



ambition
for
ageing

Age-friendly social infrastructure in the context of COVID-19

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Overview



1. Importance of social infrastructure for age-friendly work
2. Implications of social distancing for older people
3. Current adaptations being made
4. Going forward; maintaining age-friendly principles in social infrastructure



Social Infrastructure;

*the physical places and organisations that
shape the way people interact*

Klinenberg, 2018, pp.5



Social infrastructure

When social infrastructure is robust, it fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbours; when it is degraded, it inhibits social activity, leaving families and individuals to fend for themselves.

Klinenberg, 2018

- **12,000 public spaces** have been sold off by UK Councils since 2010 (Hitchen and Shaw, 2019)
- **800 libraries** closed across the UK since 2010
- English and Welsh town centres have lost **8% of their shops** on average since 2013

Implications of restricted access to social infrastructure for older people

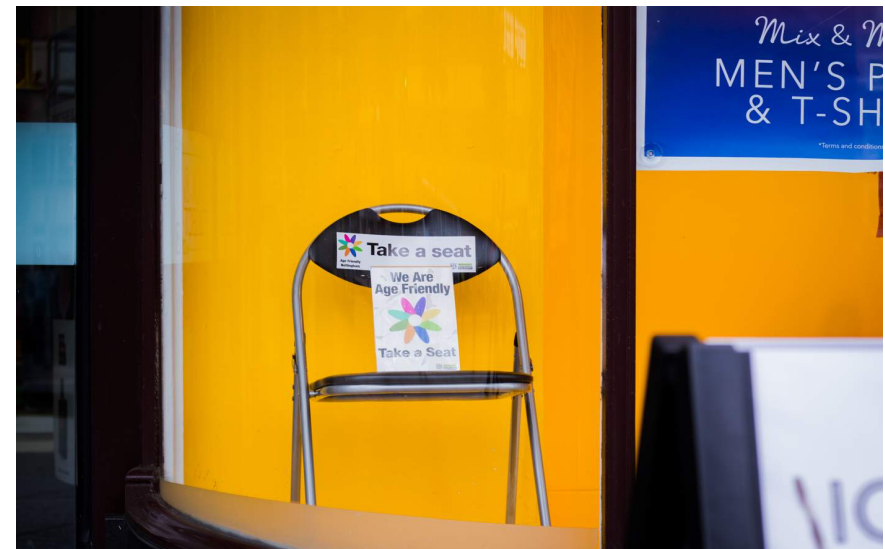
- Cut off from social connections and support networks
- Alienation from locally based support
- Health and wellbeing
- Not feeling visible or valued

Adaptations



Moving with limited mobility #KeepGMMoving

Going forward: maintaining age-friendly principles



Age-friendly recovery must include our shared spaces

- **Social aspect of our shared spaces remains crucial even whilst observing social distancing**
- **Social infrastructure can still provide spaces of informal non-verbal contact and encounters with difference**
- **This is vital for older people's sense of connection to people and place**

Age-friendly recovery must include our shared spaces



- Smaller moments of social connection might become more important for all of us
- Social distancing should not lead to lack of social solidarity
- A stronger sense of the collective is needed if we are to appeal to people to ‘stay alert’ and act in ways that contribute to the greater good.

The New York Times

Opinion

We Need Social Solidarity, Not Just Social Distancing

To combat the coronavirus, Americans need to do more than secure their own safety.

By Eric Klinenberg

Dr. Klinenberg is a sociologist.

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