Advancing Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

The Crucial Role of Leadership

Paul McGarry, Sophie Yarker, Patty Doran, and Tine Buffel

With contributions from Elena del Barrio, Barbara Douglas, Ladislava Fiedlerová, Stephanie Firestone, Sara Marsillas, Catherine McGuigan, Anne Berit Rafoss, Natalie Turner, and Tom van Benthem

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FUNDING STATEMENT

Authors: Paul McGarry, Sophie Yarker, Patty Doran, and Tine Buffel

Editing: Jack Greeney

Design: Richard Atherton

Photographs: The Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing and the Centre for Ageing Better

Publisher: The Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group (MUARG)

Suggested citation: Paul McGarry, Sophie Yarker, Patty Doran, and Tine Buffel (2024). *Advancing Age-Friendly Cities and Communities: The Crucial Role of Leadership*. Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group (MUARG) and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA): Manchester.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

LEADERSHIP FOR THE AGE-FRIENDLY AGENDA

The development of age-friendly cities and communities—as termed by the World Health Organization (WHO)[1]—has become an important area of work in the field of public policy[2]. Age-friendly communities have been described as those in which "older people are actively involved, valued, and supported with infrastructure and services that effectively accommodate their needs"[3], and those which encourage "active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security to enhance the quality of life as people age"[4].

However, building a framework to create age-friendly cities and communities involves working across a range of domains, including housing, transport, health services, and employment[5]. Interventions in these areas can be designed to implement the age-friendly agenda and consequently support older people in participating within their communities.

Leadership has been identified as a key element of the multidisciplinary work involved in implementing age-friendly interventions, including by the WHO, who highlighted its significance in their guide, *National Programmes for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities*. The reasons for its importance in age-friendly work include the opportunities leadership creates for providing a clear voice for the agenda, creating a narrative, uniting people, building teams across disciplines, identifying and promoting the work of others, and cultivating collaboration and responsibility.

However, what form age-friendly leadership should take and what might constitute 'effective' age-friendly leadership are less well defined. Although there is general agreement on the important role of working in partnerships and the need for a multi-sector approach to age-friendly work, little research has been conducted to investigate these factors from a leadership perspective or understand what leadership aspects make these partnerships work in different contexts.

In addition, there seems to be an assumption that leadership regarding age-friendly cities and communities generally depends upon key individuals, without consideration of how this type of leadership sits within urban governance more broadly. Furthermore, while leadership may be found in key individuals, it can also be found in teams and collaborations, including policy organisations, research institutions, grassroots organisations, community groups, and local, national, and regional government.

Age-friendly leadership does not always originate from professional organisations, either; sometimes, the strongest leadership comes from informal networks and those with lived experiences of age-related issues. Often, age-friendly leadership is a combination of individual people and organisations coming together with the desire to improve the lives of older people.

We hope that this guide—*Advancing Age-Friendly Cities and Communities: The Crucial Role of Leadership*—provides a useful resource for anyone interested in furthering the age-friendly agenda, regardless of where they currently sit in the age-friendly ecosystem.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDE

This guide is the product of a research collaboration between the Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group (MUARG) at the University of Manchester and the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub based in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, with funding from the Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) programme. This project was part of a larger Leverhulme Trust-funded project exploring age-friendly policies and experiences of ageing in place in seven case study cities.

The aim of this collaboration was to address the knowledge gap in research and policy regarding age-friendly leadership. The insights contained within this guide were gathered through a series of online knowledge exchange focus groups. The participants were national, regional, and city-based age-friendly leaders from Europe and North America. Themes were drawn from the discussions which took place in the knowledge exchanges, and these were used to develop the structure and content of this guide. The direct quotes used throughout are all taken from the focus groups, and vignettes are used to portray the different outlined aspects of age-friendly leadership.

AIMS OF THE GUIDE

This guide provides a useful starting point for thinking about age-friendly leadership. As a result, this work has the following aims:

- To argue for the **importance of leadership** in the context of working towards the age-friendly agenda.

- To make the case for why **age-friendly leadership is different** from leadership in many other agendas: this includes addressing the challenges and opportunities of working on and advocating for ageing-related issues.

- To provide examples of **practical skills and ways of working** that might benefit leaders working towards the age-friendly agenda, including in the form of vignettes and direct quotes from current age-friendly leaders.

- To raise awareness of the **challenges caused by ageism** regarding age-friendly work and the responsibility of advocating for a societal shift away from ageism.

OVERVIEW

The aim of this guide was to capture insights from age-friendly leaders to understand the crucial role of leadership in driving age-friendly initiatives. The guide is divided into four sections. The first section, 'Advocating for Age-Friendly Leadership', argues for the importance of leadership in the context of the age-friendly agenda, and discusses both the opportunities and challenges associated with age-friendly leadership.

The second section, 'Age-Friendly Leadership Skills', aims to address the question of what form age-friendly leadership should take given the challenges associated with this type of work. In this section, essential skills for effective age-friendly leadership are described and discussed, along with suggested approaches that could benefit age-friendly initiatives.

The third section, 'Tackling Ageism in a Time of Change', explores the significant barriers posed by ageism for age-friendly leaders and examines strategies for overcoming these. It also delves into the crucial role of age-friendly leaders in combatting ageism.

The guide concludes by providing an overview of the findings presented in the previous sections and offers potential future directions for advancing age-friendly leadership.

ADVOCATING FOR AGE-FRIENDLY LEADERSHIP

This section aims to provide a compelling argument for the importance of leadership in the context of the age-friendly agenda. This includes demonstrating the opportunities created by strong leadership for providing a clear voice, creating a narrative, uniting people, building teams across disciplines, identifying and promoting the work of others, and cultivating collaboration and responsibility. Following this, some of the challenges associated with such leadership are also discussed.

It should be noted here that age-friendly leaders can have a range of different backgrounds and spheres of influence and be at different stages in their careers, and that this leadership can take place in many spheres of society, from community organisations to politics.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

"Ageing is everyone's business but no one's responsibility. You need someone responsible—age friendly leadership."

Leadership is vitally important in driving the age-friendly work forward. In their guide, *National Programmes for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities*, the WHO highlights leadership as a key element in their framework, stating that collaborative leadership "across sectors and stakeholders... is necessary to achieve the goals of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing" (2021–2030).

Some aspects of age-friendly leadership are those generic to leadership in many areas, including setting priorities, building partnerships and strategies, setting up events, developing funding bids, and allocating resources. However, leadership in the age-friendly agenda is unique

given the importance attached to keeping older people at the forefront of consideration. Here, leaders are important in providing a clear voice for the age-friendly agenda, in both organisations and wider society.

Age-friendly leaders are also essential in processing a range of perspectives, stakeholder viewpoints, and policy and societal considerations into a narrative that people—including older people themselves—find relatable, responsible, and realistic. As the WHO guide states, age-friendly leadership "is possible only with a compelling narrative and a vision that is recognized by and resonates with all actors, including older people". The opportunity to share a persuasive vision and unite people around a common purpose is a key factor of the importance of leadership in developing age-friendly cities and communities.

Strong leadership in supporting older people can also cultivate collaboration, accountability, and responsibility at all levels, qualities essential for the successful implementation of age-friendly activities. Leadership here can also be essential in developing age-friendly-specific resources, building multidisciplinary teams concerned with age-friendly issues, and identifying and promoting the work of others who are working toward age-friendly agenda goals.

Without leadership pushing age-friendly work forward, these opportunities would not be taken. In addition, leadership can be a powerful tool in challenging ageism (as discussed in the final section, 'Tackling Ageism in a Time of Change'). Considering the context of the current trend of population ageing—the WHO notes that "in 2030, 1.4 billion people will be aged 60 years and older globally"—the importance of leadership in addressing these challenges becomes all the more clear.

Furthermore, in acknowledging the importance of leadership, this guide suggests the key qualities needed for strong age-friendly leadership (see the following section, 'Age-Friendly Leadership Skills').

CHALLENGES IN AGE-FRIENDLY LEADERSHIP

"A challenge is the cross-cutting nature of 'age-friendly', [which] means that you've got to be working on lots of different fronts at the same time."

Everybody ages, ageing populations can be seen everywhere, and "ageing is everyone's business". Yet, despite being a very well-defined topic, ageing is also a multifaceted issue that requires a great range of expertise in order to understand its underlying complexities. This is due to the complexity of the ageing experience itself, which affects a wide scope of domains of life.

Understanding the complexity of ageing experiences requires us to understand its intersection with a large breadth of topics, including:

• Health and the biological effects of ageing;

• Work, pensions, and retirement;

• The cumulative effects of disadvantage;

• Social networks and how these change with age;

• Mobility, accessibility, and transport;

• Housing, neighbourhoods, and community.

The complexity of the ageing experience means that the age-friendly agenda is multifaceted. This is reflected in the eight domains of age-friendly cities set out by the framework of the World Health Organization guide *Global Age Friendly Cities*: transport, housing, social participation,

respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services, and outdoor spaces and buildings (Figure 1).

Transport

Housing

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Age Friendly City

Social Participation

Community support and health services

Respect and Social Inclusion

Communication and Information

Civic Participation and Employment

Figure 1: The eight domains of the age-friendly city framework, as defined by the World Health Organization.

However, while it is a strength of the age-friendly framework that it covers a variety of areas relevant to different areas in later life, this also presents a challenge for its delivery. Here, it can be seen that age-friendly leadership is different to other forms of leadership in that it focuses on a phenomenon that affects all aspects of life related to ageing. Consequently, the central challenge for age-friendly leaders is to advocate for a specific focus on ageing and older people. In order to achieve this, it is important for age-friendly leaders to emphasise the diversity of conditions and circumstances in which people age.

A further challenge is that age-friendly leaders must simultaneously ensure that individual domains affected during the ageing experience are not addressed in isolation to other areas. Instead, the entire range of these domains and their intersections must be considered in order to achieve equitable environments for older people. Therefore, effective age-friendly leaders are those who can bring together experts and expertise from different specialities and facilitate the joining up of approaches in response to complex challenges.

From a regional and local government perspective, the delivery of age-friendly progress on all the domains requires a cross-cutting approach involving co-operation between both different departments and a variety of partners beyond local government. As a result, age-friendly leaders need a particular set of skills to navigate these challenges, a variety of which are discussed in the following section.

AGE-FRIENDLY LEADERSHIP SKILLS

As previously mentioned, what form leadership regarding the age-friendly agenda should take and what might constitute effective age-friendly leadership are currently poorly described in the literature. Consequently, this section aims to provide some answers to these questions whilst also considering some of the challenges described above.

First, themes regarding the key skills needed for effective age-friendly leadership were elicited from the focus group discussions, the participants of which included age-friendly leaders themselves. The skills found to be necessary for effective age-friendly leadership were:

- Building relationships and convening;

- Creating and communicating a narrative;

- Fostering intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration;

- Seizing opportunities;

- Being smart about where you put your efforts.

Each of these skills are described and discussed below, including recommendations of helpful ways of working that might benefit leaders working toward the age-friendly agenda. Furthermore, supporting quotes from the focus groups and illustrative vignettes are included throughout.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND CONVENING

"Knowing there are others out there, working towards the same goals, gives the feeling like you are part of a movement, like you are part of something over and above going to that meeting on a Tuesday morning when you've got [people] who aren't that interested, you feel kind of empowered I think as an officer."

The ability to build relationships is central to age-friendly leadership. Most importantly, effective leadership involves the building of relationships with older people themselves.

Age-friendly teams are often relatively small in size, so it can be lonely work at times, with the result that finding allies and supporters who can act as influencers in their own fields is vital. Furthermore, building local, national, and international relationships with other age-friendly leaders and teams can create a sense of being part of a movement or community of practice. Such relationships not only allow leaders to share ideas, experiences, and best practices, but also provide additional motivation and release from feelings of isolation.

Due to the wide-ranging nature of age-friendly agenda-related issues, relationships must also be built locally across sectors and organisations. It is also important to recognise the role of age-friendly leadership in bringing diverse groups of people together. Furthermore, passion—in relation to the narrative you tell regarding ageing (see following subsection)—and trust are key in building an 'ecosystem' or network of people working towards common goals.

VIGNETTE 1 — TOM VAN BENTHEM

Tom van Benthem leads the age-friendly work for the City of Amsterdam, based in the Public Health Department. He is also the chair of the working group Urban Ageing, which works across European Cities. Tom has been involved in the age-friendly work in Amsterdam from the start.

From Tom's experience, the kind of leadership you need really depends on your local situation. In Amsterdam, the age-friendly team take a low-key approach and focus on aligning their work with what is happening generally within the wider city administration. "We'd just go down and talk with a few people from the planning department, saying 'this is the age-friendly concept, this is how we think it should be developed, how do you feel about it?'" says Tom.

In order to support the development of age-friendly policies, the age-friendly team works together with the older people and incorporates their feedback into the priorities of each department. Change takes time, but after planting the seed, engagement in the age-friendly agenda started growing, and five years later, it is in writing, in policy, and in how the public space for the city should be designed for everybody, not just for the average person, but also for everyone.

"I don't think there is a simple answer on leadership, but it is all context-driven, and you need to be constantly evaluating your environment at that time to adapt your leadership."

CREATING AND COMMUNICATING A NARRATIVE

> *"We have to make time to celebrate wonderful things that we've done, whether that's in exhibitions or events, or beautiful publications or films...and then it becomes important."*

Statistical data are often used to provide evidence for population ageing and the need for action. However, people are not always motivated by data and a detailed statistical evidence-base. Instead, a clear story and a narrative about the importance of the age-friendly agenda can move people to take action. Narratives make the data and evidence relevant.

Ageism and negative assumptions about growing older can create a barrier to wider engagement with the age-friendly agenda (see Section 3, 'Tackling Ageism in a Time of Change'). Therefore, positive and empowering narratives regarding ageing and the age-friendly agenda can both challenge systemic ageism and help bring about positive change. Consequently, creating and communicating a narrative is central to age-friendly leadership.

Creating these narratives can involve age-friendly leaders tapping into the diverse range of human experiences related to ageing, asking professionals to think about their own perceptions and experiences of ageing, in addition to the ageing experiences of their loved ones.

As part of creating and communicating a narrative, it is also important to document what has been done to further the age-friendly agenda and to celebrate and share achievements (this may also help build relationships; see previous subsection). This can also be about building emblematic and eye-catching projects that clearly show the work you are doing as an age-friendly leader and that can be shared with others easily. These actions help to make age-friendly work tangible and to build your reputation as an age-friendly leader.

FOSTERING INTERSECTORAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

"You need a broad knowledge, [to be] a generalist. A jack of all trades is an ideal person in this work."

The work that needs to be conducted in order to further the age-friendly agenda is not one of a single, siloed issue or domain. In fact, as discussed in the previous sections, the age-friendly agenda encompasses a broad range of domains due to the complexity and wide-reaching nature of ageing experiences.

As a result, age-friendly leaders are required to have knowledge and awareness of a variety of issues and sectors. At an organisational level, leaders need to be able to access cross-sectoral platforms and to network with a wide group of stakeholders. Therefore, having both a broad knowledge base and networking skills renders leaders perfectly positioned to bring a range of different people around the table.

Being an age-friendly leader is about being an influencer; leaders need to be able to convince others about the reasons why the age-friendly agenda is important and persuade them to take action as a result. Considering the broad range of domains of life affected during the ageing experience, age-friendly leadership involves bringing different groups of people together, during which each participant often wants to know what advantages age-friendly work might bring to them and their interests.

Key to this is being open to a broad scope of different perspectives and ideas and using your role as an age-friendly leader to create and demonstrate the possible opportunities for collaboration. Using this skill, the aim of the role is to convince as many parties as possible that

ageing-related issues need to be part of the discussion. For example, it is important to show the ways in which the age-friendly agenda overlaps with other important agendas, such as smart technology or environment sustainability.

Consequently, becoming an age-friendly leader means building respect and credibility. This takes time, but it is also about perseverance.

"It's about being relentless and reminding them again and again, well what about? Did you remember? Have you asked older people? Just keep going until the lightbulb comes on for the others as well."

VIGNETTE 2 — ANNE BERIT RAFOSS

Anne Berit Rafoss is the Project Manager at the Centre for an Age-Friendly Norway, which is part of the National Directorate of Health.

Anne Berit uses excellent networking skills to bring people together under the national age-friendly agenda. Setting up and utilising cross-sectorial platforms at the organisational level has been key to the success of the national centre. These mechanisms bring together people from different sectors—both private and public—but also from different specialisms, such as housing, urban planning, and culture.

"Keeping ageing on the agenda means showing how it fits with other agendas," Anne Berit says.

Close collaborations with the cities and communities are fostered by raising awareness, facilitating knowledge exchange, asking 'what are the synergies?', and working toward common goals.

Particularly at the national level, where there are many competing priorities (including technology, climate, economics, and health), working toward the age-friendly agenda means influencing decision-makers and showing how age-friendly work truly is both smart development and sustainable development.

Meanwhile, at the international level, Anne Berit strives to link the work that is being conducted in Norway to the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

However, above all else, Anne Berit says that the voice of the older person is key. In Norway, through a mandated network of older people councils, knowledge is drawn from the communities up to the national level, and it is this knowledge sourced directly from the older people themselves that drives the change.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

> *"Because you never quite know where the opportunity and the leadership are actually going to take you—you never quite know which door is going to open. Lean on all of them; suddenly, one opens and, boom, you go through. And the next thing you know, it blossoms into a whole new era."*

As working toward the age-friendly agenda necessarily encompasses many dimensions, as discussed previously, there will likely be many opportunities for leaders to focus on various aspects of the work. Choosing where to focus your energies may be driven by where there is enthusiasm for collaborative working regarding ageing-related issues. Where is the noise being made? What opportunities might there be to contribute to the conversation? As a result, the ability to seize opportunities as they arise is essential for age-friendly leadership.

Conversely, there may be times when it seems more difficult to generate interest in the age-friendly agenda. When this happens in any one particular domain, the age-friendly leaders reported in the focus groups that it is often best to find another domain to work on instead. Agendas and priorities can change quickly, and opportunities come and go, so there is a need for leaders to be responsive and prepared to change their focus when new opportunities present themselves.

Here, the key to adaptability is preparedness. Being prepared with a clear and positive narrative regarding ageing—and being able to clearly articulate the benefits of engaging with the age-friendly agenda to those who are new to it—means leaders can be ready to take advantage of a wide range of opportunities as and when they arise (this will also help in creating and communicating narratives more generally; see previous subsection).

Leaders also need to be proactive and keep pushing on enough doors until one opens. With so many competing agendas and demands on people's time, it is essential to find common ground with potential stakeholders and provide them reasons to include the age-friendly agenda within their own work, such as easy victories (this will also help in building relationships and convening more generally; see previous subsection).

BEING SMART ABOUT WHERE YOU PUT YOUR EFFORTS

"If you encounter fertile soil, you do something completely different on the leadership part ... we have all been inside the policymaking process and found colleagues from other departments very much able and ready to work together."

Age-friendly leaders have to cover many different domains while usually working in small teams. Therefore, an integral part of age-friendly leadership is being smart about where you put your energy and where you direct the energy of others. One aspect of this is building on good work that has already been developed, either by yourself or others, as this is more likely to be impactful and effective. Have a good look around and find out what others are already doing well. Ask the question: 'has somebody else already done it?'

Where there is an effective innovation, replicate it—there is some great age-friendly practice already out there and in action, both nationally and across the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. Making use of resources that share best practices is essential; sometimes, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Building strong networks can also be helpful in focusing your energies, including the development of a strong network of supporters and influencers who will help in spreading the narrative regarding ageing (this will also help in building relationships and communicating narratives more generally; see previous subsections).

VIGNETTE 3 — BARBARA DOUGLAS

Barbara Douglas worked with the Elders Council of Newcastle, where she was involved in age-friendly work within the city for over 20 years.

Based in the voluntary sector, the Elders Council of Newcastle is a membership organisation of people aged 50 and over that works to promote a positive image of ageing and inspire and enable older people to be active in their local communities and the life of the city.

As well as providing strong leadership from older people themselves, the Elders Council has benefited from the relationships and collaborations with other partners in the city, notably from academia. Barbara did not believe age-friendly leadership should rest in one place and stressed the importance of relationships.

"It's never one person's responsibility—it relies on partnership and collaboration," says Barbara.

A key challenge of age-friendly leadership for Barbara was around diversity and representation and ensuring the needs of all older people were included both from the outset and at a strategic level. She felt more could be done within the agenda to find new ways of including different groups and make it easier for people from a broader range of backgrounds to both become involved in the group and participate on their own terms.

For more helpful and practical tips, the Centre for Ageing Better online article *Paul McGarry's top 10 tips for Age-friendly Communities* provides helpful advice for tackling common challenges in age-friendly work[6].

TACKLING AGEISM IN A TIME OF CHANGE

Ageism is the discrimination against people on the basis of age, and ageism against older people has been described as "prejudice against our feared future self"[7, 8].

This section aims to first acknowledge the challenges ageism presents. Then, actions that age-friendly leaders can take to effectively consider ageism in their work and advocate against it are recommended. Finally, the benefits of successfully challenging ageism are discussed.

CHALLENGES OF AGEISM FOR AGE-FRIENDLY LEADERS

Ageism is a significant barrier to age-friendly work. The WHO is currently conducting its Global Campaign to Combat Ageism, an initiative supported by its 194 Member States. This is part of the WHO's contribution toward the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030). Their work has demonstrated that ageism affects how people think, feel, and act towards others and ourselves based on age.

A main challenge for age-friendly leaders is making ageing-related issues relevant and important for people of all ages. However, ageism stops everyone—politicians, policymakers, and laypeople of all ages—from becoming involved in the age-friendly agenda.

"Neither politicians nor people in charge really want to think about the fact that they are getting older, this is not a sexy topic to do. It's so much cooler with climate or digitalisation or other sorts of developmental issues."

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING AGEISM

Age-friendly leaders have a crucial role to play in combatting ageism. This can be done by being a voice and speaking out in the face of overt ageism at all levels. However, another important aspect is developing an understanding and maintaining an awareness of the ways in which society can treat older people unfairly. This includes the ways in which ageism in society can compound the negative effects of economic inequalities, racism, the gender divide, and other issues. Consideration of these aspects while carrying out the work involved in age-friendly leadership is essential.

Age-friendly leaders should be aware that their efforts may encounter resistance rooted in ageism. It is essential to anticipate and plan for such challenges, allowing for effective responses that actively counter ageist attitudes and behaviours. This proactive approach is integral to effective leadership in this domain.

In addition, the inclusion of older people themselves—particularly those from different backgrounds—in combatting ageism is essential. This can include doing things that dispel ageist stereotypes and combatting ageism by showing organisations that they are missing out on positive opportunities if they fail to consider older people.

Furthermore, there is a general perception that younger generations do not see the ageing population as 'their problem'. Challenging ageism starts by challenging the narrative, and this can be achieved by working with people of all ages. Highlighting the diversity within the older population, which is reflected in all age groups, is one mechanism to address the polarisation between generations. Moving forward, opportunities and spaces need to be created for improved intergenerational contact.

> *"We've worked together with young people, and I think that's very important... if you segregate too much, you'll never get there. You need to be inclusive... I would be very much in favour in including younger people in the work that we do just because they have their whole life in front of them, use that knowledge."*

It is also important to recognise that ageism works both ways and perpetuates negative stereotypes of younger generations too. Challenging ageism against both younger and older generations may provide increased opportunities for positive intergenerational contact and highlight common ground.

> *"It's hard sometimes to make the argument about the ageing population, and the needs of ageing population, when the younger population is growing up in such a difficult time in the world's history, with their future, their feelings so despondent about their future. So, I think that intergenerational contact is a big issue that we haven't dealt with enough in the age-friendly community space and I think we need to."*

In conclusion, population ageing and demographic change are key features of our current societies. However, these changes are also happening in the context of the ongoing poly-crisis of environmental, health, and economic turmoil. Through intergenerational connection, age-friendly leadership needs to cross all ages and domains to create sustainable age-friendly communities for both present and future generations.

CONCLUSIONS

This guide argues for the importance of leadership in advancing the age-friendly agenda, building from work conducted by the WHO. In the first section, 'Advocating for Age-Friendly Leadership', leadership is argued to be vitally important as it creates opportunities for providing a clear voice, creating a narrative, uniting people, building teams across disciplines, identifying and promoting the work of others, and cultivating qualities of collaboration and responsibility, all of which are highly beneficial for the age-friendly agenda. The ways in which age-friendly leadership differs from leadership in many other agendas were also discussed, including the necessity of addressing the challenges and opportunities of working on and advocating for ageing-related issues.

The guide also aimed to answer the question of what effective age-friendly leadership looks like in practice. Insights from participants in this research revealed that effective age-friendly leaders excel in relationship-building, convening stakeholders, crafting and communicating compelling narratives, fostering intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration, seizing opportunities strategically, and directing efforts wisely.

The final section, 'Tackling Ageism in a Time of Change', discussed the challenges posed by ageism that age-friendly leaders must recognise and navigate. Age-friendly leaders can counteract ageism by taking proactive steps to effectively consider ageism in their work and advocate against it. This includes exposing the ways in which society can treat older people unfairly and how these injustices intersect with other forms of inequality.

Ultimately, the future success of age-friendly work hinges on visionary leadership that actively champions inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainable practices for all generations, with a particular focus on older people. This requires models of leadership which confront and counter ageism, fostering an environment where individuals at every level can participate meaningfully in society. By addressing societal injustices and embracing intergenerational and interdisciplinary collaboration, age-friendly leaders pave the way for a more equitable and vibrant future.

"Ageing is everyone's business but no one's responsibility. You need someone responsible—age friendly leadership."

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization (2023). *National Programmes for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities: A Guide.* Geneva, Switzerland.

2. Rémillard-Boilard, S. I. (2020). *Developing Age-Friendly Cities: A Public Policy Perspective.* The University of Manchester.

3. Alley, D., Liebig, P., Pynoos, J., Banerjee, T., and Choi, I.H. (2007). *Creating Elder-Friendly Communities: Preparations for an Aging Society. Journal of Gerontological Social Work,* 49(1-2), pp.1-18.

4. World Health Organization (2007). *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide.* Geneva, Switzerland.

5. Buffel, T. and Phillipson, C. (2024). *Ageing in Place in Urban Environments: Critical Perspectives.* Taylor & Francis.

6. Centre for Ageing Better (2022). *Paul McGarry's top 10 tips for Age-friendly Communities.* Available online at: https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/paul-mcgarrys-top-10-tips-age-friendly-communities.

7. Nelson, T.D. (2005). *Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self. Journal of Social Issues,* 61(2), pp.207-221.

8. Centre for Ageing Better (2021). *Challenging ageism. A guide to talking about ageing and older age.* Available online at: https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Challenging-ageism-guide-talking-ageing-older-age.pdf

FURTHER READING

For further reading, please visit the Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group (MUARG) website at: **www.micra.manchester.ac.uk/muarg**