challenges accessing or retaining the work they would like to do. Our [Age-friendly Employer action framework](#) sets out steps that employers can take to make positive changes.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Create an age-friendly culture that challenges stereotypes about older workers and celebrates multigenerational teams.
- Hire age-positively through appealing adverts, job descriptions and interview processes that minimise bias and reduce the chances of potential applicants making assumptions about age requirements.
- Be open to flexible working, advertising the right to request it and supporting the line managers of people who take up this option.
- Encourage career development at all ages by ensuring equitable take-up of training opportunities, and by providing career guidance at mid-life and beyond, including retirement planning.
- Ensure everyone has the support they need, encouraging staff to have early and sustained conversations, being flexible, and providing reasonable adjustments if needed. Topics covered may include health concerns, important life stages such as the menopause, and personal circumstances such as caring responsibilities.

Pete’s story:

“As a society, we need to be encouraging businesses to offer a more flexible way of working for older people. Throwing away years of experience because someone is over 50, 60, 70 makes no sense in a modern economy if they’re capable and willing to work. It’s bad for individuals and it’s bad for the economy.”

Age Without Limits, Centre for Ageing Better, January 2024 (11)

i Older freelance workers

Freelancers tend to be self-employed contractors or consultants who work for different businesses or clients on a flexible basis.

- Some sectors rely heavily on using freelancers, for example, around 70% of the theatre workforce are freelancers (12).
- The 2023 edition of the IPSE Self-Employed Landscape report highlighted that 49% of freelancers in the UK were aged 50 or over (13).

This way of working can offer real flexibility and an opportunity for older workers to contribute their expert skills in a way that works for them. But older workers who would prefer stable employment may turn to freelancing due to lack of high-quality, part-time work available in their sector, or due to challenges getting through age-biased recruitment processes.

If your business uses freelance workers, you could:

- Identify opportunities to create good-quality, part-time roles instead.
- Consider whether your approach to recruitment is allowing older workers a fair hearing.
- Listen to your older freelancers to understand whether there are improvements you can make.

Training and awareness

While ageing brings many changes, some of which are physical or mental, these are not consistent or linear, and they should not be used in isolation to assume what someone's abilities, interests and needs might be. By understanding the barriers that some people face, including many older people, business owners, managers and staff can better support the diverse needs and challenges of their customers and help them to feel valued, respected and included at any age.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Provide staff with appropriate training and information that relates to engaging with people who may be living with specific conditions or disabilities, including hidden disabilities. Many charities and local groups provide this free or for a small fee, and more resources are available online.
- Include age-awareness training and initiatives as an ongoing process that begins with induction and continues with periodic updates and reviews.
- Make sure staff are aware of any legal responsibilities or regulations around handling incidents such as falls and accidents. Provide training on how to handle these incidents while preserving someone's dignity as much as possible.
- Check that all staff who take phone calls have the relevant skills, experience and training, including being able to support callers in a range of different circumstances.

From a case study of Iceland supermarkets:

‘There are now 23,000 employees on the shop floor who have an increased understanding of dementia and know how best to support customers living with the condition. We are now in a position to act as an example to our competitors in retail by providing exceptional customer service which considers the needs of people with dementia.’

Dementia-friendly retail guide, Alzheimer’s Society, 2019 (8)

i Age-related conditions, impairments and illnesses

As we get older, the likelihood of developing a number of conditions increases. These conditions include hearing and vision loss, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders such as arthritis, and cognitive conditions such as dementia.

The likelihood of living with multiple conditions at the same time also increases with age (14).

However, it is important to put this within a wider context and not make assumptions based on age.

Ageist stereotypes suggest that most older people are in poor health, but this is not the case – most people enter older age in good health and they remain in good health until the end of their lives. In the 2021 United Kingdom census, just 1 in 10 people aged 50 or older and 13% of people aged 65 or older in England said they were in bad or very bad health (15). More than two-thirds (67%) of people aged 50 or older and 3 in 5 aged 65 or older said they were in good or very good health. And while many think that dementia is a likely development, in the UK around 9 out of 10 people aged 80–84 and 7 out of 10 people aged 84–90 do not have dementia (2).

Tackling ageist attitudes and assumptions

Ageism is a bias against people based on their age, manifesting in stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory actions or attitudes. It is often dismissed as being harmless but it can actually be incredibly damaging for us as individuals and for wider society (16).

‘In our survey, among the 45% of people aged 50–71 who felt they’d been treated badly because of their age at least once in the last 12 months, 32% said it was as a consumer. For people aged 71 this figure rose to 43%.’

Baseline survey by the National Centre for Social Research (unpublished) for the Age Without Limits campaign, Centre for Ageing Better, 2023 (17)

When your staff or volunteers are interacting with older people it is important they do not make assumptions based on someone’s perceived age. An age-friendly business will try to identify and address any ageist behaviours and encourage a positive, inclusive and open-minded approach among all its staff and volunteers.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Actively check that assumptions aren’t being made about people based on their age. This is not only relevant to customers but also to staff, volunteers and any visitors to the business.
- Raise awareness of ageism and create a culture where people feel comfortable challenging it in everyday conversations. The [Age Without Limits](#) website contains a wealth of information about ageism, including how to recognise it and different ways to tackle it.
- Establish standardised ways of working for customer-facing staff and volunteers. This might include ways of approaching people and attracting their attention, how to communicate clearly and effectively at an appropriate speed and volume and using suitable, age-friendly language*.
- Make sure that formal complaint processes are in place and staff are able to resolve issues in a quick, supportive and solution-focused manner that involves the customer, thereby acknowledging and respecting the opinions of older customers who can often feel ignored and undervalued.

‘A ‘one size fits all’ approach to customer service runs the risk of either excluding the older demographic altogether or, as we have increasingly seen, patronising or dismissive interactions.’

More than a million over 65s have experienced bad customer service because of their age, The Institute of Customer Service, December 2020 (18)

* More information about using appropriate language can be found in the [Your communications](#) section of this framework.

i Ageism in customer service

Ageism is so embedded in our society that many of us neither recognise it when it's directed towards us nor acknowledge that we may be inadvertently contributing to the problem. Ageism in customer-service is often the result of assumptions being made by staff without knowing or understanding the customer's personal situation. These assumptions then influence how your staff interact with older customers.

Assumptions might be made about someone's:

- tastes or personal preferences
- financial situation
- ability to engage with or use a product or service
- hearing ability
- mental capacity to understand.

This can show up in language or behaviours that, even if meant well, can inadvertently demean or disempower people based on assumptions or stereotypes about older age.

For example:

- directing customers to a narrowed range of products or services
- speaking more loudly or overly slowly
- using a patronising tone
- using terms of endearment such as 'dear'
- simplifying vocabulary
- not taking people seriously and dismissing their opinions
- excluding people or ignoring them altogether.

Empowerment and agency

Careful consideration needs to be given to how help is offered and given to people who need or ask for it. It is important to ensure that support doesn't stop people making choices and taking action themselves, and that everyone receives the support that is right for them.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Ensure customers are always asked whether they would like any assistance or support, checking what would be most helpful to the individual person, rather than stepping in and taking over.
- Encourage staff to be approachable and willing to interact with all customers, tailoring their approach so that people feel supported rather than pressured to leave or make rushed purchasing decisions.
- Provide customer-facing staff who are knowledgeable, available to answer questions, and have the time to listen carefully, giving people the confidence to make the best purchasing decisions for their requirements.

- Ensure staff are available to demonstrate new products, systems or technology, such as apps, websites and ordering screens, empowering customers to use these tools if they are keen to do so (and often reducing the need for printed materials at the same time).

Tip: For customers who feel more comfortable speaking with or learning from someone from their own age group, it can be good to have older members of staff available to answer questions.

Atmosphere and culture

When engaging with a business, people want to feel they are entering a warm and welcoming environment where they are seen and their individual needs are recognised and respected. Older people can often feel invisible and overlooked, and a good customer service culture can help tackle this and create an experience of inclusion and respect.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Ensure staff are warm, friendly, and visible, greeting everyone with a smile or hello, or introducing themselves where appropriate.
- Focus on developing soft skills and good communication techniques. These include being clear, concise, patient and compassionate, listening and acknowledging concerns and opinions.
- Foster a sense of rapport between staff and customers by encouraging staff to be open and supportive, recognising regular visitors and taking the time to interact with them. Older customers particularly value information and relationships that they regard as trustworthy (19).
- Visit the [Age-friendly Employer Pledge](#) section of our website to learn how other businesses and organisations create an age-friendly workplace culture for their staff.

Tip: Some businesses have nominated members of staff or volunteers as champions of age awareness who can provide advocacy and dedicated support, offering a positive, can-do approach and taking the time to listen and respond to the needs of individuals.

Danielle's story:

“I remember clearly the first time I felt invisible. I was sitting in a cafe with my 18-year-old daughter and the waiter was flirting with her and ignoring me. I wasn't jealous, but I thought Oh God, he sees me as someone who's past it. And I am not!”

Age Without Limits, Centre for Ageing Better, January 2024 (11)

i Useful links and resources

Centre for Ageing Better

- Age Without Limits: Ageism campaign website that includes facts and figures about ageism, along with stories, tips and resources for tackling ageism and becoming more age-friendly www.agewithoutlimits.org
- Are You Ageist? quiz: Reflect on and question your own beliefs about ageing www.agewithoutlimits.org/challenge
- Age-friendly Employer action framework: Recommendations on steps to become an age-friendly employer ageing-better.org.uk/age-friendly-employer-action-framework
- Age-friendly Employer Pledge ageing-better.org.uk/age-friendly-employer-pledge
- Good Recruitment for Older Workers: An updated toolkit ageing-better.org.uk/resources/good-recruitment-older-workers-updated-toolkit
- Customer service case study ageing-better.org.uk/stories/improving-services-older-customers

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID): Communicating with staff and customers who are deaf or have hearing loss (includes information about training) <https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/support-for-businesses-and-organisations/communicating-staff-customers-deaf-hearing-loss>

Alzheimer's Society: Dementia Friends programme www.dementiafriends.org.uk

Age Scotland: Dementia Friendly Customer Service workshops www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/services/age-inclusive-workplace/workshops/dementia-inclusive-customer-services

Age UK: Helping older people get online www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/programmes/digital-skills

Age UK: Conditions and illnesses www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses

Arts Council: How local authorities can work with creative freelancers www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/working-local-authorities/how-local-authorities-can-work-creative-freelancers



Your premises

Creating an environment that is safe, accessible, warm, welcoming and aesthetically pleasing will help provide a more positive experience, not just for your older customers but for all customers – and one they are more likely to want to repeat.

When looking at your own business premises, or premises you might hire, it is important to think about both the indoor and outdoor environment, and to consider the following:

- The experience of carers, companions or accompanying family members, and how to make their visit as easy and positive as possible.
- Whether the business as a workplace is also welcoming and accessible to older members of staff.

Tip: While the information in this section specifically looks at the physical environment of your business premises, many of the key messages can also be applied to your online presence. Further information and useful links about making the online customer experience more age-friendly can be found in the [Your communications](#) section of this framework.

Accessibility

Creating an accessible, barrier-free business environment allows people of all ages and abilities to participate fully, helping any customers with access issues such as mobility, visual, hearing or cognitive impairments to remain engaged in their local communities and stay independent. It applies to both the external and internal aspects of your premises and its surrounding environment. The accessibility of a business is determined by how easy it is to find, to get onto the premises, to move around, and also to participate in what's on offer.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Make it easy for people to plan their visit. Information and guidance about the business, including accessibility details, should be made available and easy to find online and in other relevant communications. This information should include accessibility accreditations, public transport routes and parking details, and use maps, diagrams and images alongside text.
- Consider how people approach your premises. Ensure parking, drop-off and entrance points are clearly visible with suitable lighting and signage, and provide hazard-free access routes, removing A-boards and rubbish bins and cutting back overgrown hedges or low-hanging branches.
- Cater for people with mobility issues, including those who use wheelchairs and walking aids, by offering ramped or level access where possible and ensuring internal spaces such as halls, aisles, reception areas and doorways are wide enough to navigate freely. Doors should be lightweight or automatic, or staff should be on hand to help.

- Install a hearing loop or infrared system if possible. If you already have one, it should be permanently switched on and instructions on how to connect to it should be clearly visible with staff on hand to provide support if necessary. These assistive devices ensure that an environment is as inclusive as possible for people who may be hard of hearing.
- Identify other ways to make your retail or service experience more enjoyable for many older people, including those with disabilities. For example, you could offer full or partial table service, help with carrying trays, or provide space for people to leave their shopping.

‘Prioritising accessibility and disability inclusion will not only win and keep your customers; it will help your business rise above the competition.’

How accessibility benefits your business, Business Disability Forum, May 2021 (20)

Furniture and facilities

Furniture and facilities such as seating, toilets, tables, counters and shelving should be considered carefully by businesses striving to be age-friendly. It is not just their provision, but also their design, placement and maintenance that can have a significant impact on the experiences of your customers, as well as your staff and other visitors to your premises. Thinking about design for cognitive impairments, in addition to physical disabilities, is also key.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Install counters, tables and workstations that are at a suitable height for wheelchair users, as well as shelving that is well-lit, clearly labelled and positioned so that customers do not need to stretch to access it.
- Provide toilets that are accessible, signposted clearly, well-lit, cleaned regularly and fully functioning with easy-to-use fittings and useful features like mirrors and incontinence bins, along with toilet seats in a contrasting colour to the walls and the rest of the toilet. Where this is not possible, information should be made available and staff should be able to direct customers to where they can find such facilities.
- Provide permanent seating or the option for customers to request a temporary seat. Think about the type of seating you provide, including comfort, support (backs and armrests at an appropriate height) and placement. Consider offering priority seating areas or reservation options for people with limited mobility, as well as seating in outdoor areas.

‘Losses to businesses from the failure to cater for over-50s who find walking more difficult amount to £3.8 billion a year, with £1.6 billion in lost clothing sales, £1.1 billion lost by the entertainment and leisure industry, and £1.1 billion lost by restaurants and cafes.’

The Missing £Billions: The economic cost of failing to adapt our high street to respond to demographic change, International Longevity Centre, December 2016 (21)

Tip: If you have any lifts on your premises ensure they are installed with non-reflective surfaces, tactile buttons and clearly visible information that is easy to follow.

i Providing toilet facilities

Relevant legislation on providing toilet facilities for staff and customers will vary depending on the size and type of business you are running. For example, any premises that sell food or drink should ideally provide customer toilets, although this is not always a legal requirement.

Sensory factors

If managed carefully, sound, lighting, temperature and smells can all contribute to a welcoming environment. However, if these factors are not planned and monitored with sensitivity towards the diverse needs and preferences of older people and other customers, they may present as barriers and deter people from returning.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Manage noise carefully, including the consideration of music choices and volumes that don't create barriers to social interaction or participation in events and activities. Larger businesses might consider offering quiet zones or designated quiet periods during the day.
- Be aware of and take steps to minimise auditory confusion caused by ambient sounds such as outside noise, coffee machines, air-conditioning units and internal maintenance works. Keeping doors closed, turning off machines when not in use, and taking noise absorption measures, such as installing carpets or acoustic ceiling tiles and soundboard walls, can also have a positive impact.
- Plan and manage the provision of lighting, ensuring that entrances and exits, stairways and other areas requiring careful navigation are well-lit. Also consider the use of task lights and spotlights and the reduction of glare to support activities like reading labels and menus or using interactive screens.
- Maintain comfortable temperature levels and respond quickly to uncomfortable heat or cold by adjusting thermostats, regulating air flow and keeping external doors closed.

Health and safety

Providing a hazard-free environment can help everyone feel secure, healthy and safe, and minimise accidents or injury. Reducing or eliminating risks to health and safety is particularly pertinent to older people who may be more susceptible to injury or have difficulty walking. Injuries caused by falls are the most common reason why older people visit A&E, and falls are the leading cause of death by injury in people over 75 (22). If your older customers perceive your business premises to be unsafe or a risk to their health in any way, they are likely to take their custom elsewhere.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Identify trip and slip hazards and take steps to remove them. This might include installing non-slip surfaces and using tactile warning strips, brightly coloured paint or reflective tape to clearly mark steps and any changes in flooring material or elevation.

- Ensure all facilities and equipment are cleaned and maintained regularly. Where possible, schedule this work for quieter periods in the day and use suitable warning signs and cordons when these activities are in progress.
- Prioritise fixing or removing new hazards left by staff, customers, delivery people or anyone else visiting your premises. This includes clearing spillages, removing obstructions and keeping floor space free from clutter.
- Install handrails at suitable points around your premises to give support and guidance.
- When designing new or refurbishment schemes, seek out guidance on how to remove unnecessary visual barriers. For people living with dementia, or those with some types of visual impairment, patterned flooring can be confusing and large, dark-coloured mats can look like holes.

i Health and safety requirements

Health and safety requirements depend on the type and size of your business. Anyone who runs a business in the UK must be fully aware of what their health and safety obligations are. Although the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 do not state that you need to have first aid procedures for non-employees, the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) strongly recommends that you do.

Easy interactions

For a customer-facing business to succeed, it must help its customers achieve what they have set out to do. Businesses need to think like their customers, which includes recognising the needs and interests of a hugely diverse 50+ demographic. There are many things your business can consider, including flexible opening hours, help points and intuitive product positioning, which can reduce frustration, increase satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Customers are likely to spend more time and money with you if it is easier to use your business.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Provide information that enables and eases engagement with your premises, such as floor plans, seating plans, exhibition layouts and 360-degree virtual tours. This information should be available in advance of a visit, at the point of entry and at other pivotal points within or outside your premises.
- Offer flexible opening hours that are clearly advertised and communicated using a range of formats, including digital and non-digital options.
- Where queuing is required, consider providing alternatives for customers who are less able to stand for long periods, such as ticketed systems with seated waiting areas.
- Set up a range of ways for people to contact your business, make bookings or buy products and services, including online, over the phone and in-person. For people buying products and services, it is particularly important to consider providing different options for checkout and payment, including accepting cash payments, and offering traditional customer-service tills as well as dementia-friendly checkouts and self-service options if possible.

- Consider offering designated customer service areas or ensure staff are on hand to provide support, including additional staff at particularly busy periods.

‘The Financial Lives 2020 Survey found that around 2.4 million people aged 65 and over in the UK relied on cash to a great extent in their day-to-day life, representing around one in five (21 per cent) of all older people.’

One in five older people rely on cash for everyday spending, Age UK, July 2021 (23)

Useful links and resources

Centre for Ageing Better:

- Web accessibility ageing-better.org.uk/web-accessibility
- Age Without Limits: Ask your local high street businesses to offer you a seat www.agewithoutlimits.org/resources/ask-your-local-high-street-businesses-offer-you-seat

Changing Places toilets www.changing-places.org

Business Disability Forum: How accessibility benefits your business businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/knowledge-hub/resources/how-accessibility-benefits-your-business

NHS: Information about falls www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls

Anchor campaign: Standing Up 4 Sitting Down <https://www.anchor.org.uk/media/campaigns-and-research/standing-up-4-sitting-down>

Pipedown campaign pipedown.org.uk

Innovations in Dementia: Accessibility audits for public spaces www.innovationsindementia.org.uk/what-we-do/accessibility

Dementia Services Development Centre: Design guidance for different settings shop.dementia.stir.ac.uk/collections/design

Cubicle Centre: How many toilets do you need? www.washroomcubicles.co.uk/how-many-toilets-do-you-need

Inspired Washrooms: Washroom regulations every business needs to know www.inspiredwashrooms.co.uk/washrooms-regulations-every-business-needs-to-know

Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm



Your communications

Although older consumers are responsible for half of all household spending, businesses could do a lot more to target the over-50s market in terms of their services, advertising and communications.

Mark Beasley, Chair of the Mature Marketing Association, says:

“Older people are not a single segment. This group is too complex to be stereotyped and too diverse to be second-guessed. Yet that’s exactly what some businesses are doing.”

Marketing to older consumers, Marketing Donut (24)

Your communications include marketing and advertising, customer relations and community engagement. Age-friendly marketing and communication uses language and imagery that makes older people feel they are being acknowledged, represented, and included, rather than feeling ignored or portrayed in a patronising or stereotypical way.

An age-friendly business also provides up-to-date and relevant information that is readily accessible and available in a range of formats, including through offline channels such as print, in person and over the phone. Digital exclusion is particularly pronounced for people in later life, although it affects many others too.

i Digital exclusion

Digital exclusion is where an individual lacks internet access and/or has low levels of digital skills or confidence.

People who are more at risk of digital exclusion include older people, the most financially vulnerable, and those who are not working, living alone, or impacted by a limiting condition such as a hearing or visual impairment. User choice, cost issues and a lack of skills or confidence are all contributory factors in digital exclusion (25).

Although the number of older people who are digitally connected continues to rise, 1 in 3 people aged 65 and over do not have or use the internet at home (26). This is around 3.2 million people in England - roughly two-thirds of all people aged 16 and over (a total of 5 million people) who do not have or use the internet at home (27).

Easy-to-find information

Information about your business, such as opening hours, contact details and accessibility, should be easy to find, up to date and accurate. This information should be available to people in advance, as well as when they visit your premises (see the section about channels and formats). Investing in non-digital communications and marketing plans will benefit the range of people who are digitally excluded.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Display information in a range of places, including online and on printed materials at the entrance and other key points within your premises, as well as elsewhere in the local area such as on notice boards and in printed listing guides.
- Promptly and clearly communicate any changes to schedules, products, pricing, booking systems or floor and shelving layouts.
- Make the engagement process as easy as possible, communicating alternative ways to book or locate information for people who are not online. For example, send booking reminders via text as well as emails and apps.
- Provide information up front about any additional customer needs your business may or may not be able to support, such as personal assistance or any special discounts or services. For example, making it clear how many wheelchair spaces are available can have an impact on things like group bookings for accessible shows.
- Help people plan their visit by providing advice on the logistics of getting to your premises and interacting with your business. This could include public transport routes, parking recommendations, step-by-step instructions on what to do or where to go on arrival, or the length of time required to complete an activity such as viewing a new art exhibit. Complex instructions should be written down with supporting images or diagrams.

Readability and language

As we age, our eyes and vision can be affected, often making it more challenging to read menus, labels and other information your business shares. Readability can be affected by the way written text is presented, including the font type, size and colour, along with the use of empty space, the layout, and other information presented within the same space.

The use of certain words and phrases can either challenge or reinforce ageist stereotypes. The language you use in your written and verbal communications has the power to increase customer satisfaction and sales.

To be an age friendly business, you could:

- Use inclusive design standards for font size and colour contrast. The ability to see colour decreases with age, so avoid contrasts of pale shades that are more difficult for ageing eyes to distinguish, such as blues, greens and violets. Dark-coloured text on a light background is the most reader friendly.
- Use linear layouts, plenty of white space and easily distinguished fonts such as Ariel, Calibri or Century Gothic.
- Provide clear explanations for new or unfamiliar concepts, such as touch tours or relaxed performances, so people know exactly what to expect. Use everyday language that avoids jargon and does not assume specialist knowledge about your business and what it offers.

- Read our [age-inclusive communications and writing guide](#) and think about how you refer to older people in your communications. Terms like OAP, senior and elderly can be associated with negative stereotypes. Consider whether there is a clear need to reference the age of a person or a group of people at all. If there is, the terms older adult(s) or older person/people should be the standard.
- Use terms that are precise and accurate. Poor communications that are ambiguous can damage your business and leave customers unhappy or unclear.

Rosemary's story:

“On the radio someone was described as an 85-year-old grandmother. So me as a 73-year-old grandmother gives (and I'm being ageist now!) a picture of a little white haired old lady sitting by the fire knitting. Language matters!”

Age Without Limits, Centre for Ageing Better, 2024 (11)

Tip: Consider how you can support customers who find reading more challenging, such as people with visual impairments, dyslexia or colour blindness.

Signs and labels

Good signage gives all customers important cues to help them achieve what they have set out to do, supporting independence and increasing confidence and satisfaction levels. Signs and labels can be particularly important to people of any age with a visual or cognitive impairment, or to those who have difficulties walking. For example, you can use signage to help people find their way and make them aware of things like hazards, special offer promotions, awards and accreditations, and certificates of compliance with health and safety guidelines.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Cater for people with visual impairments and accessibility needs when designing signs and printed materials such as price lists and menus. Make sure everything is readable (see the earlier section about readability and language) and consider the material you print onto, for example, avoiding gloss finishes that create glare.
- Place signs and labels so they are clearly visible, unobstructed and positioned at eye level, while still being visible to wheelchair users. They should be placed at key decision points, such as on the way to and from toilets (including inside the toilet facilities to direct people back out), cafes, outside areas, customer services, collection points and payment points.
- Make sure temporary signs and labels are readily available and used appropriately, for example, hazard warning signs for cleaning in progress, wet floors and equipment/facilities under maintenance or out of order.

i Visual impairment issues as we get older

Although visual impairments can affect the whole population, we know they are more prevalent as we get older. In the 50–69 age group, blindness and visual impairment are one of the top contributors to disability (28). Nearly 80% of the 340,000 people who are registered blind or partially sighted in the UK are 65 or older (29).

Images and representation

Like language, images shape the way we think about ageing. They can evoke an emotional response in people and make or break a message your business is trying to convey.

‘How older people are portrayed in images plays an important role in the implicit messages that are sent through media, advertising, and other communications.’

Images Shape Attitudes About Aging, AARP, October 2022 (30)

Older populations are more diverse than ever before – in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, family structure and the way we live our lives. When designing your marketing communications and promotional materials it is important to show diverse and realistic representations of older people. Avoid images that show extremes, for example, images that reinforce ageist stereotypes, such as wrinkly hands, or images that are unrepresentative, such as 90-year-olds bungee jumping.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Feature a range of ages, including older people, in your communications.
- Focus on the abilities and experiences of people as individuals rather than making assumptions or generalisations about their circumstances based on their age.
- Show people of different ages interacting and engaging with products, services and activities together.
- Where relevant, use images from your local area and the diverse range of over-50s who live there.

Tip: Use our free [age-positive image library](#), which contains hundreds of photos of people aged 50 and over in a range of settings to highlight the diversity of later life.

Channels and formats

There are many communication channels your business can use, including emails, phone calls, websites, instant chats, apps and social media channels. Some older people may prefer more traditional communication channels like speaking on the phone or in-person, but it is important you do not make assumptions about this, and you cater for a range of needs and preferences.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Include older customers within your communications and marketing strategies, and make promotional materials available in a range of formats.
- Provide a range of different ways – phone, email, online and in-person – for customers to contact your business.
- Explore additional formats that can help a diverse range of people to engage with information about your business more easily. This might include offering subtitles and transcripts, braille, easy-read and audio options, translations in other languages, and images, maps, and diagrams. Verbal communication can be especially important for people who are visually impaired or find reading difficult.
- Follow guidance on designing accessible websites that make the user experience as simple and straightforward as possible.
- Consider your automated answering service. Do you need it? Is it working well? These services can be a huge obstacle for some customers because they often provide information too quickly, with too many options, and without the chance to speak to a real person.



i Useful links and resources

Centre for Ageing Better

- Age-friendly communications principles www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTxKFKDSQgs
- Web accessibility ageing-better.org.uk/web-accessibility
- Age-inclusive communications and writing guide www.agewithoutlimits.org/resources/your-comms-and-writing
- Free age-positive image library www.agewithoutlimits.org/image-library
- Why does imagery matter? www.agewithoutlimits.org/resources/your-images

Manchester City Council: Standards for age-friendly communications www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200091/life_over_50/8396/standards_for_age-friendly_communications

Plain English Campaign: Free guides www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html

The Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project (DEEP): Dementia words matter dementivoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/DEEP-Guide-Language.pdf

Silver Marketing Association: silvermarketingassociation.org

Design Council: The principles of inclusive design www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/the-principles-of-inclusive-design.pdf

GOV.UK: Accessible communication formats www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats

Alzheimer's Society: Dementia friendly signage www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementia-professionals/resources-professionals/resources-gps/dementia-friendly-signage

Sensory Trust: Designing with clear and large print www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/designing-with-clear-and-large-print

UK Association for Accessible Formats: www.ukaaf.org

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID): Communicating with staff and customers who are deaf or have hearing loss rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/support-for-businesses-and-organisations/communicating-staff-customers-deaf-hearing-loss



Your offer

People want to have access to products, services, activities and offers that best meet their changing needs, including as they age.

‘4 in 5 people aged over 55 say their favourite retail brand no longer understands them or what they need.’

The missing market: How home retailers can better meet the needs of over-50s consumers, Centre for Ageing Better, 2021 (31)

Understanding the desires, needs and challenges of your existing and potential customers, including the diverse groups who live within your local community, can help to inform your priorities, including what, when and how you deliver products and services. Businesses that fully understand and provide for the wide range of older people’s needs, interests and preferences are best placed to win them as valuable customers.

‘All services must be culturally sensitive to help maintain the independence of older people and respect their diverse identities and backgrounds.’

The Impact Of The Cost-Of-Living Crisis On Older Ethnic Minority People Living In Greater Manchester, Lewis et al., October 2023 (32)

Giving customers choice

People want to be able to choose what works best for them and their individual circumstances. Take into account the differing needs and abilities of your older customers when you are setting your business opening hours, pricing options, product ranges, or the activities and services you offer, including their frequency, duration and intensity. There is no replacement for speaking to your older customers and seeing what they are buying or using, but you could start by considering the following points.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Look at how you schedule activities and services. This includes thinking about things public transport timetables, or parking options if people rely on cars, and whether the start or finish time might limit someone’s ability to attend.
- Think about the customer journey in its entirety and provide options that cater for the needs of people with limited mobility issues throughout this journey, including the period of time after they leave your premises. For example, you could offer a delivery service or help with loading customers’ cars.
- Offer a range of ways for people to purchase, book or order services in advance rather than restricting them to online only. For example, provide options for pre-booking a restaurant table or an exercise class.
- Consider how products and services are labelled and marketed, prioritising inclusive and interesting options that focus on people’s needs, abilities and desires rather than being age specific. For example, offer different portion sizes and add-ons rather than advertising kids’ meals or OAP specials, or promote exercise classes for a range of abilities rather than for the over-50s.

- If you offer online services, ensure that offline services are still available wherever possible. This is a more inclusive approach and helps maintain human connections, which many customers value.

Designing products and services

Good inclusive products and services are easy to use, affordable, aesthetically pleasing and provide positive experiences for all your customers. Many customers can be put off by the price, aesthetics and stigma surrounding products designed specifically with the older or disabled customer in mind. Age-friendly businesses provide everyday products and services that are created with clear consideration of the needs of the majority of the population, taking into account our different degrees of ability and mobility, and how these can change throughout our lives.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Ensure that the needs and preferences of different age groups are included when you are designing new services, activities, programmes or products. Consider involving older age groups directly in the delivery of products and services – as programmers, trainers, facilitators, artists, performers or designers.
- Consider customers who might not be able to access your products and services as easily as others, including those living in more rural or remote locations. For example, could access be improved through mobile libraries, touring schemes, a mobile grocery shop, or using village halls and community centres as venues?
- Avoid additional or hidden costs due to differing needs and abilities. You might, for example, include rest breaks in activities and services, offer a water station and menus that cater for different dietary needs, or provide free places for carers.
- Think about social interactions as part of the design process. The direction in which chairs face and the timing of breaks can make a real difference. Not everyone wants to be forced to interact, but for some people, including many older customers, social opportunities are important and they encourage repeat business.
- Include the views and experiences of disabled and older customers when you are undertaking hazard identification and risk assessments, and take steps to remove or reduce them as part of the design and testing process for new products, services and activities.

Dolores' story:

“I enjoy still being able to do activities with a mix of ages. There is an assumption that older people are all very similar, but we are as varied and different from each other as younger people.”

Age Without Limits, Centre for Ageing Better, January 2024 (11)

Feedback and improvement

Business improvement is an ongoing process of enhancing and refining your offer to best meet the needs of existing and potential customers. For customer-facing businesses, improvement focuses on the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the offer – seeking, listening to, and responding to feedback proactively and in a positive manner. Make sure you capture the views and experiences of a wide range of your older customers in this process.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Ensure that staff know about your monitoring and evaluation processes and have an active role to play in them. Train and monitor staff in how they respond to both solicited and unsolicited feedback.
- Proactively seek, evaluate and act on feedback, promoting opportunities for customers of all ages to share their views and experiences through a range of formats (not just online). Recognise the value of all comments, including customer complaints (see the Consumer Rights Act 2015).
- Openly communicate the changes you have made as a result of the feedback you received, so customers can see their contributions are being heard and respected. Also acknowledge when and why changes might not be possible.
- Recognise and use feedback to make changes that focus on supporting the needs of older people, such as adaptations to scheduling, booking options and processes, and the range of products, services or activities you offer.

Consumer Rights Act 2015

In place to protect your customers, the Consumer Rights Act 2015 is legislation passed by Parliament stating that businesses are required to provide goods and services that are as described, fit for purpose and of a satisfactory quality for the price paid. Find out more here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/consumer-rights-act-2015/consumer-rights-act-2015

Offering incentives

Most of us like to get value for money, and special offers can encourage customers to try new things, make multiple purchases or come back for more. While the spending power of some older adults is sizeable, it is equally important for businesses to recognise that many older people are experiencing financial challenges.

‘Since 2012–13, the number of pensioners living in poverty has steadily increased. Contrary to the perception that all older people are well off and enjoy a comfortable retirement, the reality is that almost one in five pensioners are living in relative poverty.’

The State of Ageing 2023–24, Centre for Ageing Better, November 2023 (7)

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Give people the chance to try things out before having to commit. This could be through offers like free taster sessions or ‘try before you buy’ promotions for new products.
- Think about ways to reward loyalty through schemes that suit people’s needs and interests, such as free gifts, Recommend a Friend incentives and group discounts. While discounts based on age can often get huge take-up, try to avoid schemes that lump all older people together as a homogenous group. Offering incentives like loyalty schemes and early-bird discounts might avoid alienating or putting off potential customers who don’t want to be pigeonholed or stigmatised.
- Look into the feasibility of different voucher schemes, such as offering gift cards or accepting food coupons and other vouchers issued by local government, social services or charities.
- Try to reach as many people as possible by ensuring your offers are generic, well-presented and communicated through a range of channels, with any expiry dates and other important information made clearly visible.

Innovation

Innovation in business is about developing new products or services that are even more effective at meeting customers’ needs, improving their experiences and making their lives easier and better. It involves being forward-thinking and exploring novel ideas and approaches. To stay relevant and be successful over the longer term, your business will have to address the needs of older people as a significant and growing portion of the consumer market.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Present products, services and activities that celebrate ageing and challenge stereotypes.
- Look to other businesses for inspiration, including those from other countries or ones with a reputation for having successfully increased their older customer base.

Your offer

- Look out for new products and services that could meet the needs of existing and potential customers more effectively, and work with developers to create new offers that older people might want or need.
- Use the experience, expertise and potential of older workers, alongside others, to inform innovation. Take an intergenerational approach, involving collaboration and blending perspectives to offer something different.

‘Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.’

Beth Johnson Foundation, April 2001 (33)



i Useful links and resources

Centre for Ageing Better

- Inclusive products in the home ageing-better.org.uk/our-work/inclusive-products-home
- The missing market: How home retailers can better meet the needs of over-50s consumers ageing-better.org.uk/resources/missing-market-how-retailers-meet-needs-over-50s-consumers

Design Age Institute: designage.org

Consumer Rights Act: Guidance for Business www.businesscompanion.info/sites/default/files/CRA-Goods-Guidance-for-Business-Sep-2015.pdf

National Innovation Centre Ageing: uknica.co.uk/what-we-do/experience-and-design

Citizens Advice: Age discrimination - when discrimination is allowed in the provision of goods or services
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/discrimination-in-the-provision-of-goods-and-services/discrimination-in-the-provision-of-goods-and-services1/goods-and-services-what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/what-doesn-t-count-as-unlawful-discrimination-in-goods-and-services/age-discrimination-when-discrimination-is-allowed-in-the-provision-of-goods-or-services

Linking Generations Northern Ireland: Intergenerational Practice Explained
www.linkinggenerationsni.com/intergenerational-practice-explained/#Section_1



Your place within the wider community

Your local community is made up of the people who live in the area where your business is located. Not all these people are necessarily your customers, but they are all neighbours to your business and have a vested interest in its success, how it operates and what it does to support them as members of the community. There are many things you can do to support your local community and contribute to the lives of older people, now and in the future. Making your community a great place to live and to age is good for individual members of the community, the local economy and your business too.

Knowing your community

To be able to support your local community, you need to understand its make-up – the people living in the area, along with the organisations and individuals responsible for supporting and managing local services and facilities, such as transport, education and the physical environment.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Find out about who lives locally, including their ages, the languages they speak and other demographic information, including your business's current and potential employee and customer base.
- Identify whether your local area is part of the [UK Network of Age-friendly Communities](#) and get in touch to find out how you might work together.
- Look for local groups and initiatives that support older people within your community (including faith groups and community organisations) and identify some that your business might be able to help, for example, through promoting or fundraising activity.
- Talk to customers to understand the different challenges that older members of your community might experience living in the area. For example, recognise the difficulties that come with living in a rural area if you don't drive, and be aware of other local amenities (not just shops and services) that might be missing – is there a role you can play in replacing these?

Increasing social connections

Positive relationships, shared activities and connections contribute to our emotional health and wellbeing. Anyone at any age can experience loneliness, and older members of your community are no exception. Retirement, bereavement and reduced mobility or income can all contribute to a lack of social connections in later life.

‘Tackling social isolation through supporting social contact is an important task in allowing people to ‘age in place’, the policy of encouraging people to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.’

Social Infrastructure: How shared spaces make communities work,
Yarker 2019 (34)

Most businesses have some capacity to facilitate building connections both within and between different generations. Customers, staff, volunteers, trustees, etc can all benefit from social opportunities. By providing activities that support physical, mental and social health, you can also improve the customer experience, drive wider engagement and increase repeat business.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Consider ways to encourage people to talk and connect with others through initiatives like ‘chatty tables’ or offering newspapers and other prompts to create topics of conversation for people.
- Involve staff or volunteers in organising activities that foster social connections between different age groups. Intergenerational activities promote collaboration, shared learning, empowerment and belonging, and mutual respect. They can help bridge divides, challenge stereotypes and change attitudes between generations (35).
- If you have suitable space at your premises, identify ways to make it available for community social gatherings.
- Be proactive about providing activities and events for different age groups and consider how they might work together.
- Focus on regular and ongoing opportunities that encourage interaction and social connections rather than just one-off events.

Collaborations and partnerships

‘Collaboration among organizations is fundamental to promoting age-friendly environments. Organizations can engage in collaboration and cooperation across multiple sectors of service delivery and across multiple types of organizations.’

Examining collaboration across organizations in an age-friendly community,
Teixeira-Poit, October 2019 (36)

Customer-facing businesses might consider working with local groups or other businesses to improve the way they meet customer needs by offering complementary products and services. This can help your business reach a greater number of older people in your local community and encourage repeat business.

To be an age-friendly business, you could:

- Identify other local businesses, such as libraries, community centres, adult learning centres and local transport organisations, where mutually beneficial arrangements could be made. For example, you could offer expertise, a space to hold an event, or discounts on products and services.
- Connect with local care homes to see if there is anything your business can offer to the home or residents, and vice versa.
- Identify charities or community organisations who provide services to older people that your business is happy to endorse as part of broader promotional activities and communications.
- Support wider campaigns or social movements that align with your business. For example, you could allow people to come to your premises to hand out information about health issues or keeping warm in winter.

i Examples of age-friendly campaigns:

- Take a seat campaign, Nottingham ageing-better.org.uk/stories/age-friendly-nottingham-take-seat
- Chatty cafes <https://thechattycafescheme.co.uk>
- Community Toilet Scheme, Bristol www.bristol.gov.uk/business/business-support-and-advice/join-the-community-toilet-scheme
- Food for Health awards, Tower Hamlets www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/business/health_and_safety/food/healthy_food_awards/healthy_food_awards.aspx

Community engagement and support

Community engagement and support involves actively participating with, and providing help to, local communities. It is a key aspect of corporate social responsibility that benefits employees, consumers and the wider community, while also increasing sustainability for any organisation.

i Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The UK Government defines Corporate Social Responsibility as “the responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decisions on society and the environment above and beyond its legal obligations, through transparent and ethical behaviour” (37).

The purpose of CSR is to encourage businesses to run their companies in an ethical manner and work towards having a more positive impact on society through ensuring sustainable growth.

It can be a way to strengthen your business at the same time as giving back to society (38).

This blog post published by The Giving Machine provides a simple guide to CSR: www.thegivingmachine.co.uk/blog/posts/corporate-social-responsibility-and-environmental-social-and-governance-a-simple-guide

As an age-friendly business, you could:

- Take an inclusive and flexible approach to engaging older volunteers to increase numbers and diversity. Our [Age-friendly and inclusive volunteering guide](#) makes practical recommendations for businesses and organisations who work with volunteers.
- Offer volunteering days to employees. This can improve staff satisfaction and retention as a valued workplace benefit. It can also help staff develop transferable skills, including teamwork, leadership, creative problem-solving and time management, as well as a greater understanding of how to engage more effectively with different people.
- Consider ways to maximise footfall during off-peak hours while supporting local people on lower incomes. For example, you could offer food and drink or entry fees on a sliding scale or a ‘pay what you feel’ basis at particular times of day – or introduce a ‘pay it forward’ scheme that allows people to provide for those who are among the thousands experiencing poverty across the UK.
- Identify what your business might be able to offer and take steps to put things in place. For example, offer public use of your toilet facilities as part of a wider community toilet scheme, allocate a notice board or window space for sharing information about community activities and events, or promote opportunities for people to be active and make healthy choices.
- Find ways to support bigger events and activities taking place in your local area and nationally, including the International Day of Older Persons (1 October) and our own annual [Age Without Limits Action Day](#).

‘Older people contribute hugely to society, in many different ways. People aged 50 and over, and particularly those aged 65–74, are the most likely to volunteer.’

The State of Ageing 2023–24, Centre for Ageing Better, November 2023 (7)

i Useful links and resources

Centre for Ageing Better

- The State of Ageing 2023–24 ageing-better.org.uk/the-state-of-ageing-2023-4
- Neighbourhood networks: A model for community-based support ageing-better.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-networks-model-community-based-support
- UK Network of Age-friendly Communities ageing-better.org.uk/uk-network-age-friendly-communities
- Age Without Limits Action Day www.agewithoutlimits.org/action-day
- International Day of Older Persons ageing-better.org.uk/international-day-older-persons-1-october-2023
- Tackling ageism: The transformative power of intergenerational connection ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/tackling-ageism-transformative-power-intergenerational-connection
- Age-friendly and inclusive volunteering: Guide to making the most of volunteers’ talents ageing-better.org.uk/news/guide-age-friendly-and-inclusive-volunteering-volunteers-week
- Age-friendly case study: Take a seat campaign ageing-better.org.uk/stories/age-friendly-nottingham-take-seat

Office for National Statistics

- Labour market and population data for areas within the UK www.ons.gov.uk/help/localstatistics
- Census maps that show what people’s lives are like across England and Wales www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps

GOV.UK

- Find your local council www.gov.uk/find-local-council
- Find a community support group or organisation www.gov.uk/find-a-community-support-group-or-organisation

The King’s Fund: What is social prescribing? www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/social-prescribing

NHS England: Social prescribing link workers www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/workforce-and-training/social-prescribing-link-workers

Great British Public Toilet Map www.toiletmap.org.uk

Community toilet scheme en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_toilet_scheme

The Chatty Cafe Scheme thechattycafescheme.co.uk

Brighton & Hove City Council: Healthy Choice scheme
www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/business-and-trade/food-safety/find-healthy-choices-brighton-hove#tab--what-the-healthy-choice-scheme-is

Tower Hamlets: Food for Health awards
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/business/health_and_safety/food/healthy_food_awards/healthy_food_awards.aspx

CIPD: An introduction to corporate responsibility www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/corporate-responsibility-factsheet

Generations Working Together: What are intergenerational spaces and places?
<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/news/what-are-intergenerational-spaces-and-places-10-09-2021>



Summary

As we get older, we need age-friendly environments and infrastructure that enable us to remain active, maintain connections and live independently, which will enable us to live a good-quality later life. Customer-facing businesses and community settings have a vital role to play in this.

This framework has mapped out the five key areas of any customer-facing business that can influence an older person's experience, their ability to live independently and your chance of getting repeat custom.

The key messages we would like you to take away from this framework are:

- Being age-friendly is good for your business, good for people of all ages, and good for our wider society.
- There are easy steps you can take to ensure that respect for, and inclusion of, older people is embedded in all your business practices.
- This is not about being perfect, it's about making improvements. All progress is beneficial and even the smallest changes can make a huge difference to how older customers experience your business.
- You can learn a lot by engaging with older people from your local community – listen to them and involve them in your business decisions.
- By taking steps to be age-friendly you will make your business more welcoming and accessible to an increasingly diverse range of older people, and also to many other people, including those with physical, mental and learning disabilities, families and young people.

With a fundamental change in approach, businesses can help enable millions more people to live a good later life. The question should not be *Why be age-friendly?* but rather *Why not?*

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for their involvement and support in the production of this framework:

- Kylie Aitken, Ready for Living Coordinator, Gore District Council, New Zealand
- Debby Anderson, Community Development Worker, Hastings Voluntary Action
- Andy Barry, Elders Programme Producer, Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
- Jane Berni, Age-friendly Communities Officer, East Lindsey District Council
- Dr Emer Coveney, National Programme Manager, Age Friendly Ireland
- Davina de Laszlo, Age and Dementia Friendly Public Health Specialist, Brighton & Hove City Council
- Monique Deletant, CEO, artsdepot, London
- Anna Dever, Executive Director, Family Arts Campaign
- Bernadette Elder, Chief Executive Office, Inspiring Communities Together, Salford
- Ailsa Forbes, Retail Impact Fellow, International Longevity Centre
- Petrit Krasniqi, Community Sports Manager, GLL Better, Barnet
- Pippa Mannerings, Project Lead for Age-friendly Barnet, Age UK Barnet
- Beth Mitchell, Ageing Well Programme Manager, GM Ageing Hub, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)
- Thea Monk and Jason Bergen, Project Manager, Age Friendly Manchester, Manchester City Council
- Heather Olive, Age Friendly Community Coordinator, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
- Geoff Pearman, Founder, Partners in Change, New Zealand
- Rosie Radwell, Managing Director, Marsham Court Hotel
- Farrell Renowden, Head of Cultural Partnerships, Age UK Oxfordshire
- Diane Turner, Director, Office for Seniors, New Zealand
- Dr Xuan Lorna Wang, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Surrey
- Rachel Woodward Carrick, author of Happy Silver People and Board member of Bournemouth Town Centre BID
- Members of the Centre for Ageing Better's Experts by Experience network for sharing their insights and experiences
- Members of the Centre for Ageing Better's Age-friendly Communities steering group for their knowledge and expertise.

Methodology

This framework has been developed to communicate the core concepts of what it means to be an age-friendly business and organise a broad range of ideas into a logical and accessible structure.

The process for developing the framework involved the following steps:

1. To help us identify the main aims of this work and inform our approach, we used insights from our UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, who bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise, as well as conversations with partner organisations and stakeholders.
2. We identified a broad range of existing guidance, toolkits, checklists and reports about age-friendly businesses and sectors. Initial reviews of this work led to the identification of recurring themes that could be mapped out to build an overarching picture or framework of the five key areas of an age-friendly business.
3. We then undertook a more detailed desk review of 12 of these published resources from a range of place-based and sector-specific sources (see full list below). This review included a high-level thematic analysis, mapping content against the basic framework structure, and identifying consistencies, similarities and differences.
4. To inform both the content and approach to the work, we undertook semi-structured interviews with the authors of 5 of the 12 resources, discussing the who, what, why, how and when of their work, as well as the challenges they faced along the way and any lessons learned. The need for collaboration and consultation with business representatives and people with lived experience became clear through these conversations.
5. Using our learning from the interviews and a draft structure for the framework, we went through an early consultation process with people with lived experience (members of our Experts by Experience network) and our Age-friendly Communities steering group to help us identify priorities for the content, target audiences and dissemination approaches.
6. Focus group sessions were then run with representatives from 8 members of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, bringing insights from a range of geographically and demographically diverse locations across the country. These representatives work closely with lived-experience networks and local businesses within their communities. The sessions were used to sense check both the content of the framework and the plans for design and visualisation.
7. We then collated the first full draft of the framework, which went through an internal review with Centre for Ageing Better staff. Their feedback informed the substantive content development for the second draft.
8. An external review took place involving 17 representatives from across stakeholder organisations, age-friendly communities, and businesses from a range of different sectors.

Methodology

9. The feedback from the external review helped us refine the content and shape the final draft of the framework.

Further reviews and feedback may inform future content updates and improvements to the framework. You can email comments and feedback to localities@ageing-better.org.uk



Source materials

The following resources were reviewed in the development of this framework.

* Indicates the resources whose authors were interviewed as part of the development process.

Age Friendly Aotearoa New Zealand. Becoming an Age Friendly Business (2020)* officeforseniors.govt.nz/assets/documents/our-work/age-friendly/age-friendly-business-/Becoming-an-Age-friendly-business-book-.pdf

Age Friendly Ireland. Towards An Age Friendly Stadium (2022)* agefriendlyireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Age-Friendly-Stadium-Guidelines.pdf

Age-friendly NYC. Age-Friendly Business Resource Guide (2014). media.nyam.org/filer_public/bf/f7/bff7621c-cac7-4679-9e0f-f5e8bd6d3ae9/agefriendlybusinessguide.pdf

Age UK. Age-friendly business: Valuing and including older consumers in supermarkets and service companies (2017) www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_feb17_age_friendly_business.pdf

Alzheimer's Society. Dementia-friendly retail guide: A practical guide for shops and retailers to support people affected by dementia (2018) www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-07/AS_NEW_DF_Retail_Guide_Online_09_07_19.pdf

Bristol Ageing Better. Make Your Business More Age-friendly (2019)* extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Business-Toolkit-for-Issu-on-screen-Tess-Sieling.pdf

Family Arts Campaign. Age-Friendly Standards (2022)* www.familyarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Age-Friendly-Standards-Family-Arts-Campaign-1.pdf

International Longevity Centre. Health Retail Guides (2023). <https://ilcuk.org.uk/thrive-not-just-survive-helping-the-retail-sector-support-healthy-ageing>

Manchester Libraries. Age Friendly Pledge (2022) democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s32061/Appendix%204%20-%20Manchester%20Libraries%20Age%20Friendly%20Pledge.pdf

Museum Development North West. Age-Friendly Museums (2019) www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-12/MDNW_Age-Friendly-Museums-checklist_Sept20192.pdf

UK Active. Life in our Years: Unlocking physical activity participation for older adults (2021) www.ukactive.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Life-in-our-Years.pdf

University of Surrey. Hospitality Connect. Welcome ALL: A Toolkit for Age-inclusive Hospitality Venues (2023)* www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/toolkit-for-age-inclusive-hospitality-venues.pdf

References

1. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). The State of Ageing 2023–24: Our Ageing Population. [online] Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/our-ageing-population-state-ageing-2023-4>
2. GOV.UK (2023). Chief Medical Officer’s annual report 2023: health in an ageing society. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2023-health-in-an-ageing-society
3. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). Age Without Limits campaign insights. Survey by Basis [unpublished] (average age ‘old’ starts at is 60)
4. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). Age Without Limits campaign. Wave 1 Tracker Survey by Solutions [unpublished] (average age ‘old’ starts at is 58)
5. Age Friendly Ireland (2022). Towards An Age Friendly Stadium. [online] Available at: <https://agefriendlyireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Age-Friendly-Stadium-Guidelines.pdf>
6. International Longevity Centre UK (2023). Money well spent – Overcoming barriers to spending in later life. [online] Available at: <https://ilcuk.org.uk/money-well-spent-overcoming-barriers-to-spending-in-later-life>
7. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). The State of Ageing 2023–24. [online] Available at <https://ageing-better.org.uk/summary-state-ageing-2023-4>
8. Alzheimer’s Society (2019). Dementia-friendly retail guide: A practical guide for shops and retailers to support people affected by dementia. [online] Available at: www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-07/AS_NEW_DF_Retail_Guide_Online_09_07_19.pdf
9. Centre for Ageing Better (2022). Older workers are the solution – not the cause – to the UK’s productivity problem. [online] Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/older-workers-are-solution-not-cause-uks-productivity-problem>
10. Harvard Business Review (2019). The Key to Happy Customers? Happy Employees. [online] Available at: <https://hbr.org/2019/08/the-key-to-happy-customers-happy-employees>
11. Age Without Limits (2024). Stories. [online] Available at: www.agewithoutlimits.org/stories
12. Freelancers Make Theatre Work (accessed 2024). [online] Available at: <https://freelancersmaketheatrework.com>
13. IPSE (2024). The Self-Employed Landscape in 2023. [online] Available at: www.ipse.co.uk/policy/research/the-self-employed-landscape/the-self-employed-landscape-in-2023.html
14. The Health Foundation (2023). Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England. [online] Available at: www.health.org.uk/publications/health-in-2040

References

15. Office for National Statistics. Age (b) and general health: Census 2021. [online] Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/articles/generalhealthbyagesexanddeprivationenglandandwales/census2021
16. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). Ageism: What's the harm? [online] Available at: ageing-better.org.uk/resources/ageism-whats-harm
17. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). Age Without Limits campaign. Baseline Survey by NatCen [unpublished]
18. The Institute of Customer Service (2020). More than a million over 65s have experienced bad customer service because of their age. [online] Available at: www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/over-65s-bad-service
19. BCG (2023). Customer Insights: Don't Overlook Your Mature Consumers. [online] Available at: www.bcg.com/publications/2023/marketing-to-mature-consumers
20. Business Disability Forum (2021). How accessibility benefits your business. [online] Available at: <https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/knowledge-hub/resources/how-accessibility-benefits-your-business>
21. International Longevity Centre UK (2016). The Missing £Billions: The economic cost of failing to adapt our high street to respond to demographic change. [online] Available at: ilcuk.org.uk/the-missing-billions-the-economic-cost-of-failing-to-adapt-our-high-street-to-respond-to-demographic-change
22. Age UK (2019). Falls in later life: a huge concern for older people. [online] Available at: www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/articles/2019/may/falls-in-later-life-a-huge-concern-for-older-people
23. Age UK (2021). One in five older people rely on cash for everyday spending. [online] Available at: www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/articles/2021/one-in-five-older-people-rely-on-cash-for-everyday-spending
24. Marketing Donut (date unknown). Marketing to older consumers. [online] Available at: www.marketingdonut.co.uk/marketing-essentials/your-target-market/marketing-to-older-consumers
25. Ofcom (2022). Digital exclusion: A review of Ofcom's research on digital exclusion among adults in the UK. [online] Available at: www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/234364/digital-exclusion-review-2022.pdf
26. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). The State of Ageing 2023–24: Society. [online] Available at <https://ageing-better.org.uk/society-state-ageing-2023-4>
27. Ofcom (2024). Communications Affordability Tracker. [online] Available at www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/affordability-tracker
28. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (accessed February 2024). Global Burden of Disease (GBD). [online] Available at: <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare>
29. RNIB (2021). Key information on sight loss statistics in the UK. [online] Available at: www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/health-social-care-education-professionals/knowledge-and-research-hub/key-information-and-statistics-on-sight-loss-in-the-uk

References

30. AARP (2022). Images Shape Attitudes About Aging. [online] Available at: www.aarp.org/pri/topics/aging-experience/demographics/aging-media-representation.html
31. Centre for Ageing Better (2021). The missing market: How home retailers can better meet the needs of over-50s consumers. [online] Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/missing-market-how-home-retailers-can-better-meet-needs-over-50s-consumers-online-version>
32. Lewis et al. (2023). The Impact Of The Cost-Of-Living Crisis On Older Ethnic Minority People Living In Greater Manchester. [online] Available at: documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=71052
33. Beth Johnson Foundation (2009). Intergenerational Working. [online] Available at: www.bjf.org.uk/working-with-others/intergenerational-working
34. Yarker S (2019). Social Infrastructure: How shared spaces make communities work. [online] Available at: www.gmcvo.org.uk/publications/social-infrastructure-how-shared-spaces-make-communities-work
35. Centre for Ageing Better (2023). Tackling ageism: The transformative power of intergenerational connection. [online] Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/tackling-ageism-transformative-power-intergenerational-connection>
36. Teixeira-Poit SM (2020). Examining collaboration across organizations in an age-friendly community. [online] Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31663430>
37. GOV.UK (2014). Corporate responsibility: call for views. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/corporate-responsibility-call-for-views
38. The Giving Machine (2023). Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental, Social and Governance – A Simple Guide. [online] Available at: www.thegivingmachine.co.uk/blog/posts/corporate-social-responsibility-and-environmental-social-and-governance-a-simple-guide

Let's take action today for all our tomorrows.
Let's make ageing better.

Reproduction of the findings of this report by third parties is permitted. We ask that you notify us of planned usage at digital@ageing-better.org.uk

The Centre for Ageing Better is pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone, including challenging ageism and building an Age-friendly Movement, creating Age-friendly Employment and Age-friendly Homes. It is a charitable foundation funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and part of the government's What Works Network.

July 2024.