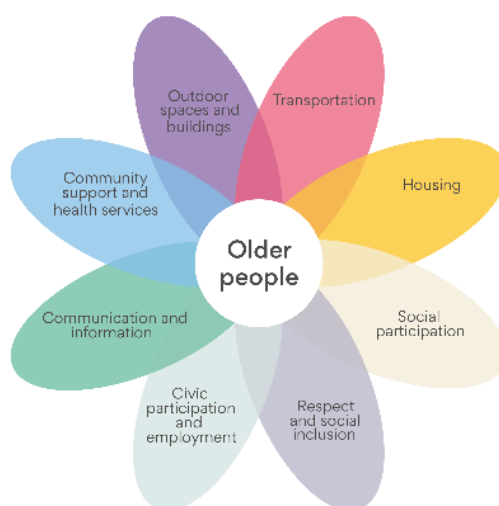


## Scottish Older People's Assembly

### An Update on Age-friendly Communities in Scotland: July 2023

#### 1. Introduction

1.1. This Briefing Paper provides an update on progress with the Development of Age-friendly Communities (AfCs) in Scotland. The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) is leading on work to increase the number of areas in Scotland that are AfCs to achieve better outcomes for people in and approaching later life. This is based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-friendly Communities Framework with its eight essential features illustrated below:



Source: Centre for Ageing Better

1.2. The main foundation of an AfC is ensuring that older people are at the heart of helping to shape the place and communities they live in. AfCs focus on older people as an asset whose voice and actions are vital to contribute to thriving communities. An AfC requires a collaborative approach involving older people, local groups, councils, businesses, health, leisure and well-being services as well as the voluntary sector.

1.3. At a UK level there is a well-developed network of Age-Friendly Communities supported by the Centre for Ageing Better who are affiliated to the WHO global network. Across the UK there are around 60 places who are AfCs with most of these in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. **There are currently two areas in Scotland**

**who are Age-friendly, South Lanarkshire and South Ayrshire, with both members of the UK Network of AfCs.** The challenge for us in Scotland is to develop more AfCs and allow our older people to thrive in their communities in this, the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing.

## **2. Progress in Scotland**

- 2.1. Over the past eighteen months SOPA have been raising the profile of AfCs across Scotland funded by the Tudor Trust. However, with continued funding from the Tudor Trust secured we are ready to take further strides forward in delivering more AfCs in Scotland. SOPA have recently appointed a new post of AfC Project Co-ordinator (Tony Donohoe – [tony@scotopa.org.uk](mailto:tony@scotopa.org.uk)) to progress our ambitious plan to increase the number of AfCs in Scotland. We are keen to ramp up the momentum in generating interest among other areas and stakeholders. We are planning on establishing relationships and networks in Scotland that can be used as a support base to encourage more areas to become AfCs. We will also work closely with the Centre for Better Ageing UK network to assist more areas in Scotland.
- 2.2. As mentioned above, there are two areas in Scotland that are most advanced with becoming an AfC. In South Lanarkshire<sup>i</sup> the Council has worked closely with Seniors Together and older people to achieve this and has recently submitted its final letter of commitment to the WHO. It is the first Council area in Scotland to become an AfC. In South Ayrshire, Voluntary Action South Ayrshire, the Council and other partners have also recently committed to becoming an AfC. We anticipate that the experience of these leading areas can be harnessed to help other areas in Scotland become AfCs. In the past other areas have expressed an interest in becoming an AfC and we would like to rekindle this – for example North Ayrshire, City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and Moray.
- 2.3. In addition, there are twenty Local Authority areas in Scotland who have appointed Older Peoples' Champions (OPC) supported by Age Scotland<sup>ii</sup> and SOPA. These are elected councillors who have taken on the role of providing a tangible link between older people and the Council in their area. This includes identifying the issues and priorities that are important to older people and ensuring their voice is heard at decision-making level. We view these areas as potentially ripe for the development of AfCs given the political commitment that already exists.

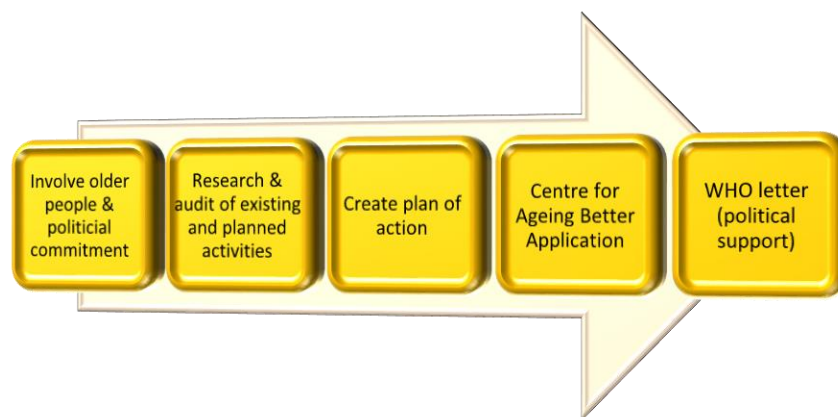
## **3. Why should my LA area become an Age-friendly Community?**

- 3.1. Nationally, demographic projections show that the proportion of the population in older age groups is going to continue to rise over the next few years. For example, over the period 2018-28 Scotland is projected to see a 25.4% rise in those aged 75yrs+, with all LA areas experiencing a rise to one degree or another. Across Scotland we would like to see communities where demographic change is seen in a

positive light and where people can age well and enjoy a good later life. Age-friendly communities are a vital component in making this a reality. They provide a vehicle to ensure that older people can contribute and participate in society allowing them to lead healthy and active lives.

3.2. Becoming an AfC has additional benefits in terms of furthering commitments to equalities, plan services better and allows your area to become part of a worldwide movement with the ability to share expertise and practice both within the UK and across the globe. Most of all it will assist in improving the lives of older people in your area. It is important to note while political commitment is generally viewed as a prerequisite that the catalyst and momentum to drive forward AfCs can come from various sources such as the voluntary sector within your area.

3.3. The steps to becoming an AfC are relatively simple including:



3.4. The most important aspect of this is that you **must** have well-developed or plan to develop structures to involve older people in the creation of your AfC. This is the key factor in ensuring that the initial plan is successful and there is a foundation for continuing to improve the age-friendliness of your area and community.

3.5. Based on the WHO eight key features of an AfC we have identified some broad activities below which your area may be undertaking that fit with the AfC approach. This is simply to illustrate examples that can provide a basis for other Local Authority areas to think about developing their AfC:

- Welfare benefits and advice initiatives for older people.
- Services designed to combat isolation and loneliness.
- Specific staff training or other training programmes that focus on Ageism.
- The existence of an older persons' network or other groups that directly influence Community Plans or Health & Social Care Plans.
- Services promoting digital inclusion among older people.
- New housing or other property design standards that have been developed in partnership with older people.

- Initiatives for older people to access leisure or health and well-being services.
- Initiatives with local employers encouraging older people back into employment.

#### 4. Next Steps

4.1. If you are a voluntary organisation, Councillor, Local Authority, Health & Social Care Partnership or other organisation representing older people and are interested in finding out more about becoming part of the growing network of AfCs across Scotland you should contact our **AfC Project Co-ordinator, Tony Donohoe**:

- Email at [tony@scotopa.org.uk](mailto:tony@scotopa.org.uk)
- Mobile phone 07745 355234

4.2. In terms of the next steps for the project SOPA are intending to establish a Scottish network or working group to bring together areas across Scotland that would like to work towards becoming an AfC. The aim will be to share practice on how to achieve this and support areas to do this in conjunction with the UK Network of AfCs. **Please contact Tony Donohoe if you would be interested in joining this group.**

4.3. The best current resource to learn more about AfCs in the UK is through the Centre for Ageing Better which can be found here [Centre for Ageing Better | Action today for all our tomorrows \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](https://ageing-better.org.uk). The Scottish Older People's Assembly website can be found here [SOPA | Home \(scotopa.org.uk\)](https://scotopa.org.uk).

---

<sup>i</sup> [Council first in Scotland to be Age Friendly Community - South Lanarkshire View](#)

<sup>ii</sup> [Older People's Champions | Age Scotland \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://ageuk.org.uk)