Age-Friendly Academy
Impact Report
2017-2020

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AfU Age-friendly University Global Network

'The University of Strathclyde has a unique, life-course approach to learning and opportunity and aims to offer something for everyone, regardless of age or stage in life'.

Introduction – a '5 to 95' University

In 2012 Strathclyde became one of the initial members of the Age-Friendly University (AFU) consortium founded by Dublin City University (DCU) alongside Arizona State University (ASU) to create the start of a global network of Higher Education institutions committed to recognising the impact of changing demographics within their strategic objectives.

As an Age-Friendly University, the University of Strathclyde has agreed to align with the following 10 'pillars':

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programmes.

2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue "second careers".

3. To recognise the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master's or PhD qualifications).

4. To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.

5. To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.

6. To ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an ageing society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.

7. To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that ageing brings to our society.

8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of health and wellness programmes and its arts and cultural activities.

9. To engage actively with the university's own retired community.

10. To ensure regular dialogue with organisations representing the interests of the ageing population.

Strathclyde's initial involvement centred around its unique programme of learning aimed at the over 50's delivered by the Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL), the largest programme of its kind in any UK university attracting over 2500 learners each year.

For Strathclyde, membership of the Age-Friendly University Network underpinned the founding principle of providing "a place of useful learning, open to all". Strathclyde is a University where regardless of age or stage in life, there are learning opportunities for everyone. Strathclyde aims to be a '5 to 95' University that is committed to both research relating to ageing and demographic change as well offering a unique range of learning opportunities across the life course to those who many not typically associate themselves with University involvement.

In 2017, this culminated in the establishment of the Age-Friendly Academy (AFA).

Since its launch, the AFA has brought together activities already being delivered at the University, as well as developing new opportunities for collaboration, both internally and externally. This has all been aimed at promoting positive ageing across the lifespan, breaking down barriers and changing perceptions of what a university is and who it is for. In short, we have created a 'shop window', which sends a clear message that Strathclyde offers something for everyone.

This report will give an overview of achievements from the launch of the AFA until now, including the measures it has taken to adapt its work in response to COVID-19 and its hopes for life post-COVID.

"I am very proud of the fact that The Age-Friendly Academy is part of our Faculty of Humanities and Social Science. The Academy's work highlights the importance of engaging with demographic change and it is at the forefront of creating new and innovative ways to do this through research and opportunities for learning at all ages."

Ian Rivers,
Associate Principal and Executive Dean,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The AFA aligns itself with Strathclyde's core values:

People-Oriented: through offering something for everyone regardless of age or stage in life.

Ambitious: no other UK University offers programmes for older learners on the scale of Strathclyde.

Innovative: by using online delivery, it is taking learning aimed at those aged over 50 to a wider geographic audience.

Bold: the AFA initiative is one-of-a-kind and demonstrates the University's wider commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Collaborative: we are keen to build upon our proven track record through new partnerships – contact us to get the conversation started

About The Age-Friendly Academy

Our vision

- To consolidate and showcase the innovative work taking place across the University which demonstrates Strathclyde's commitment to being a place for everyone, regardless of age or stage in life

- To provide a platform to highlight research relating to ageing and demographic change

- To continue to explore opportunities for internal and external collaboration and act as a platform through which new initiatives can be launched

- To continue to develop and maximise community engagement

Our 4 key areas of work

1. Learning and Volunteering Opportunities aimed at those aged 50+

CLL at Strathclyde has been providing learning opportunities for adults for almost 50 years and runs the largest programme of university-based learning opportunities aimed at those over 50 in Europe with over 2500 adult learners taking a range of classes each year – from languages to history, to photography to art, to name just a few. The programmes are constantly evolving to cater for the interests of older adult students.

CLL also has an active Student's Association, the 3Ls, which has over 1000 members who have benefitted from classes run by CLL. The 3Ls offers students the chance to join a range of clubs, be involved in social events and attend lunchtime talks

Age-Friendly Academy Volunteering Network
The Age-Friendly Academy Volunteer Network is a database of older adults, typically aged 50+, who are interested in taking part in a range of University-wide volunteering opportunities or research activities. At the end of 2020, there were over 220 volunteers registered as part of the Network.

Members of the network are emailed whenever a new opportunity for participation within the University arises. The Network is managed by CLL, but the opportunity to send information on research and volunteering recruitment opportunities is actively promoted to all staff University-wide.

"Everyone has something to offer, regardless of age. Through the classes I have done at CLL I have been able to share my life experiences and it has definitely helped me to become more confident"

Helen,
CLL Student

2. Ageing-Related Research

The University of Strathclyde is committed to ageing-related research and innovation projects. The AFA has connected research relating to ageing across all faculties to demonstrate the wide range of ongoing research in one central web presence.

In line with the University's Key Strategic Theme of 'Health and Wellbeing' - specifically, the multidisciplinary sub-theme 'Ageing Better', Ageing Research covers a wide range of age-related topics including thinking and memory skills across the lifespan including dementia, mobility and stroke rehabilitation, digital healthcare and intergenerational engagement.

Research Groups

The Strathclyde Ageing Network (SAN) is a thriving internal group, working within the University to grow and promote collaborative research across all faculties. With over 70 members, from all four faculties and professional services, its members are committed to ageing-related research on the Strategic Research Theme Health & Wellbeing, focusing on the sub-theme of 'Ageing Better'.

"The AFA has become such an important University initiative which showcases our Age Friendly University programme which runs through most of our activities, including our research, teaching and learning, and the University's position within the local community. The collaboration between SAN and the AFA helps facilitate engagement between researchers and the CLL's students and associated volunteer network, and in this way the AFA makes a strong contribution to the progress of our ageing-related research."

Dr Louise A. Brown Nicholls,
Senior Lecturer and SAN Director

The Digital Health and Wellness Research Group a world-leading research group who design, develop, implement and evaluate real-world health and care solutions. The group focus on user-centred design and work in partnership with key stakeholders to create smart and connected digital health and care technologies that have a positive impact on individuals, communities, and organisations at scale.

The Dementia Research Network is composed of a multidisciplinary group that carries out research in the field of dementia. The researchers work on a diverse range of dementia related projects that cover the detection of dementia, patient monitoring, therapeutics, post-diagnostic support and care. The group have a variety of backgrounds and expertise in topics that include psychology, biology, pharmacology, chemistry, biomedical engineering, social work and policy.

CASE STUDY: In 2020 Researchers from the Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences were awarded funding from the Dunhill Medical Trust for a project that aims to help older people with sensory impairment manage their medication. The research is exploring a range of tools and interventions to support patients to use their medicines in a safe and effective way. It is also identifying ways in which health and social care professionals can adopt more holistic, person-centred approaches to help older people, especially those with sensory impairment, with their medicines in order to optimise their health and wellbeing.

3. Intergenerational Work

As Strathclyde continues to position itself as a socially progressive '5 – 95 University', there is a range of intergenerational work being undertaken that the AFA continues to showcase. Age-Friendly activity does not just focus on older people. At the other end of the age spectrum there are examples of University-wide intergenerational activity that has made significant impact to date, including:

- **The Intergenerational Mentoring Network (IMN):** A programme matches children and young people with older adult mentors, in areas where there are challenges in terms of pupil attainment and progression into Higher Education. The Network also focuses on nurturing literacy development in primary schools.

- **The Children's University:** The Children's University recognises achievement and celebrates learning out of normal school hours. Children aged 5-14 gain credits for taking part in after school activities or learning experiences at the weekends or school holidays. The project aims to raise aspirations, boost achievement and encourage a love of learning.

- **Schools Outreach Programmes:** The Faculty of Engineering at Strathclyde are committed to encouraging school pupils to consider a career in engineering, and offer a wide range of activities that allow them to experience what it's like to study at Strathclyde and to open their eyes to the multitude of career paths on offer. The wide range of projects offered include The Scottish Space School and Engineering the Future for Girls.

CASE STUDY: In September 2018, the research team from the School of Psychological Sciences and in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences launched a pilot of a school-based intergenerational research project called "Generation for Generation" in West Lothian. The community-based programme was designed to promote health and wellbeing in adults aged 60 and above and to improve children's success in school. The programme volunteers, aged 60-85 years, helped young children in primary schools (P1-P4) with their reading, writing, numeracy, and other school activities. The key findings from the project will be disseminated in March 2021.

4. Community Engagement

As well as highlighting the growing provision and research taking place across the University, the AFA provides a platform from which new partnerships can be made and initiatives launched. The AFA has regular dialogue with range of organisations all throughout Scotland including:

Generations Working Together

Scottish Older People's Assembly

Age Scotland

One key aim of the Age Friendly Academy is to continue to add to the portfolio of activity related to ageing through new collaborative projects and maximised community engagement.

> "I have been involved with volunteering through the University as well as taking classes. Having the community engagement element and the chance to give something back to the local community cannot be underestimated. This is not something that I had not expected to experience when I first became involved as an older learner."
>
> Bob,
> CLL Student and Project Volunteer

AFA Highlights: 2017 – 2020

May 2017: The Launch of the Age-Friendly Academy

On Tuesday 2nd May 2017, the University of Strathclyde Age-Friendly Academy (AFA) was officially launched at part of Engage with Strathclyde week at the Technology and Innovation Centre. Engage, which is the University's flagship programme of events, takes place over one week with the purpose of developing new, and strengthening existing, collaborations with external partners.

The launch event was opened by Principal and Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Jim McDonald and Alix McDonald, Head of the Centre for Lifelong Learning, hosted the event introducing a variety of both internal and external speakers to an audience of over 100 attendees.

The AFA webpage and Twitter account were launched the same day.

September 2017: Dublin City University visit

Following their attendance at the launch of the Age-Friendly Academy in May, colleagues from the Age-Friendly University network at Dublin City University invited CLL and the 3Ls Students Association to DCU to meet with some of their adult learners at their Dublin campus in order to learn from each other and collaborate further on all Age-Friendly activity.

March 2018: Age-Friendly University conference

In March 2018, the Centre for Lifelong Learning attended and presented at the second international Age-Friendly Conference at Dublin City University. The conference, "Engaging Ageing 2018: New Frontiers of Ageing: Research, Policy & Practice' was attended by over 160 international delegates and took place in the iconic Corke Park in Dublin.

Alix McDonald, Head of CLL, was joined by the President of the 3L's Student Association, John Parkhill, to deliver a session to the delegates on CLL's expanding Daytime Programme and how it has successfully worked alongside the active Student Association for the past 30 years.

Gemma Gilliland, Age-Friendly Academy Manager, also delivered a session on the intergenerational project, Sharing Childhood (SACHI2), which ran in 3 Primary Schools in Glasgow between January and March 2018.

Professor Alexander Caliche, former Director of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) global Ageing and Life Course Programme delivered the Keynote speech, sharing his experience of the WHO Active Ageing Policy Framework and the global movement on Age-Friendly Cities.

The conference also gave members of the Age-Friendly University network the chance to share ideas and good practice about recent successes in their Age-Friendly activity.

May 2018: Funding approved

In May 2018, The University's Principal, Professor Sir Jim McDonald agreed to centrally fund, alongside the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences/CLL, the development and delivery of the AFA initiative over another 3 years. This demonstrated the University's commitment to ensuring the age-friendly ethos is embedded within the institution and further enhances the University's 'socially progressive' agenda.

In August 2018 Age-Friendly Academy (AFA) Manager, Gemma Gilliland, was appointed to grow and develop the AFA, thus ensuring a dedicated resource towards AFA onward development.

October 2018: Inaugural AFA lecture

In October 2018, CLL hosted a visit from Professor Cathy Eden from the College of Public Programmes at Arizona State University, one of the founding partners in the Age-Friendly University Global network. During her visit, Professor Eden delivered the very first Age-Friendly Academy lecture 'Policy, Politics and Pensioners: demographic challenge and opportunity in the USA' chaired by Professor Tom Scotto, Head of School of Government and Public Policy followed by a lively debate with the audience of 55 attendees.

Engage Event 2019

Two years after its launch, a second follow up AFA event on 'Impacting Lifelong Health and Wellbeing' was held at the Technology and Innovation Centre as part of the University's Engage Week 2019.

The event was attended by 100 delegates and provided an excellent forum to share informative updates on ageing-related research, community projects, and learning provision.

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Sir Harry Burns, Director of Global Public Health at the International Public Policy Institute and, until 2014, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland. Sir Harry has written extensively and spoken worldwide about how societies can create "wellness" – more than simply the absence of illness.

CLL student Lorraine McQueen also spoke powerfully about her experience of attending CLL classes as an older learner. Further student testimonials can be viewed at CLL's website:
https://www.strath.ac.uk/cll

Expanding the Open Campus Programme

In 2017/18, in partnership with the School of Psychological Science and Health, CLL piloted the opportunity for older adult learners to study for an Open Studies Certificate in Psychology in order to break down barriers and change perceptions of what a university is and who it is for.

The unique intergenerational opportunity allowed older adults to study alongside and interact with undergraduate students in 1st year psychology lectures at the University.

Over 35 students have now received a Certificate in Open Studies via the Open campus programme.

The programme has been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, CLL will continue to identify more University-wide opportunities to roll out the integration of adult learners into the undergraduate curriculum in the future.

Launch of The Next Stage

In response to the changes in longer working lives and ageing workforces, in 2019 CLL developed a new range of courses aimed at those aged 50+ who were seeking a career change or preparing for retirement to allow them to engage with others at a similar stage of life. Through a pilot of new employability and personal development courses, participants were supported to review their career options and explore future possibilities by an experienced team of tutors and career guidance professionals. The personal development courses proved to be particularly attractive to older adult learners and CLL aims to grow the range of courses on offer in the future.

Time Higher Education Award 2019

In 2019 The University of Strathclyde became the first university to be awarded 'University of the Year' at the Times Higher Education Awards 2019 for the second time. The award recognises the University's overall strategy of engaging with business, industry and government, investing in students and developing socially progressive policies.

The Age-Friendly Academy was named as one of the influencing factors in the winning bid, framed within the University's 'socially progressive' agenda.

As with every organisation around the world, in 2020 the University of Strathclyde was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, despite the difficulties presented by the completely unforeseen and unprecedented situation, the AFA continued with its goals and was proactive in applying the age-friendly ethos to seek new opportunities that were presented whilst recognising the barriers that were created.

Teaching and Learning

In March 2020, in line with the national lockdown, the entire University moved to home working, suspending all face-to-face teaching. However, the University was committed to ensuring that students could continue with their studies with minimum disruption.

Within a matter of days CLL recognised the importance of developing a way to keep it's older learners engaged with their learning and with each other and started work on a pilot scheme of online classes. The team then went on to run it'sSummer Programme online and subsequently the Daytime and Evening programme in October 2020.

Despite the challenges faced by both CLL staff and students, in 2020 CLL had over 4000 registrations on its online live classes via Zoom. The classes provided not just a diverse range of subjects for students to continue their learning (everything from music appreciation to art, history to literature) but also aimed to recreate the 'live classroom experience' for students and incorporate the crucial social element aimed at keeping people connected.

'Participating in the online class made me feel I was living and not just existing. Monday mornings were the highlight of my weeks in lockdown! '

CLL Summer Programme Student

Other positive outcomes have emerged from this new learning and teaching strategy, including a new sense of 'online community' that CLL's tutors have experienced. This will be explored further through qualitative research in 2021.

Additionally, online learning means that CLL is no longer restricted by geography, opening up new national and international student recruitment opportunities. Due to its success to date and the possibility of far greater reach, online learning will now become a permanent fixture of CLL's learning provision, alongside face-to-face teaching. A new live and online programme of online learning aimed at those aged 50+ will be launched in August 2021.

Community engagement

In 2020 CLL's Public Lecture Programme, traditionally held in a lecture theatre, moved online via Zoom webinars, allowing even more participants to attend from the comfort of their homes. The lectures have been open to all and are an opportunity for the public to engage with research from staff across the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

One of the online public lectures held in September from Professor Sir John Curtice on 'The Changing Contours of Scotland's Constitutional Debate' attracted over 200 attendees.

With many more virtual opportunities available and the development of a successful online learning model at CLL, the AFA now aims to work more collaboratively with community organisations and harder to reach groups who may have been limited in the past by geography or circumstance, on both a local and national level.

Research, Innovation and Volunteering

In line with the University's strategic research theme 'Ageing Better' - research relating to this theme continued to be carried out in 2020 by a variety of different research groups and academics across the University.

In 2020, The Scottish Government awarded funding to Strathclyde researchers to support five projects that aimed to contribute to the national and global efforts to combat the COVID-19 and its effects. The projects focussed on various areas of research including the impact of social distancing, public mental health and the treatment of COVID-19.

CASE STUDY: One of the funded led by the department of Computer and Information Science from the faculty of Science focussed on Digital Health for informal carers, who may be facing poor physical and mental health. The project is developing and testing an inclusive reliable, motivational app to support home-based regular physical activity for carers who, due to COVID-19, are now largely housebound, facing increased stress with significantly reduced opportunity and motivation for exercise. The app aims to support carers to regularly exercise at home, thus helping them to fight infections and stay well.

Health and Care Futures

In 2020, The University of Strathclyde committed to its principal of being a 'place of useful learning' by making an effective and sustained contribution to the future of health and care in the UK and beyond.

The aim of Health and Care Futures is to use state-of-the-art innovation and expertise in the fields of medicines innovation, health technologies, data analytics and artificial intelligence, and the workforce and leadership. Through this, Strathclyde will promote the delivery of new models of care focusing on prevention, and empowering individuals and populations to live as well as possible at home and in their communities.

Health & Care Futures will centre around three main areas:

Future Medicines

Future Technologies and Data-Driven Health and Care

Future Organisation of systems management and change

The University of Strathclyde:
A socially progressive employer

As an Age-Friendly University, Strathclyde also promotes this ethos by being an Age-Friendly Employer. A number of age-friendly practices are in place for staff that include:

- Offering support for those with caring responsibilities, including the creation of a Carer Policy and the establishment of a Carers' Group. This group meets regularly to have the opportunity to network with other carers and share concerns and experiences.

  Since 2019, Strathclyde has held Carer Positive Exemplary status, in recognition of its support for staff who act as carers. The Carer Positive award, operated by Carers Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, is presented to employers in Scotland who have a working environment where carers are valued and supported.

  In 2021, the AFA plan to work closely with the Carer's Group to better understand the challenges they have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how CLL, and the wider University, may support them.

- Delivering learning opportunities for all staff through the Organisational and Staff Development Unit, including a 'Planning a Positive Retirement' workshop for staff considering retirement in the near future. Policies are also in place for staff approaching retirement including guidance on flexible retirement and succession and career planning.

- Offering the option of both Flexible and Agile working to all staff. The University was already moving towards Agile Working prior to 2020 but this concept has been accelerated due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This allows all staff to have greater flexibility around their normal hours, time or location of their work. In 2020, an Agile Working Toolkit was launched to help staff and managers understand what agile working is, what agile working arrangements may be available and how to make agile working successful for both staff and the University.

- Putting staff at the centre of the University's response to the COVID-19 crisis - through a Wellbeing and Working from home hub, dedicated rest days for all staff, meeting free Fridays, a free confidential staff counselling service which enables staff to access counselling sessions via Zoom and online "drop-in" sessions where students and staff can obtain information and advice on support, health and wellbeing.

Looking Forward

As evidenced in this report, since the launch of the Age-Friendly Academy in 2017, Strathclyde has made extensive progress in demonstrating its commitment to being a place for everyone, regardless of age or stage in life. Developments in learning provision, research and new initiatives have all been underpinned by providing "a place of useful learning, open to all".

2020 was an unprecedented year for all at the University of Strathclyde, which brought many challenges, but also presented many opportunities.

Strathclyde remains as the only UK University offering online learning specifically aimed at those aged 50+ - something which complements the longstanding on-campus programme. CLL will continue to develop a suite of online classes in the future, potentially offering 'blended learning' for some courses with a mixture of on-campus classes supplemented with an online option, as well as fully online courses. CLL aims to grow its older adult student base to reach a wider audience – throughout the UK and worldwide.

Online learning also provides opportunities to develop more national collaborative partnerships with more isolated community groups now that location is no longer a barrier to participation.

A variety of research aimed at understanding how to foster better, healthier ageing will continue to be showcased – from childhood through to education, employment, and older adulthood.

Reskilling and upskilling throughout our working lives are also key age-friendly areas for the University with the aim of providing more agile support for both employers and employees to upskill and reskill, and increase the provision of in-work learning using flexible models of delivery.

Going forward, The Age-Friendly Academy will continue to support all these initiatives as well as add to its portfolio of activity related to ageing through new collaborative projects, new course development and maximised community engagement.

"Strathclyde is well known for its commitment to widening access and social inclusion. The Age-Friendly Academy adds another unique layer to this work and not only does it underpin the University's founding philosophy, it is equally in step with the more recent socially progressive ethos which Strathclyde is committed to delivering. Universities have a civic responsibility to provide opportunities for all, at all points in the life-course and initiatives like this assist with this goal."

Professor Douglas Brodie,
Associate Principal, Social Inclusion

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