

A Design for Life

/// Urban practices for an
age-friendly city



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**A Design for Life:
Urban practices for an age-friendly city**

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Produced in collaboration with GM Ageing Hub Housing, Planning and Ageing group (www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Additional images, where not otherwise reference:

Centre for Ageing Better 'Age-Positive Images' library.

<https://ageingbetter.resourcespace.com/>

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Published in 2021

Manchester Metropolitan University Press

ISBN (e-book): 978-1-910029-71-8

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12 / Dementia in Neighbourhoods

The importance of interactions, activities and environments for improving quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers

Contributors: Sarah Campbell (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Andrew Clark (University of Salford)

Dementia is a progressive condition associated with deteriorating cognitive functions including memory loss, mood change, and problems with communication and reasoning. Dementia can lead to challenges regarding getting out and about, maintaining social connections, for some, difficulties completing everyday tasks. There are around 850,000 people affected by dementia in the UK and 61% of are living at home in the community⁴³. It is estimated that there are around 36,000 people living with dementia in Greater Manchester and this is predicted to rise to 61,000 by 2036.

Good neighbourhood design and management can support people living with dementia to live independently. This includes access to retail, health and social care services, or leisure and work spaces, but supportive neighbourhoods are also vital in maintaining health and

wellbeing. People with dementia can feel vulnerable in outdoor settings and it is important that they feel reassured and supported, while retaining a level of independence.

The ESRC/NIHR Neighbourhoods: Our People, Our Places study investigated the neighbourhood experiences of people affected by dementia and examined how neighbourhoods can be better appreciated and developed, as sites of support and engagement for people living with dementia and their carers. The work was completed in Scotland, Sweden and across Greater Manchester. The 54 people affected by dementia we were part of the project from Greater Manchester proposed a range of ways neighbourhoods mattered to them. The suggestions will not suit everybody and they are small in scale and scope; but they indicate how ordinary interactions, activities and environments can help people remain included in the social life of local places.

Remaining connected: Neighbourhoods are about people as well as places. Local relationships can provide low-level everyday support and assistance in times of need. Neighbours can be a useful point of call, from taking out household waste to keeping a watchful eye on others.

Keeping up with routines: Routines can help maintain a sense of local familiarity and involved a range of seemingly ordinary activities, from a short walk along a

familiar route to visiting the same cafés and shops. This can enable people to become recognized locally and contribute to a sense of belonging. Local businesses can make customers feel welcome, providing assistance with money, help making purchases, or just by being patient or letting someone sit for a while on their premises.

Being kind: Acts of kindness are often carried out without comment and enable people to continue to live independently. People living with dementia reciprocate support and play their own role in supporting the social life of local places, for example by caring about the local environment, frequenting local shops, or saying hello to others in the street.

Staying in: For those less able to get out and about it is still possible to enjoy connections to others through visitors to their home or chatting to a neighbour over a garden fence. Sitting in the front garden or near a window are small ways in which people can feel more connected to others and enable them to enjoy outdoor sounds or the feel of sunshine through a window.

Further reading and funding information:

This work was supported by the ESRC (part of UK Research and Innovation) and the NIHR. It is taken from work programme 4 of the Neighbourhoods and Dementia mixed-methods study (<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/neighbourhoods-and-dementia/>)



A Design For Life: Urban practices for an age-friendly city is a guide for architects, planners, developers and policy-makers about their role in addressing the changing needs and aspirations of an ageing society. Through essays and case studies, this pocketbook highlights the opportunities that arise when urban design professionals proactively challenge common stereotypes about the ageing process, and work together to develop practices, policies and designs that value older people as diverse, intersectional citizens.

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