Developing age-friendly cities

- Population ageing and urbanisation are global trends. WHO has responded with its Age-Friendly Cities (AFC) initiative, and a growing number of urban settings are engaging in efforts to enhance their age-friendliness.

- NIHR SPHR researchers have developed an evaluation tool that can help to ensure that AFC initiatives are evidence-based.

- The application of the tool in Liverpool has provided insights that can inform the city’s future policy and practice on age-friendliness.

- The tool complements existing assessment frameworks and can be adapted to different contexts.

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Key issues

- Recent years have seen a proliferation of initiatives worldwide to enhance the age-friendliness of urban settings.
- Through its AFC programme, the WHO has played a leading role in supporting relevant efforts.
- Cities seeking to become more age-friendly need reliable ways of monitoring and evaluating their work.
- Approaches to the evaluation of AFCs should be evidence-based, capture the complexity of age-friendliness, and ensure a clear presentation of findings that can inform subsequent action.

What we did

The study was based on fieldwork in Liverpool/UK, which had pledged its commitment to the WHO AFC initiative in 2012. Alongside a focus on the city’s overall AFC approach, it involved a case study of falls as a local health priority.

SPHR researchers conducted interviews with city stakeholders in policy and practice, and interviews and focus groups with older people. They analysed routine falls data and carried out an umbrella review of effective falls-related interventions.

Findings and implications

- The study has produced an evidence-based evaluation tool for age-friendly initiatives that can be adapted to different contexts, and which complements existing AFC assessment frameworks.
- The tool can be used by a steering group of city stakeholders in collaboration with researchers to evaluate or plan local initiatives.
- Its use in Liverpool has provided insights that can inform the city’s future age-friendly policy and practice.

What next?

The tool is being piloted in different sites.

A study to adapt it to dementia-friendly initiatives is under way.

Opportunities for applying the tool in a comparative evaluation are being explored.

References:

Publications on the development of the tool, its application in Liverpool, and the umbrella review are under review or in preparation

SPHR Contact/Find out more about this study at:

http://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/ageing-well/projects/developing-age-friendly-towns-and-cities/

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“We commend such efforts to create evaluation tools that are sensitive to local and regional contexts.” (P. Rosenberg, WHO)