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**ARTS COUNCIL  
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## Age-Friendly Standards

### Introduction:

Organisations that sign-up to the Age-Friendly Standards value all generations and want to provide a welcoming and positive experience for everyone, regardless of their age.

Whilst many of the Age-Friendly Standards relate to general inclusive practice, they also acknowledge that older people may be more likely to experience barriers to engagement than younger family members<sup>1</sup> and there is a need for cultural organisations to adopt measures to discourage the reported<sup>2</sup> drop-off in cultural engagement amongst older people. This is further reinforced by Age UK's recent research<sup>3</sup> that identifies cultural engagement as the biggest contributing factor to wellbeing in later life.

The Age-Friendly Standards also acknowledge the significant benefits of providing opportunities for different generations to engage in cultural activities together, and encourage organisations to facilitate these experiences.

### Who are the Age-Friendly Standards for?

The Age-Friendly Standards apply to any type of cultural experience, from museums, concert halls, libraries and art galleries, to dance companies, theatre groups, music ensembles and festivals.

They are designed to complement the existing [Family Arts Standards](#) which codify good practice in welcoming families. Displaying the Age-Friendly Standards logo affirms that an organisation has considered the often more complex needs of older visitors, either in their own building, or venues in which they present their work.

An organisation that displays the Age-Friendly Standards will:

#### 1. **Build relationships:**

- Facilitate relationships between the different generations the organisation interacts with
- Aim to foster relationships with older people not only as audiences, but as volunteers, ambassadors, trustees and active participants in the organisation
- Acknowledge that older people are not a homogenous or distinct visitor segment but a diverse group with a wide range of abilities, tastes etc. The organisation will respond in ways that are appropriate to individual needs, informed by individuals themselves
- Be open and willing to learn from older people and solicit their views, either formally, or informally
- Encourage relationships with other places and services older people may use (e.g. health and care facilities, housing providers, adult learning centres, libraries, clubs and societies and community centres)

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<sup>1</sup> [ComRes poll for Arts Council England, 2016](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Taking Part Survey, 2015/16](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Summary of Age UK's Index of Wellbeing in Later Life, 2017](#)

- Consider working in partnership with other age-friendly cultural organisations and venues in the local area to help inform older people about the whole cultural offer that is available to them
- 2. Consider programming:**
- Encourage artistic work that has the ability to inspire, articulate & celebrate life in older age
  - Avoid making assumptions about taste and recognise that with any large and diverse group comes diverse interests. Ensure that the views of older people are represented on any consultation panels or questionnaires
  - Aim for intergenerational provision to be integrated into the whole programme and sustained beyond specific participation or engagement initiatives
  - Think about collaboration, co-production and work that is not only for older people, but with and by older people- as programmers, facilitators and artists
  - Consider timings and times of day in programming- including matinees and daytime activities. Build in extra time for getting settled, intervals and comfort breaks. Also factor-in local public transport provision and be aware that where it is unavailable at certain times (particularly at night), this may present a significant barrier, as well as potential hidden costs
- 3. Provide appropriate facilities:**

The guidance below is intended as an at-a-glance checklist of some key considerations for organisations providing age-friendly facilities.

The following pointers do not replace existing access recommendations or legal guidelines for public buildings. Whilst disability or physical impairment are by no means specific to older age groups, these are factors whose likelihood increases with age. Ageing population trends therefore impact upon the need for general accessible provision.

- Display accessibility accreditations (where applicable) clearly and visibly, both on-and-offline
- Consider the accessibility of every aspect of the visit to ensure the best experience possible and show awareness of hidden disabilities such as sight or hearing impairments

This could include:

- entrances/ exits- automated doors or additional assistance and drop-off space with lowered kerb
- parking & possibility of reserving parking bays in advance or signposting to nearby parking facilities & costs
- provision of seating plans at point of booking that highlight best positions for visibility/ acoustics etc.
- hand rails around buildings
- provision of additional or portable seating in non-seating areas (e.g. galleries)
- working lifts
- ramped and level wheelchair access and seating
- possibility of reserved seating for those with limited mobility

- access to and availability of toilets
  - counter heights at box office/bars/ cafes
  - potential for obstruction of thoroughfares for wheelchairs or walking aids
  - assessing outdoor spaces as well as indoor
  - provision of large-text print materials, seat numbers, exhibitions captions and staff name badges
  - ease of connecting to hearing loops or infrared systems
  - use of microphones in smaller spaces/ interactive activities and checking of acoustics
  - Braille and audio recordings of information provided in print. Also consider colour contrast and design that could impact on legibility for those with some visual impairments
  - Having additional staff on hand when expecting larger groups of visitors with additional needs
- Consider additional environmental factors for comfort/ ease such as:
    - Sufficient heating levels
    - Sufficient lighting levels
    - Availability of comfortable and supportive chairs (with backs and armrests where possible) and relaxed/ quiet seating areas
    - Possibility of advance booking café space/ parking
    - Clear signage, maps and building navigation
    - Free drinking water and low-cost refreshments
  - Consider equally the needs of companions or accompanying family members and help make their experience easier
  - Be clear, not only on the facilities available, but also on the logistics of getting to a venue. Supply clear indications of transport routes, parking, paths, time needed to get from A to B to minimise any surprises. Consider ways of visualising e.g. virtual tour/ street map/ visual stories
  - Be clear about which needs the organisation can support, and those it cannot- indicating whether personal assistance is required for events/ activities

#### 4. **Communicate appropriately:**

- Use positive and inclusive language and images in marketing communications and group booking criteria that do not restrict or perpetuate stereotypes of 'family' or of older people
- Communicate alternative means for ease of booking tickets and finding information for visitors who may not be online- with an easy-to-find telephone number
- Provide clear channels for older people to communicate specific needs to the organisation in advance, with reassurance that requirements will be met.
- Use alternative approaches to reach older people who may be offline.
- Think creatively about new channels to reach older people, particularly the growing number who are online

- Provide logical and clear website navigation for bookings and information
- Provide clear explanations for new or unfamiliar concepts e.g. 'touch tours' or relaxed performances' so visitors know exactly what to expect- using everyday language that avoids jargon and does not assume specialist knowledge about the arts

**5. Provide a warm welcome:**

- Create a welcoming atmosphere, ensure staff are visible and remain vigilant to visitors' needs
- Ensure that all staff are well-trained and aware of difficulties that some older visitors may encounter, including factors that can cause distress for visitors with certain conditions, such as dementia and be able to advise on use of loud noises, music or strobe lighting
- Where staff have undertaken specialist training, encourage them to display this e.g. by wearing their Dementia Friends badge
- Nominate staff members or volunteers as champions of age-awareness within the organisation who will provide advocacy and dedicated support
- Embed age-friendly policies and procedures into the organisation's working practices that are accessed by staff

**[www.agefriendlystandards.com](http://www.agefriendlystandards.com)**