



# Creating a Healthy City in Belfast

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# WHO European Healthy Cities Network



- Currently consists of **1400 cities / 165 million people** supported by National Healthy Cities Networks in 30 countries
- 78 WHO flagship designated cities, plus 18 applicant cities = **96 cities in total**
- Now in Phase VII (2019 - 2025) the network was founded in 1988 - it has been running for **30 years**



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# WHO European Healthy Cities Network Phase VII (2019–2025)



## Programmes

- Promoting Healthy Transport
- Greening the City
- Community Prosperity
- Increasing Knowledge and Capacity Building
- Maximising Learning & Knowledge Exchange from Global, European and other networks



Belfast Healthy Cities Strategic Plan

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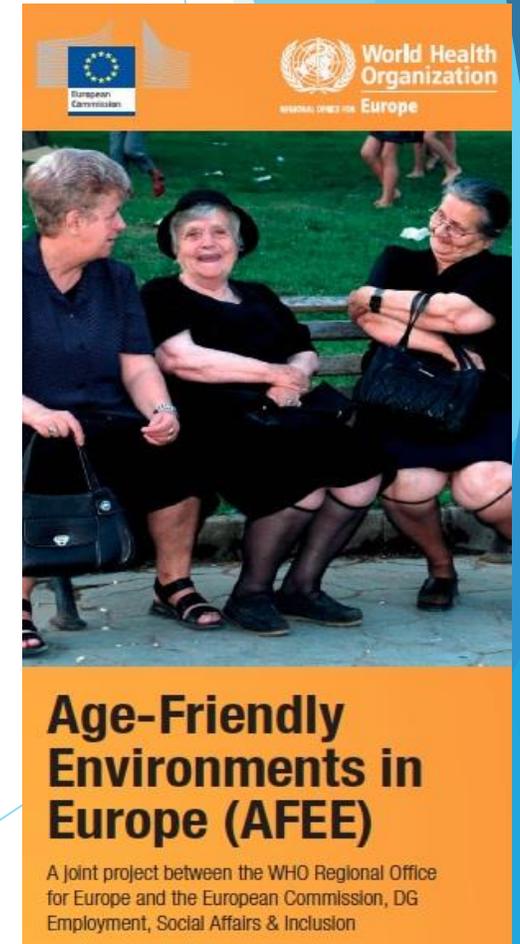
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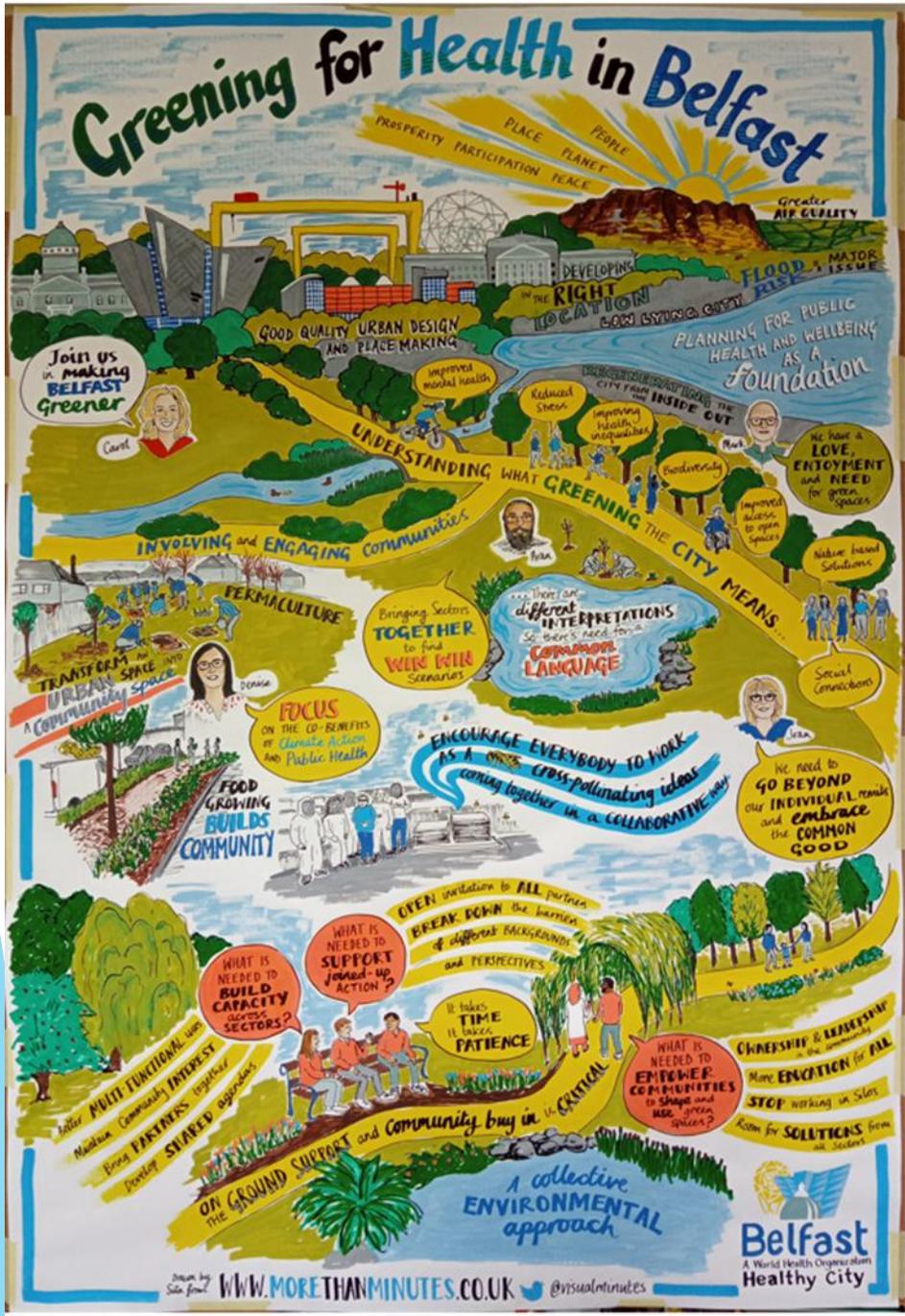


# Main Challenges in Europe

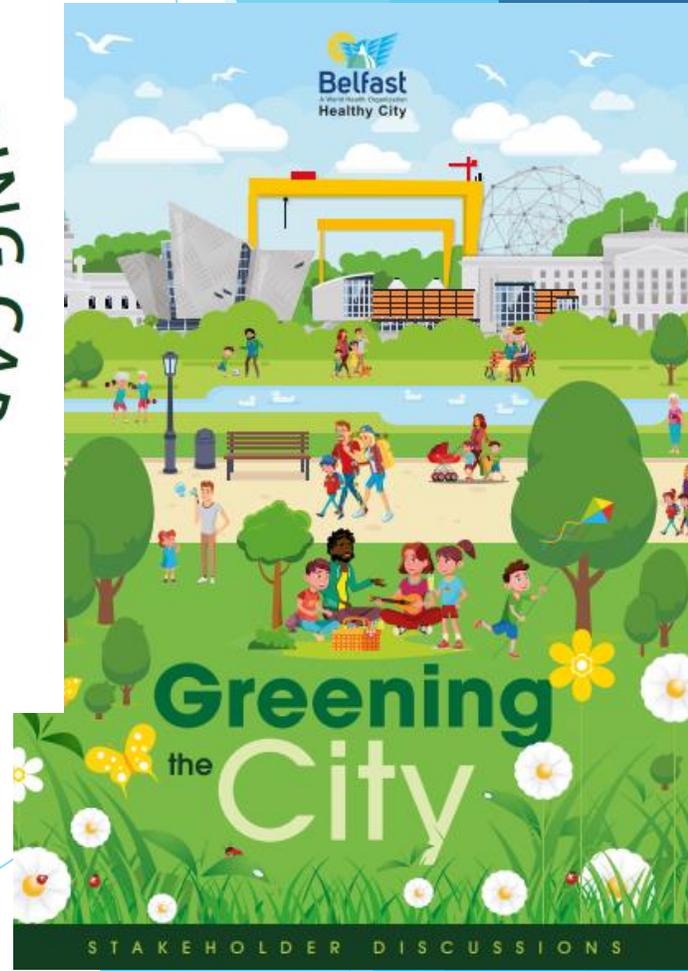
- ▶ Ageing populations
- ▶ Climate change
- ▶ Environmental challenges
- ▶ Inequalities, economic & social challenges
- ▶ Migration & urbanisation
- ▶ Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

**COVID-19 lens**





**BUILDING CAPACITY**



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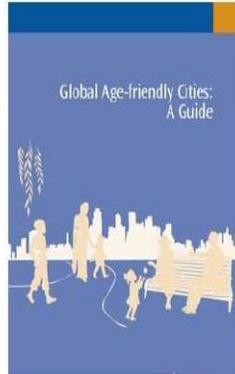
# Older People - Walkability Assessments



## Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide

WHO Guide outlines a framework for assessing the age-friendliness of a city

WHO Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities



**Belfast Healthy Cities**  
Age-friendly Walkability Assessment Questionnaire

**Outdoor spaces – local streets & pavements**

General impression of the area:	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Cleanliness					
Overall appeal					
Pavements:	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Well maintained with few cracks					
Free of obstruction –cars, bins etc					
Non-slip					
Wide enough for wheelchairs or for safely passing pedestrians					
Dropped curbs to crossings					



sthealthy

Walking Belfast: Older People's Views  
Report on developing a walkability assessment tool  
October 2016



## Resilience of age-friendly environments during the COVID-19 pandemic Lessons learnt from 12 European cities

The COVID-19 pandemic has put not only health systems, but also cities and communities, to the test. Age-friendly environments have played a key role in implementing timely measures to mitigate risks and support citizens. Older people carried a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 deaths and were strongly affected by restrictive measures to contain the spread of the pandemic.

### A PROJECT WITH THE HEALTHY AGEING TASK FORCE

The WHO Regional Office for Europe collaborated with 12 cities of the Healthy Ageing Task Force of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network to identify the main challenges facing older people and their city leaders during the pandemic. Ideas about resilience and successful ways to adapt were exchanged.

### MAIN CHALLENGES

**Survival**  
Pre-existing health problems are more prevalent in older people and increase the risk of death from COVID-19. Cities and communities were challenged to develop quick, effective and flexible protection for those most susceptible to dying from COVID-19 without isolating and stigmatizing older people.

**Equity**  
Neighbourhood-based inequalities deepened during the pandemic, posing difficulties for many low-income neighbourhoods.

**Sustainable adaptations**  
Lockdowns reduced transmission of COVID-19 but led to isolation, eroding mental health. The challenge now is to adapt lives to a so-called new normal.

**Voice**  
The need for quick decisions often led to the voices of older people being overlooked.

### MULTILEVEL RESPONSE

**WHO**  
WHO headquarters and the WHO Regional Office for Europe synthesized the science on the virus and vaccines and disseminated results and recommendations to national governments.

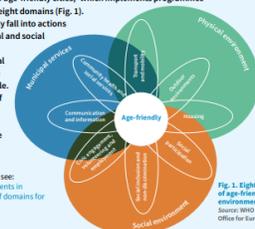
**Whole of government**  
National governments and public health agencies partnered city governments to operationalize national responses.

**Whole of city**  
Municipalities and mayors orchestrated the monitoring of problems and introduction of effective city responses and implemented the national response via key agencies from many sectors.

### AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

Investment in building age-friendly environments prior to the pandemic strengthened the capacity of cities and communities to adapt quickly and support older people. Age-friendly environments are inspired by the WHO global guide to age-friendly cities, which implements programmes and actions across eight domains (Fig. 1). The domains broadly fall into actions on adapting physical and social environments and enhancing municipal services to meet the needs of older people. Investment in any of these action areas can support older people and promote healthy ageing over the life-course.

For more information, see: Age-friendly environments in Europe: a handbook of domains for policy action\*



### CITY LEADERSHIP

Age-friendly environments provide a compass for promoting health and equity as enduring core values in city policies and recovery plans. City leaders must: engage and understand; plan strategically; act and implement; and evaluate.

For more information, see: Creating age-friendly environments in Europe: a tool for policy-makers and planners\*

### LESSONS LEARNT

- City leaders have a key role in creating age-friendly environments and resilient communities.
- Investments in age-friendly environments make communities more resilient when big adaptations are needed.
- Cities and communities should redouble their efforts to overcome inequities in health that have been magnified by the pandemic.
- Intergenerational solidarity is vital to the lives and livelihoods of older people.
- Age-friendly environments support older inhabitants to flourish.
- The voices of older people need to be listened to and acted upon, including in emergency situations.

Fig. 1. Eight domains of age-friendly environments  
Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe (2).



## Age-Friendly Environments in Europe (AFEE)

A joint project between the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion



## Key strategic themes

- Infrastructure- helping people to get out and about,
- Social inclusion- promoting social connections,
- Health and wellbeing- promoting opportunities to be healthy, active and included and;
- Financial security- supporting people to manage the increasing costs of living.

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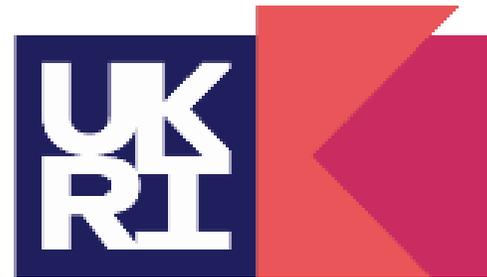
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**SPACE**

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR  
PHYSICAL & SOCIAL ACTIVITY,  
HEALTHY AGEING & COGNITIVE HEALTH

Healthy Ageing Challenge  
Social, Behavioural and  
Design Research



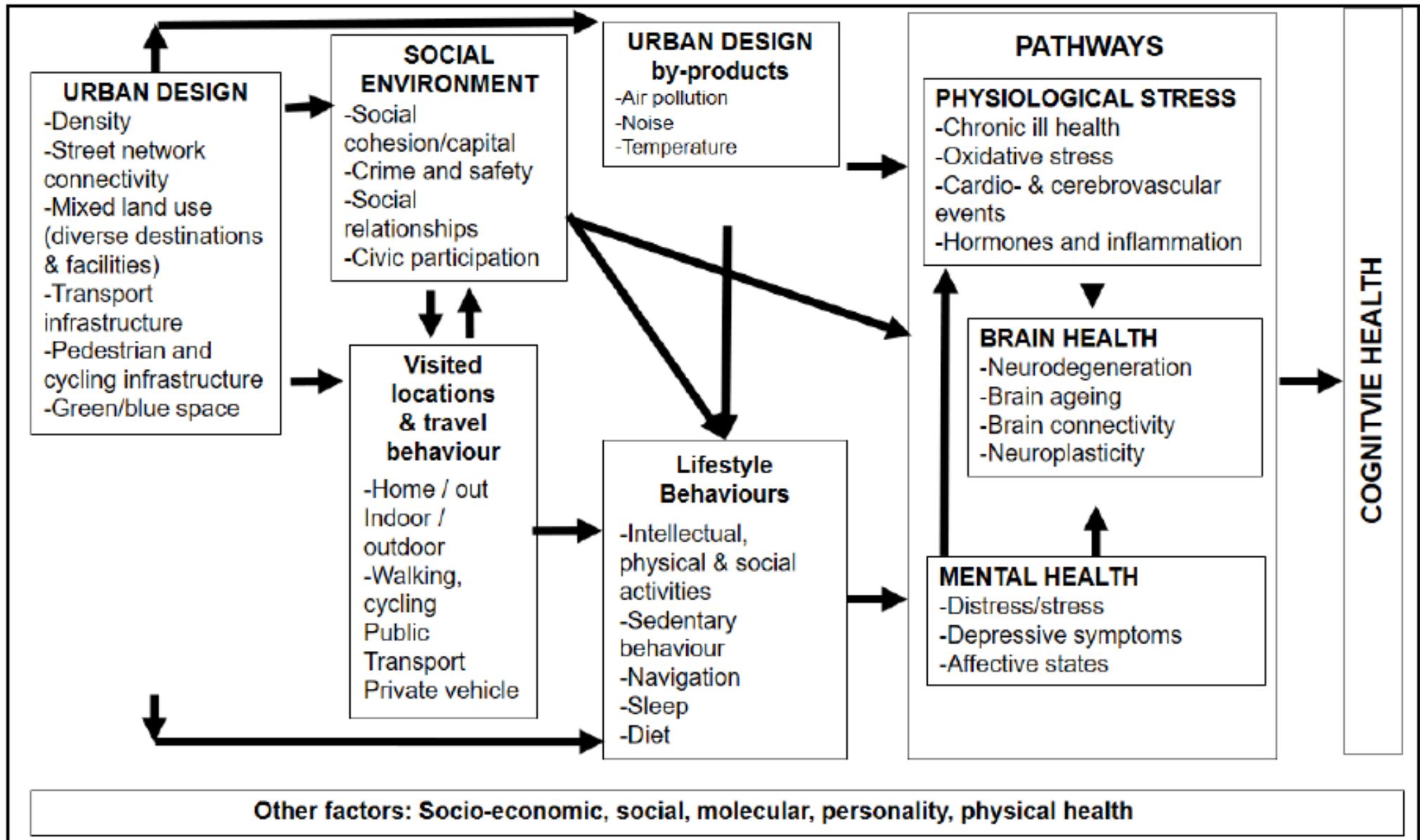
Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

### *Project aim*

The aim of SPACE is to investigate the impacts, and possible mechanistic pathways, of urban environments on healthy ageing and cognitive health, through the novel integration of multi-omics, lifestyle behaviour and environmental exposures from urban environments.

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**Figure 1: Conceptual model of the effects of urban environment on cognitive health (Adapted from Cerin et al, 2020)**

# WP 5: Knowledge synthesis, knowledge exchange, impact and communication



- ▶ Contribute to stakeholder engagement
- ▶ Liaising with relevant local, national and international partners, including the WHO European Healthy Cities Network
- ▶ Disseminating project findings internationally through the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and associated networks
- ▶ Partner in HULAP

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# Citizens' Jury on Car Dependency in Belfast

8 - 9th October 2022

#CarDependencyBelfast



## GroundsWell

Transforming our cities from the ground up



Prof Ruth Hunter



Systems  
Belfast

Prof Ruth Jepson



Co-production  
Edinburgh

Prof Sarah Rodgers



Data  
Liverpool

With co-investigators from nine universities



And partners from Government, industry and the third sector including

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# WHO Regional Committee



“Whether solidarity will come from the heart or from the brain, it is an essential dimension of future societies. Leaving no country behind, leaving no individual behind, is not a slogan. It is our collective duty.”



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# Thank~you



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