Becoming an Age Friendly Business

A framework and toolkit for continuous improvement

GO DISTRICT RE**ADY** FOR **LIVING**

ASPIRING TO BE **AGE FRIENDLY** AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

The **Becoming an Age Friendly Business Framework and Toolkit** was created with the Gore District through the Ready for Living programme. Its development was facilitated by Partners in Change and funded by the Office for Seniors. The resources have been designed to be adopted by other regions and communities. Additional resources are available from the **Office for Seniors website**.

About Ready for Living

Ready for Living is a Gore District community-led project, working in partnership with key stakeholders. The project was launched in 2018 to address the challenges and identify the many opportunities for the Gore Districts growing ageing community. Ready for Livings goal is to ensure that Eastern Southland remains a great place to live for people of all ages.

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Introduction

The world's population is undergoing a fundamental long-term change. People are living longer and generally healthier lives in both developed and developing countries. The 65+ age group is now the fastest growing primary segment of the world's population. Its growth rate is only outstripped by that of an even older sub group – those aged 80+.

This change is not just about today's older population and the so called "baby boomers." It also includes the generations that follow, people currently in their 30s and 40s. By 2040, New Zealand's median age will be 42, up from 27 in 1980. Currently, over 34 percent of the population is aged 50 plus. This percentage is often higher in provincial New Zealand.

Not all older people are the same. We become more diverse as we age. Some communities are better set up to support their expanding ageing populations than others with facilities, accessible spaces and venues, and services that enable people to participate, contribute and be valued as they age.

Older people contribute value through their knowledge, experience and commitment. In 2019, nearly one in four people aged 65 and over were still in paid employment with the number of older workers increasing. The ageing population presents a significant opportunity for businesses and service providers willing to innovate, enhance existing products and services or develop new product lines suitable for the older consumer and client.

In 2018, New Zealand became an affiliate of the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities. The Office for Seniors leads the Aotearoa New Zealand Age Friendly programme, providing advice and support to cities, towns and communities wanting to become more Age Friendly. Developing initiatives that support seniors to participate fully in community life requires partnering with older people so that solutions are relevant and meet their diverse needs.

The **Age Friendly Business Framework and Toolkit** was developed in conjunction with Gore District in Southland as part of the **Ready for Living** programme. Older community members, along with businesses and service organisations in Gore contributed to the framework through focus groups, workshops and a survey. The initiative aims to support businesses and service providers to adapt to the changing population and to better meet the needs of their customers and clients.

The **Age Friendly Business** programme focusses on people as they age, however international research recognises that products and services designed with the older person in mind often provide benefits to people of all ages.

The case for change

Three compelling reasons

1. Life expectancy is increasing. People are living longer and staying healthier as they age.

2. The number and percentage of the population aged 65+ is rapidly increasing.

3. As the older population grows so will their spending power.
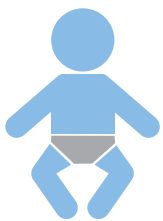
Life expectancy at birth

	Female	Male
1916	71	62
1966	86	81
2016	93	91

"One of the biggest mistakes businesses and service providers can make is to assume that longevity will simply mean many more older people being older longer."
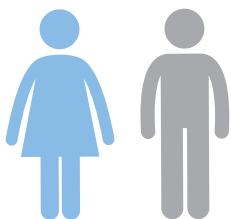
Population over 65

2016	0.7m
2031	1.13m
2041	1.35m
2051	1.47m
2061	1.71m

Spend by 65+

2016	$21b
2031	$41b
2041	$42b
2051	$70b
2061	$94b

What is an Age Friendly Business

An Age Friendly Business or service is person centred. It aspires to create an environment that is accessible and a customer service experience that is inclusive and respectful. It offers products and services that meet the needs of all of its customers and clients irrespective of age, life stage and ability.

An Age Friendly Business focuses on continuous self-improvement in four areas.

- Environment and Accessibility
- Communication and Information
- Respect and Inclusion
- Products and Services

"The bottom line is that businesses and service organisations can no longer take their aged 50 plus customers and clients for granted."

What is in it for me

✓ Good for your bottom line – in the end it may be about the survival of your business or organisation.

✓ Customer retention and growth – people have choices and will go where they get great service, and the products that meet their needs.

✓ Customer and client experience - satisfied people keep coming back and tell others about you.

What do I have to do

This is a recognition programme, not an accreditation system. No one is going to audit your business or inspect you.

Age Friendly Business is a programme which recognises businesses and organisations that are aspiring to be Age Friendly. By participating you will be saying to your customers, clients and the community that you have committed to a journey of learning, self assessment and continuous improvement. You won't always get it right. The process rewards your commitment to learning and your desire to continuously improve your business or service.

It involves a simple four step process.

1. Undertaking a self assessment.

2. Creating an action plan.

3. Submitting your self assessment and action plan to receive your ***Aspiring to be AGE FRIENDLY logo.***

4. Making the changes and then re-assessing every 12 months.

Remember: Simply undertaking a self assessment and writing an action plan will change nothing unless you put it into practice and make the changes you have identified.

Here are some ideas

✓ As the business owner or service manager take personal leadership and show your commitment.

✓ Schedule a six-monthly discussion with some of your customers or clients, let them know what you have done, ask them for feedback and suggestions about ways you could continue to innovate as an Age Friendly Business or service provider.

✓ Tell your story through newsletters, social media, articles in the local paper etc. Have your customers tell the story for you.

Who can join

Aspiring to be Age Friendly should be the aim of all organisations. This includes retail, professional services, health and social services, government agencies, local government, trades, suppliers, and online services. Any organisation that interacts with the public.

What will it cost

The **Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme** is free of charge.

In your self assessment you can identify changes that need to be made. Experience is that many of the things that businesses identify are relatively simple to implement and cost very little. More expensive items can be scheduled into your business planning.
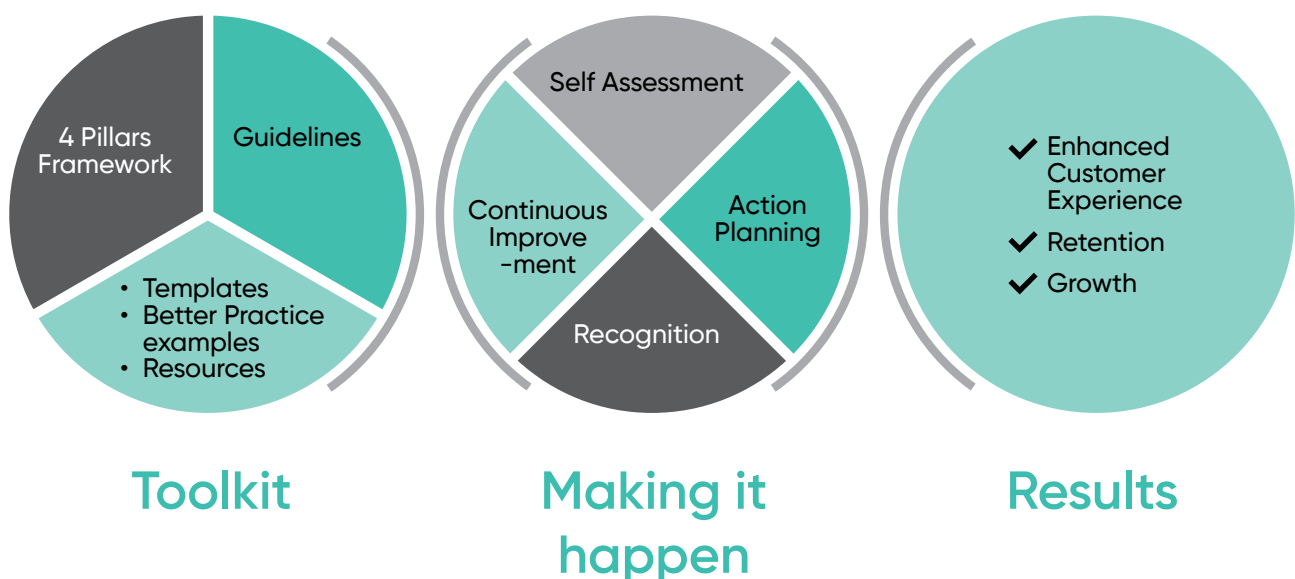
Becoming an age friendly business

The Age Friendly Business Framework comprises a toolkit of resources and templates and a process for making it happen. The underlying approach is one of continuous improvement resulting in an enhanced customer experience, customer retention and growth over time.

Continuous improvement

Businesses and organisations that excel at continuous improvement start with the belief that success comes from three things:

✓ Innovating and improving "how" they do what they do.

✓ Involving their employees and their customers in sharing knowledge and generating improvement ideas.

✓ Exploring better ways to deliver products and services to their customers and clients.

"Core to a continuous improvement mindset is the belief that a steady stream of improvements, diligently executed, will have transformational results."

Toolkit

- 4 Pillars Framework
- Guidelines
- Templates
- Better Practice examples
- Resources

Making it happen

- Self Assessment
- Action Planning
- Recognition
- Continuous Improve-ment

Results

✓ Enhanced Customer Experience
✓ Retention
✓ Growth

Four Steps to Success

Step 1
Self Assessment
4 Pillars Framework
20 Indicators

Step 2
Action Planning
12 month Action Plan
Priority Actions

Step 3
Recognition
Logo Displayed
Telling your story

Step 4
Continuous Improvement
Awareness
Changes
Improvements

Four steps to success

Step 1 Self assessment

Make this a participative exercise, involve your staff, invite in customers, link up with another business and undertake a peer review. Why not join up with other businesses in your town, shopping centre or with members of your professional or business association and undertake the process as a group.

Listen to what people are telling you – this is not a time for defensiveness or finding reasons why you can't do something. It is about learning, improvements and innovation.

Use the Four Pillars Framework and collaborate with those you invite to explore the Pillars one at a time. Identify and discuss the changes that could make a difference.

Step 2 Action planning

You don't have to do everything at once, this is a journey, pace yourself, establish your priorities.

One way to identify practical actions is to think about

✔ Things you will stop doing

✔ Things you will start doing

✔ Things you will keep doing

Your Action Plan should also include a description of what success will look like to help you recognise and celebrate your successes.

Step 3 Recognition

When you have undertaken your Self Assessment and drawn up your Action Plan for the next 12 months contact your local Age Friendly Business Co-ordinator. Send them a copy of your plan. They will not be "approving" it, but will be keeping track of the areas people are addressing and the innovations taking place. From time to time, they will also send you up to date information about what others are doing around the world.

The Age Friendly Business Co-ordinator will send you an "Aspiring to be AGE FRIENDLY" logo to display. They may also talk with you about publicity opportunities.

Step 4 Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement is a cycle that leads to gradual change over time. Once you've implemented some changes, review what you have done and the impacts. Did they work well or are further adjustments required? What other changes could you implement to make your business even more Age Friendly?

You may want to have one or two people in your organisation work with you on this initiative. They could support you to make the changes, keep you informed on new developments and discuss possibilities for improving your business or organisation.

Four pillars Age Friendly Business framework

As an Age Friendly Business or service, you will be committed to creating an environment that is accessible, a customer service experience that is inclusive and respectful, and offering products and services that meet the needs of all your customers and clients irrespective of age, life stage and ability.

An Age Friendly Business focuses on continuous self-improvement in four areas
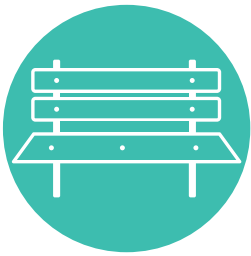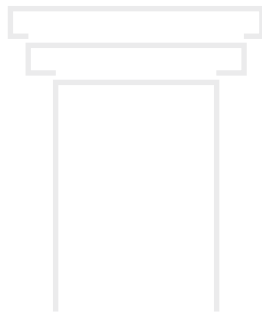
Environment and Accessibility	Communication and Information	Respect and Inclusion	Products and Services
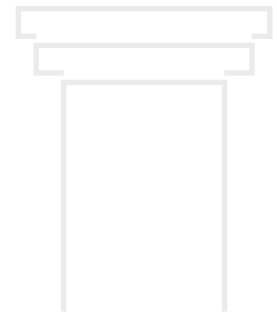
"People have choices and will exercise them purchasing goods and services from those businesses who understand their needs and provide outstanding service and life stage relevant products."

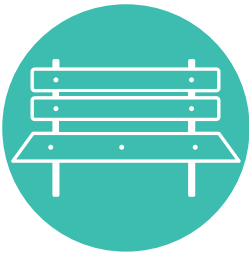# Environment and Accessibility

If your customers or clients need to visit your premises then it is important to create an environment that is welcoming, safe, easy to get around and meets their needs.

Five things to consider

- ✓ **Access** – ease in finding you, getting in and getting around
- ✓ **Furniture** – suitable seating is available, counter heights and shelving appropriate
- ✓ **Sensory** – lighting, sound and heating are at a comfortable level
- ✓ **Health and Safety** – handrails, non-slip floor coverings, an emergency kit and trained staff if needed
- ✓ **Ease of doing business** – flexible opening hours, a readable website, accessible product placement

Changes that can make a difference

- Clear pavements – no advertising boards cluttering up the walkway. On rubbish day, remember to leave sufficient space on the pavement for a wheelchair or mobility scooter to travel. Also trim back any overgrowing hedges that narrow the walkway
- Doors are lightweight or automatic. Notices on doors indicate which way to push/pull them
- Steps and ramps have a handrail and a painted visual contrast on the edge
- Aisles are clear of products and wide enough for people to freely navigate with walking aids or in wheel chairs
- Accessible toilets on every floor or at least on the ground floor with signs
- Non slip secured floor coverings
- Comfortable seating if people need it for a rest or while waiting for a service. Seats should be sturdy, a suitable height and have arm rests
- Furniture and furnishings are contrasted against walls for ease of visibility
- Size and appropriateness of changing rooms

- Counters low enough for wheelchair users
- Products are placed at a height where they can be seen and accessed easily
- A private space is available if people want to talk about a personal matter or require a space with no noise
- Lighting is adequate and even especially at entrances, exits and hallways
- Distinctive way-finding cues/landmarks are positioned to ease navigation if visual access is not clear
- Music is suitable for all ages and at a volume that enables people to hear and be heard
- A designated quiet hour for customers who struggle with high noise levels or bright lights
- A first aid kit is available and staff know what to do in a medical emergency
- Power points for recharging mobility scooters.

Communication and Information

Communication with your customers and clients is the most important part of your business. People want information that is up to date, easy to read and relevant to them. People also want to be acknowledged and valued.

Five things to consider

✓ **Staff** – friendly, welcoming and genuine. It is easy for people to ask for help or assistance

✓ **Signs and labels** – well placed and easy to read

✓ **Readability** - plenty of white space, larger font size, high colour contrast. Website is easy to find, read and navigate

✓ **Language** – clear and concise with no jargon or acronyms

✓ **Technology** – you cater for all people even if they are not technology savvy

Changes that can make a difference

- Staff are friendly, genuine and greet people when they enter the premises

- It is easy to ask for help and seek advice. This includes ease in finding contact information on your website

- Inclusive language is used that all can understand, so no jargon, abbreviations or acronyms

- Not talking down or past older people – avoid condescending behaviours such as speaking louder or exaggerated slowness

- Information about your business, such as prices, opening hours and access is up to date and easy to find at your premises and on line

- A single point of contact is provided so people don't have to navigate complex telephone systems or deal with multiple people

- Recorded answerphone messages and instructions are easy to listen to, not rushed or garbled. Menu options allow time for people to comfortably process the information

- Not assuming everyone uses the internet, emails or texts to communicate. Provides multiple ways for people to contact you

- Printed material has been designed with people with visual or cognitive impairments in mind

- Price labels and product descriptions are easy to read at a distance

- Check your website using the online evaluation tool – WAVE Web Accessibility Tool

- Safe environments are provided for learning to use technology or simple problem solving

- Advertisements and materials feature a range of ages, including older people

- Complex instructions are written down or diagrams are provided

- People are aware of discounts on offer e.g. Super Gold Card.

Respect and Inclusion

We all like to feel respected and that we matter when we visit a professional practice, a service provider, shop or go to a café/restaurant or when we phone for information or help.

Five things to consider

✓ **Assumptions** – not making assumptions about people based on age, gender or ethnicity

✓ **Language** – inclusive language, spoken and written. Not using labels to categorise or describe people

✓ **Awareness** – staff trained in how to engage with people as they age. Staff are aware of how dementia can affect individuals cognitive abilities. Staff are able to anticipate people's needs without making assumptions.

✓ **Empowerment** – engaging with older people in ways that do not diminish them

✓ **Culture** – ensuring an inclusive work place for staff (paid or voluntary) that respects and celebrates diversity

Changes that can make a difference

- Not using labels such as "boomer", "retiree", "old" or "elderly" in our speech or written materials. Many older people find these offensive

- Avoid using generational labels e.g. Gen X, Millennials, Boomers. They are riddled with stereotypes

- Photos used in your advertising are inclusive. When photos of older people are used, ensure they represent the diversity of the population

- Signing up to the Dementia Friendly recognition and education programme with Alzheimers New Zealand

- Ask people if they want assistance and what would be helpful, don't assume. We can so easily disempower people in the act of trying to be helpful

- If offering an older person an appointment, don't assume they will be available just because they no longer work

- Provide spaces for people to rest or wait and where they can have a private discussion if needed

- Ensure magnifying glasses are available

- Have a designated staff person as an Age Friendly champion who can keep other staff up to date

- Proudly display your Aspiring to be AGE FRIENDLY logo

- Remember this is not just about your customers or clients; it is also about your staff – create an age inclusive workplace.

Products and Services

We all want products and services that best match our changing needs.

Five things to consider

✓ **Product choice** – you offer a broad and interesting range of products in ways that appeal to all life stages

✓ **Product design** – you involve the end user in the design process

✓ **Service and programme design** – you seek and act on feedback from all your customers and clients

✓ **Merchandising** – your products and services are well presented and accessible

✓ **Innovation** – you look out for new products and services that could better meet the needs of all your customers or clients

Changes that can make a difference

- Products are placed to ensure they can be seen and reached or assistance is readily available

- Product offerings are sized to meet the needs of older people for example the size of restaurant meals, slices in a café, number of food items in a pack

- Not assuming you know what older people need. Not falling into the trap of thinking that all older people are like the older people in your family/ whānau. Diversity increases with age

- Not assuming that affordability is the primary decider for someone who is older or on a fixed income

- Delivery options are available for people who are housebound or not able to transport products themselves

- Seek out and stock modern and stylish designs. Older people still care about how they and the products they use look. Sometimes products aimed at the older person can be ugly and an unwanted signal of fragility or weakness

- When designing services or products, don't assume you know your user. Involve your customers/clients in this process, get feedback, prototype, test, and refine

- Everybody wants a beautiful product so why not design it and make it available

- Almost anything you do that will help the older population will end up helping everyone.

"They thought of everything, I had forgotten my glasses and the restaurant had a few spares on hand so I could read the menu."

Toolkit

Age Friendly Self Assessment

Note down gaps, suggestions and actions.

Environment and Accessibility

Access - ease in finding you, getting in and getting around your premises

Furniture – suitable seating is available, counter heights and shelving

Sensory - lighting, sound and heating are at a comfortable level

Health and Safety - handrails, non-slip floor coverings, an emergency kit and trained staff if needed

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Toolkit

Age Friendly Business Action Plan

Period:

Pillar	What we plan to do	Who is responsible	By when	What success looks like

Additional resources

Age Friendly Aotearoa New Zealand

Office for Seniors

http://superseniors.msd.govt.nz/age-friendly-communities/index.html

Dementia Friendly New Zealand

https://www.alzheimers.org.nz/get-involved/a-dementia-friendly-nz

Universal Design Principles for Buildings

https://www.building.govt.nz/building-code-compliance/d-access/accessible-buildings/about/practical-application-of-universal-design/

Web Accessibility Guidelines

https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/

Accessibility Charter NZ

http://msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/accessibility-guide/about-the-charter.html

Accessible Documents and Websites.

Resources provided by Blind Low Vision NZ

https://blindlowvision.org.nz/how-we-can-help/businesses-and-professionals/accessible-documents-and-websites/

Web Accessibility Tool Undertake an online evaluation

https://wave.webaim.org/

Mature Workers Toolkit

Produced by MBIE

https://www.business.govt.nz/mature-workers-toolkit/

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