

NEWS



Elderly people

Building great places to grow older and thrive

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Greater Manchester is UK's first age-friendly city region and wants to share its example with the world

In the metropolitan area of Greater Manchester, 1.2 million people are already aged over 50 years old. Just in a couple of decades, older people in the city-region are expected to represent about half of the entire population. Instead of facing longevity as a burden, the city-region has developed a strategy to **build a society where everyone enjoys a good later life, catering to older people's needs as it keeps different generations active and connected.**

Last 13 February, an audience of about 300 people got to know the work behind making Greater Manchester the "UK's first age-friendly city region" (status given in 2018 by the World Health Organization). At the Greater Manchester Age Friendly Conference 2019, the metropolitan **Mayor Andy Burnham, along with representatives of local communities, academia and enterprises, got together at the Manchester Science and Industry Museum to share their pioneering thinking about later life.**

The Greater Manchester Ageing Strategy connects all aspects of public policies, with emphasis on health, housing, neighbourhoods, transport, culture and economy. Examples are new neighbourhoods models that support ageing in place, adapted transportation means, and **the potential of the “silver economy” to generate prosperity and sustainability**, as a supplier of working force and consumer power.

“When people talk about the ageing population, they often speak of it as a burden, focusing on rising pension, health and social care costs”, says Dr Anna Dixon, chief executive of the UK’s Centre for Ageing Better. As a speaker at the conference’s first plenary session, Dr Dixon proposed, instead of a dystopia of automated jobs, obesity, no public transport, no public green spaces and costly hospital admissions, a **utopia of ageing better**, in which small and medium companies flourish, and more people are working and paying taxes for longer – the so-called “longevity dividend”, which promotes economic opportunity and innovation.

To turn the utopia into reality, the coordinated participation of various stakeholders at the local level is key. To tackle issues that are still common in older ages, such as ill health, disability, loneliness, poverty and being undervalued, the metropolitan authority has set up the **Greater Manchester Ageing Hub**, which **works hand-in-hand with local communities and providers of public services**, to promote age-friendly neighbourhoods where older people feel they are valued.

With a life expectancy of 79,4 years, Greater Manchester is 14th among the 51 Metropolis members which have been assessed for the development of our first metropolitan indicators. With life expectancies ranging from 80,5 to 84 years, Berlin, Bruxelles, Lisbon, Athens, Montréal, Guangzhou, Toronto, Seoul, Torino, New Taipei, Grand Lyon, Barcelona and Madrid, may have a lot to share with Greater Manchester and other metropolises of the world. Greater Manchester is seeking to seize the momentum as a global centre of excellence for ageing, pioneering research, technology and new ideas. The city-region is also consolidating international partnerships around how cities and city-regions are delivering opportunities in face of a reality that sooner or later will affect the whole planet, as a result of desirable medical advances, public health and living standards.

“Getting to know some of Greater Manchester’s policies on ageing inspires us to go further on sharing specific cases about the same topic from around the world”, said Lia Brum, Focal Point for Europe at the Metropolis Secretariat General, who was a speaker of the Conference’s workshop about international perspectives on age-friendly cities.