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# A MANIFESTO FOR ALL-AGE FRIENDLY CITIES

Working Paper 2 of the Bristol All-Age-Friendly City Group



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## Preface

The Bristol All-Age Friendly City project began in Spring-Summer 2014. The initial programme of work was designed to bring people in the city together, including artists, local policy makers, computer scientists, community organisations and practitioners working with children and older people, to imagine the future city from the perspective of children and older adults - groups who are often overlooked in the design and planning of cities today. Working paper 1 was published after this phase. In it, we outlined why designing the All Age Friendly city is an urgent contemporary concern, the resources available to achieve this goal and four key areas for future work and development.

In this second working paper we return to some of these issues. In Spring-Summer 2015 we conducted an analysis of the 'Child Friendly City' and 'Age Friendly City' metrics in order to identify shared ideas and map missing issues in both. A subsequent event brought together those in the city who were already actively seeking to develop a 'child' and 'age' friendly city - but who were currently working largely in silos. In this paper we elaborate our shared vision of what might constitute an 'All-Age friendly' city and discuss possible next steps for this group and others emerging across the UK and internationally.

We are grateful to the TSB/Future Cities Catapult for funding the workshops and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for enabling Keri's involvement as part of her Connected Communities Leadership Fellowship.

We are also grateful to the contributors to the workshops who gave their ideas and experience so generously. We want to continue these conversations and look forward to hearing from others who are interested in sharing these ideas nationally and globally.

**Helen Manchester & Keri Facer**  
Graduate School of Education  
University of Bristol

## Contributors

The following people contributed to the discussions and workshops that informed this manifesto.

Project Lead for Future Cities Catapult

**Caroline Twigg**

**Simon Hankins** (Southville Community Development Association)

**Ben Barker** (Community activist, Greater Bedminster Partnership)

**Mark Baker** (Age UK, Bristol)

**Ingrid Skeels** (Playing Out and Room 13)

**Amy Harrison** (Bristol Architecture Centre)

**Alice Ferguson** (Playing Out)

**Rachel Allbless** (Bristol City Council)

**Dave Clarke** (Bristol City Council)

**Geraldine Summers** (Bristol City Council)

**Lorraine Hudson** (Hudson Sustainability Consulting)

**Jenny Barke** (Southville Community Development Association)

**Suzanne Wilson** (Bristol Futures, Bristol City Council)

# Contents

<b>WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>MAPPING CHILD AND AGE FRIENDLY CITIES</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>BUILDING ALLIANCES BETWEEN ADVOCACY GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND OLDER ADULTS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A MANIFESTO FOR ALL-AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR FUTURE CITIES?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>SO YOU WANT TO BECOME AN ALL-AGE FRIENDLY CITY?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>WHERE NEXT?</b>	<b>20</b>

## What are we up against?

### NOTES

### Why an 'All-Age-Friendly' City?

Around the world we are seeing the emergence of two parallel and unconnected movements advocating for the 'Child Friendly City' (led by UNICEF) and for the 'Age Friendly City' (led by the World Health Organisation). These movements both aim to ensure that planners, policy makers and developers design cities that take account of the interests of age groups who are too often marginalized in current policy and design processes. Both are important.

However, our belief is that in advocating for children and older adults separately we risk ignoring the fact that these groups live alongside each other, they occupy the same public spaces and have interests and needs in common. We believe that important opportunities for creating services and infrastructure that address the needs of both groups are often missed. At a time of great demographic change when traditional attitudes are increasingly challenged in treating these groups separately we also risk furthering current documented trends towards intergenerational tensions that could be potentially damaging to the wellbeing of all living in our future cities.

We know that over the last couple of decades intergenerational interaction in public spaces has diminished and positive contact reduced as children and older adults alike are encouraged to live and spend time in age-segregated spaces where physical barriers such as gates and high walls predominate. Fear and competition over resources and policies also contribute to our cities becoming increasingly segregated on generational lines.

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## Mapping Child and Age Friendly Cities

### NOTES

In Spring- Summer 2015 we conducted an analysis of the 'Child Friendly City' and 'Age Friendly City' metrics in order to identify shared ideas and map missing issues in both. Our analysis established that the metrics shared many characteristics as presented in the following chart.

Our analysis established that the metrics shared many characteristics.

Child Friendly City (UNICEF, adapted by Bristol CFC group)	Age Friendly City (WHO)
Influence decisions about their city	'Civic Participation' (influencing decisions about the city and services for older people)
Express their opinion on the city they want	'regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services'
Participate in family, community and social life	'Social Participation' (activities and events in the community are designed to actively reach out to and involve older adults)
Walk safely in the streets on their own	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings - The city spaces and buildings are adapted to the vulnerabilities and capabilities of older adults
Meet friends and play	Social Participation headings (NB – doesn't recognise 'friends')
Have green spaces for plants and animals	'green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well maintained and safe'





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Differences between the approaches were also evident in our analysis - partly explained by the nature of the organisations designing the metrics. In the Child Friendly City metrics UNICEF take a rights based approach with advocacy for and on behalf of children encouraged. This includes in built mechanisms to monitor progress against children's rights as defined by the UN convention. The approach therefore stresses children and young people's participation in decision making, a child-friendly legal framework and rights strategy, a children's budget and a need for strong advocacy on behalf of children and young people by others. The WHO Age Friendly City guidance meanwhile stresses practical solutions and issues related to health in making the city a better place for older people whilst also pointing out the importance of recognition and representation in relation to older adults in the city.

## NOTES

In looking at the two lists together issues began to surface that are missing from each.

- Housing is a primary concern for the Age Friendly Cities agenda but entirely missing from the discussions on child friendly cities. This assumes that children's rights related to housing and homes are already met through families and parents which, as we know, may not necessarily be the case. In the UK alone it is estimated that in 2015 it is estimated there were almost 100,000 children without a permanent home<sup>1</sup>.
- While the Child Friendly Cities movement is founded on a rights based agenda new approaches to recognizing and representing children differently are missing from this agenda. This is despite the fact that dominant understandings and representations of children and young people often make assumptions about their lack of competence and capacity to engage with the city.
- Any consideration of children as workers is missing from the 'child friendly city' metrics despite the high numbers of children in work globally, currently standing at around 168 million children<sup>2</sup>.
- In an Age Friendly city, the heterogeneity of the population is not explicitly recognized and issues related to differences between social groups are missing. For instance, there is no mention of equality of opportunity in reference to access to services regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.
- In the Age Friendly city agenda 'participation' focuses on public events and activities outside the home, particularly highlighting the 'risk' of social isolation rather than the rights to family life.

While the Child Friendly Cities movement is founded on a rights based agenda new approaches to recognizing and representing children differently are missing from this agenda.

<sup>1</sup>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34346908>

<sup>2</sup>  
ILO-IPEC, 2013, see <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>

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- There is a focus on play and friends in the Child Friendly city agenda whereas these are not mentioned in the Age friendly city approach perhaps reflecting taken for granted assumptions about how older people might want to spend their leisure time. The unwritten assumptions here suggest the prevalence of social isolation for older people and the need to counter this – an issue that is rarely discussed in relation to young people even though it is a particular concern in adolescence.

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## Building alliances between advocacy groups for children and older adults

### NOTES

Following our work to analyse these similarities and differences the Bristol All Age Friendly City group brought together those in the city who were already actively seeking to develop a 'child' and 'age' friendly city - but who were currently working largely in silos. At the workshop we discussed the analysis of the metrics to ask whether the commonalities and differences described above made sense. Using this as a starting point we worked together to identify recommendations and principles for an All Age Friendly future city which we present here as a manifesto for discussion.

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# Manifesto for an All Age Friendly City

The Manifesto for an All Age Friendly Future City has emerged from the Bristol All Age Friendly City working group discussions and research. We are advocating for the design and development of services, infrastructures and spaces in the city that acknowledge the need for intergenerational solidarity.



**The Bristol All Age Friendly City working group believes that a future All Age Friendly City will be characterized by:**

- 1** A commitment to challenging assumptions about people based on age
- 2** Representation and voice of children, young people and senior citizens in democratic processes and citizenship while recognising the heterogeneity of these groups
- 3** The experience and perception of safety in the city, including physical, economic and psychological safety, for children, young people and senior citizens
- 4** A sense of ownership of the city, in particular its public spaces and buildings, and feelings of belonging, being considered and being welcome in these spaces
- 5** A liveable city, that encourages independent mobility and positive, pleasurable participation in public and cultural life
- 6** Planning processes and advocates who encourage beneficial opportunities for interactions between children, young people and older adults in all areas of education, health, family and civic life
- 7** Recognition that poverty and inequality have significant negative impacts upon people of all ages

## NOTES

**Rationale behind the Manifesto**

Here we outline the arguments and ideas that underpin the manifesto and the reasons why both child-friendly city and age friendly city groups identified these issues as important.

**A commitment to challenging assumptions about people based on age**

Age is a concept that is assumed to refer to a biological reality, however assumptions about people based on their age are social constructs which therefore can be challenged. There are many misconceptions about older and younger people and participants in our workshops were keen that children were not seen as useless and assumed to be incapable of engaging in decision making and doing and older people only seen as a 'burden' on society. Adults are often surprised by children's capacity to get involved in tasks they thought were beyond them and we know that older people are already offering their time to volunteer and take on caring responsibilities that suggest they are making significant contributions to society through the gift economy that are often ignored.

**Representation and voice of children, young people and senior citizens in democratic processes and citizenship while recognising the heterogeneity of these groups**

Children and older people are more likely than other groups to be dependent on government resources, particularly in relation to education and healthcare, however their voices are rarely heard in decision making processes. Being clear that young people and older people should have protected rights in relation to involvement in democratic processes and decision making is vital. However also bringing older people and younger people together to make decisions may result in a clearer focus on intergenerational concerns and our interdependence. This will likely be important in relation to many decision

Age is a concept that is assumed to refer to a biological reality, however assumptions about people based on their age are social constructs which therefore can be challenged.

## NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

making processes including those related to urban planning – for instance when decisions are made on the creation of older adult villages or other kinds of gated communities in the city. There is also a need to avoid pathologising older people and children as being defined only by their generational group identity – culture, gender, sexual orientation and socioeconomic identities also need to be considered.

**The experience and perception of safety in the city, including physical, economic and psychological safety, for children, young people and senior citizens**

Older people and children share concerns over fear of crime and access to ‘safe’ public space to socialize however intergenerational interaction is often understood and discussed in relation to familial relationships. How the built environment impacts on our ability and motivation to interact with it has often been underestimated. For instance, how might the built environment encourage or discourage people from walking and cycling which are activities that also increase opportunities for social interaction? Environments can contribute to a feeling of fear or produce a sense of safety for instance a physical design can evoke fear where an open view is blocked. Feelings of powerlessness and social disintegration, in turn, promote fear of crime.

**A sense of ownership of the city, in particular its public spaces and buildings, and feelings of belonging, being considered and being welcome in these spaces**

Ageist notions affect the spatial forms created for meeting the health, housing and social needs and older and younger people. The designed environment is rarely considered in relation to either of these age groups which often has the effect of further constricting the places that they feel welcome in the city. The immediate residential environment in which older and younger people live is often important to them as they tend to be less mobile than other generational

Ageist notions affect the spatial forms created for meeting the health, housing and social needs and older and younger people.

## NOTES

groups. Therefore, it can be important to focus on change at neighbourhood level, and to understand issues from the perspective of older and younger people themselves, taking into account their own personal geographies rather than artificially constructing activities in age segregated spaces. In relation to older age there is often a withdrawal from the public sphere and for both older and younger people a feeling of being unwelcome in public space. This suggests the need to challenge ideas concerning particular places as 'appropriate' for certain age groups. We might ask how we can disrupt these age identities associated with particular places and re-imagine certain groups as being 'in place' or 'out of place' in certain settings.

**A liveable city, that encourages independent mobility and positive, pleasurable participation in public and cultural life**

There are common needs for children and young people and older adults for very low cost public transport. Children and older people share a greater reliance on public transport to get about the city and may share access difficulties, for instance, in reading timetables and worries about safety on public transport. Outdoor mobility is important for both age groups in relation to life satisfaction and increasing concerns around social isolation and loneliness. Bus companies and other commercial outfits, as well as cultural providers would be important partners in these discussions.

**Planning processes and advocates who encourage beneficial opportunities for interactions between children, young people and older adults in all areas of education, health, family and civic life**

Pervasive rhetoric of intergenerational conflict and division must be challenged. Spaces such as city centres are often relatively inaccessible and unwelcoming to older and younger people. There are currently few intergenerational spaces designed for the purposes of promoting interaction between members of different generational groups. In order to develop

Outdoor mobility is important for both age groups in relation to life satisfaction and increasing concerns around social isolation and loneliness.



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increased intergenerational insight generations need to come together to made decisions, to take action and to discuss concerns which can also support older and younger people to build mutual respect and concern for each others perspectives, cultures and concerns.

**Recognise that poverty and inequality have significant negative impacts upon people of all ages**

The gulf between the rich and poor in our cities continues to grow. Poverty and inequality have an important effect on how we experience the world and may result in qualitatively different experiences across the lifecourse in relation to, for instance, basic needs, to education and to health. Adopting a rights based approach to these issues is important in ensuring that the gaps between rich and poor can be at worst stabilised and at best narrowed.

Poverty and inequality have an important effect on how we experience the world and may result in qualitatively different experiences across the lifecourse in relation to, for instance, basic needs, to education and to health.



## So you want to become an all-age friendly city?

### NOTES

We encourage local government, civil society organisations and community groups to build alliances and develop activities in pursuit of the idea of the all age friendly city. We believe this is vital for the wellbeing of all in our future cities. A series of questions to support this work are provided below:

- How can we work across the city to challenge assumptions about older and younger people? Who might this work involve? How could we do this with older and younger people (together)?
- How can we create opportunities for intergenerational activities and shared encounter in the city?
- Where are the spaces and places in the city where older and younger people do feel a sense of belonging? Why is this the case? How/what can we learn from these spaces?
- What sites of and opportunities for intervention are there in relation to bringing young people and older adults voices together in democratic processes?
- How can we work at a strategic level to consider urban development and intergenerational relations in longer timescales taking future trends into account?
- How might we adopt a non paternalistic, co-produced approach to the design of metrics and actions based on an asset based philosophy?
- What practical steps can be taken to increase older and younger people's perceptions of safety in the city? How might working this out in intergenerational groups produce different results?

We encourage local government, civil society organisations and community groups to build alliances and develop activities in pursuit of the idea of the all age friendly city.



## Additional Resources

### NOTES

### Publications

Active Age (2012) **Tracking the development metrics to help cities and communities compare and contrast their progress on the design and implementation of age-friendly policies, strategies and interventions.**

<http://www.activeage.org/publications>

Bazalgette, L., Cheetham, P., and Grist, M. (2012) **Ageing Sociably.** London: Demos. [http://demos.co.uk/files/Ageing\\_Sociably\\_-\\_web.pdf?1342087566](http://demos.co.uk/files/Ageing_Sociably_-_web.pdf?1342087566)

Facer, K., Horner, L. and Manchester, H. (2015) **Towards the All Age Friendly City.** London: Future Cities Catapult. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281203621\\_Towards\\_the\\_All-Age\\_Friendly\\_City](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281203621_Towards_the_All-Age_Friendly_City)

Gleeson, B. and Sipe, N. (2006) **Creating Child Friendly Cities: New Perspectives and Prospects.** London: Routledge

Handler, S. (2014) **A research and evaluation framework for Age Friendly Cities.** [http://www.micra.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/A%20Research%20and%20Evaluation%20Framework%20for%20Age-friendly%20Cities\\_web%20version.pdf](http://www.micra.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/A%20Research%20and%20Evaluation%20Framework%20for%20Age-friendly%20Cities_web%20version.pdf)

Handler, S. (2014) **An Alternative Age Friendly handbook.** [http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Manchester-Age\\_Friendly\\_Neighbourhoods/Handler\(2014\)-An\\_Alternative\\_Age-Friendly\\_Handbook-Large\\_print\\_version.pdf](http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Manchester-Age_Friendly_Neighbourhoods/Handler(2014)-An_Alternative_Age-Friendly_Handbook-Large_print_version.pdf)

IPPR (2014) **The generation strain: Collective solutions to care in an ageing society.** [http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/generation-strain\\_Apr2014.pdf?noredirect=1](http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/generation-strain_Apr2014.pdf?noredirect=1)

Sheffield First Partnership and Sheffield City Council. **A city for all ages.** [http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Sheffield\\_50Plus/ACityforAllAges-26-12.pdf](http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Sheffield_50Plus/ACityforAllAges-26-12.pdf)

Thomas, G., and Thompson, G. (2004) **A Child's Place: Why Environment Matters.** London: Green Alliance/ Demos. <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/ACHildsPlace.pdf>

UNICEF (2004) **Building Child Friendly Cities: A Framework for action.** <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/cfc-framework-eng.pdf>

UNICEF/ Innocenti Research Centre (2005) **Cities with Children: Child friendly cities in Italy.** <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/cfcgb2005.pdf>

## NOTES

UNICEF (2012) **The State of the world's children: the situation of children growing up in urban areas.** <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2012/fullreport.php>

### Web Resources

Bath Child Friendly City  
<http://cfba.org.uk/making-bath-a-child-friendly-city/>

Beth Johnson Foundation: making a future for all ages  
<https://www.bjf.org.uk/>

Bristol Child Friendly City  
<http://bristolchildfriendlycity.blogspot.co.uk/>

Centre for Intergenerational Practice  
<http://www.centreforip.org.uk/>

Future Cities Catapult  
<https://futurecities.catapult.org.uk/about/>

UNICEF Child Friendly Cities resources  
<http://childfriendlycities.org/>

World Health Organisation Age Friendly City resources  
<http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/>

## The Future Cities Catapult

The Future Cities Catapult is a global centre of excellence on urban innovation, a place where cities, businesses and universities develop together the solutions cities need for a strong economy, resilient environment and an improved quality of life. It focuses on the challenge of urban integration: helping cities take a more joined-up approach to the way they plan and operate. Its central London Innovation Centre and Cities Lab provide cutting-edge facilities for cross-disciplinary innovation.

Future Cities Catapult  
Urban Innovation Centre  
1 Sekforde Street  
London  
EC1R 0BE

Contact us directly  
[info@futurecities.catapult.org.uk](mailto:info@futurecities.catapult.org.uk)

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## Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol

The University of Bristol is recognised for its engaged and collaborative research, its experimental partnerships with the city of Bristol, as well as its world-leading research in city infrastructures, aging and climate change (through the Elisabeth Blackwell and Cabot Institutes). The Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol is a centre for innovative and interdisciplinary research, addressing the challenges of learning and knowledge for a changing world. Its strengths in international education, learning beyond the classroom, and educational technologies drive research collaborations across the spectrum of future challenges, from sustainability to big data, social justice to globalisation.

Graduate School of Education  
University of Bristol  
35 Berkeley Square  
Bristol  
BS8 1JA

Contact us directly  
[Helen.Manchester@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Helen.Manchester@bristol.ac.uk)  
[Keri.Facer@Bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Keri.Facer@Bristol.ac.uk)

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