



## Bristol Health and Wellbeing Board

Title of Report:	<b>Building an Age Friendly City</b>
Author (including organisation):	<b>Carly Urbanski, Head of Programme, Bristol Ageing Better, Age UK Bristol</b>
Date of Board meeting:	<b>March 18<sup>th</sup></b>
Purpose:	Decision

### 1. Executive Summary

Loneliness and isolation is a substantial issue for older people in Bristol and is closely linked to pressures on health, social care and community services. The Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) programme adopted a whole-system, age friendly, test-and-learn approach to identify solutions. The UWE-led evaluation has identified statistically significant improvements for people across twelve health and psycho-social measures (1). BAB is now funded for a final year to embed the learning for local and national service development, as well as incorporating the best of the national Ageing Better learning back into Bristol. We want to ensure that Bristol benefits from our findings and applies the learning to help the city recover from the pandemic.

The Coronavirus has had an impact on older people that will last well beyond the pandemic. Learning from the BAB programme on how to tackle social isolation and the effects it has on older people can inform us in how to reduce these impacts and lessen health inequalities. The HWB is requested to:

- Oversee a programme of work to utilise the learning from the BAB programme, taking an age-friendly approach to improve the health and wellbeing of older people post Covid-19.
- Work with the City Office to champion learning from the BAB programme and urge each thematic board to incorporate age-friendly targets in the One City Plan. A whole-system approach is necessary to enable the change needed.
- Utilise the BAB team to support the work programme until March 2022.
- Consider how the work of the BAB programme could be enabled to continue after April 2022 as part of a whole city approach.

### 2. Purpose of the Paper

Investment in early intervention and prevention can have benefits for people's health and longevity and a corresponding reduction in the need for more expensive intervention by health and social care. To support preventative work, there is a need to invest in social infrastructure to change how people connect with each other and the spaces in which they live and work. The BAB programme has 6 years of learning to support the required changes in the city. A whole-system approach, embedding age-friendly practices into all aspects of an older person's life, requires us to focus on improvements in housing, connectivity, learning, environment, economy, culture and intergenerational relationships as well as health and wellbeing.

Age-friendly cities have been found to optimise opportunities for health, participation and security to enhance quality of life as we grow older. BAB has practical evidence of how to move forward post COVID-19, building back the city by creating connections and enabling people to stay active and engaged as they age.

1. Mat Jones et al. BAB Outcomes Report, UWE 2021.

2. Center for Ageing Better. 2020. <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/community-spirit-survey.pdf>

3. The Kings Fund, Feb 2021. COVID-19 recovery and resilience: what can health and care learn from other disasters?

The BAB team have the capacity to take concerted action over the next year to embed learning in the most effective ways. We need the help of the Health & Wellbeing Board to make this happen.

### **3. Background and evidence base**

In the past year, due to the pandemic, we have seen people more disconnected and isolated than ever before, with huge impacts on the older population and the largest effects on mental health still to be seen. Research from the Centre for Ageing Better demonstrates that there is a real difference in people aged 50-69 who are 'living comfortably' versus those who are 'struggling to get by' (2). The latter, have lower levels of contact with others, feel less of a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood, and are less likely to be aware of the local voluntary groups offering to help. While all of this might have been true before, it has been at an all-time high since the start of the pandemic.

Furthermore, a divide between the ages is at risk of growing as a result of the way that age has framed policy during the pandemic. There is a need to ensure intergenerational understanding given that younger people have also suffered as a result of the pandemic. Now more than ever, we can demonstrate how our BAB evidence and age-friendly agenda are vital for ensuring that post COVID-19 we are able to reconnect people to their surroundings.

The BAB programme has had statistically significant positive impacts on social and emotional wellbeing, and a very positive impact on the overall health of the participants (1). BAB's evidence can be used to ensure that older people are able to reconnect to their communities and that Bristol is able to build back stronger than before.

### **4. Community/stakeholder engagement**

The BAB programme was co-produced with older people from original concepts through to delivery and evaluation. Local stakeholder engagement was also undertaken with:

- Focus groups of older people, consultation with older people, projects led by older people, older people as volunteers and researchers. Our Programme Board is chaired by Judith Brown, Ambassador for Bristol Older People's Forum
- The City Office, Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health (Bristol City Council), Adult Social Care (Bristol City Council), wider city council and community health providers
- Key funders across the city including Bristol Older People's Funding Alliance
- The voluntary sector via the BAB Partnership that enabled networking and learning as well as via funded 'test and learn' projects
- The business sector.

### **5. Recommendations**

With both the One City Plan and your Plan on a Page having included actions around this work previously, the foundation has been laid, however, now is the time to progress it further. The Health & Wellbeing Board is asked to now actively promote the use of BAB learning in improving older people's lives post COVID and in building resilience in communities by:

- Having oversight of a work programme to 'build back better' by working towards an age-friendly city. BAB would undertake the work for this programme, but we need the HWB to champion and host it to ensure whole-system impact.

1. Mat Jones et al. BAB Outcomes Report, UWE 2021.

2. Center for Ageing Better. 2020. <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/community-spirit-survey.pdf>

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- Calling for cross-sector support from city leaders via the One City thematic boards, to build an age-friendly city, encouraging them to set appropriate targets in their section of the One City Plan.

## 6. City Benefits

The BAB programme took a **whole-system** approach to tackling social isolation, with a focus on the importance of 'creating the conditions' for change. Building an age-friendly city is about ensuring longer term sustainability. Change that has cross-sector support is key. Bristol's One City Plan offers the potential to make systemic change over time.

We worked with a very **broad range of stakeholders**, with a view of enabling whole-system and cross-sector approaches. There is a need to ensure that responses to the pandemic do not fragment Bristol's approach. BAB's learning can unify efforts by different organisations and sectors.

BAB learning has been **co-produced with older people** and can inform a recovery from the pandemic that also empowers them and their communities. People's feelings of connectedness have been boosted by helping each other during the pandemic and can continue to play a part in recovery. Our learning shows the value of incorporating direct community empowerment in constructing effective short and long term responses to the pandemic.

Research by The Kings Fund shows that the path to recovery post COVID is not a linear one and people will need a **range of services** in the years to come, from support to access the community and activities focused on wellbeing through to the provision of mental health support (3). BAB has funded this type of support and has evaluation to inform a longer term plan for funding. The BAB programme reached a significant number of older people from low income and deprived communities and also engaged with older people from BAME communities and LGBTQ communities. Our learning is informed by co-production with a diverse range of older Bristolians.

## 7. Financial and Legal Implications

## 8. Appendices

BAB Outcomes Report

1. Mat Jones et al. BAB Outcomes Report, UWE 2021.
2. Center for Ageing Better. 2020. <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/community-spirit-survey.pdf>
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