Brain Health Community Framework

Background

Brain health is an emerging concept, and while there is broad agreement around definitions, there is less consensus on how to translate this concept into practice and specifically into a housing and community setting. From a policy and implementation point of view, it is possible to view brain health sitting at the nexus of many determinants (including biomedical and psychological but also socially determined environmental and economic), all of which impact the brain health of the individual across the life course.

This framework, developed as a component of the Respond/Global Brain Health Institute led 'Brain Health Village' project, is an attempt to articulate the general components required to create a Brain Health Supportive Community, and to introduce approaches to support its implementation.

Scope and purpose

This framework is intended as a guide and resource for those working with housing and communities - including organisations directly involved in the delivery or management of housing or housing supports, those active at a community engagement level, as well as those engaged in policy development and research. It introduces the concept of brain health supportive communities and the value of delivering housing and services using this approach.

The framework outlines a values based conceptual model based on six pillars, and a guide for implementation - presenting a menu of strategies and considerations to help inform an implementation approach.

Each pillar within the framework is presented in a dedicated section, and initially outlined with a general explanation. This introduction is followed by a detailed exposition of several key principles that reinforce each pillar. Subsequently, each document section presents a range of examples of Enablers and Barriers, illustrating factors that may either aid or hinder the implementation of each pillar. The section concludes with a comprehensive presentation of strategies for effectively implementing these principles.

It should be noted that the framework is primarily designed to provide an evidence-based 'starting point' towards creating a brain health supportive community, which can be adapted for the specific conditions of a given community through a process of stakeholder engagement and co-creation. Some aspects of the framework may be more appropriate, or applicable in certain settings, but the overall model can be used as a scaffold to develop an implementation plan based on local needs and priorities. In considering implementation, the framework is intended for use at the scale of the neighbourhood or residential area - but recognises the interconnection and interdependence with the wider community, and the need to involve community stakeholders in the development and implementation process.

Development & contributors

The development of this framework was undertaken as part of the Respond/Global Brain Health Institute Brain Healthy Village (BHV) project, as a starting / reference document, with the intention of further updating and developing the approach based on evidence and practice gathered through implementation.

The framework development group comprised of individuals with expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of housing provision and management, brain health research and education, design, architecture and urbanism, policy, advocacy and implementation science. Three contributors took on additional roles regarding coordination, collation of feedback, and document creation. The final document was developed through a series of large and small group meetings, with 'offline' development of successive drafts.

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Glossary of key terms not defined elsewhere in document:

- **Brain health supportive community:** a community where actions to support brain health and promote wellbeing have been implemented, such as design, awareness and community activation.
- **Brain health:** a general definition of brain health is provided by the WHO as ''the state of brain functioning across cognitive, sensory, social-emotional, behavioural and motor domains, allowing a person to realize their full potential over the life course, irrespective of the presence or absence of disorders''. More specifically the term brain health is often used the context of public health approaches to dementia prevention, focusing on risk reduction approaches.
- **Embedded services:** embedded services are services that are permanently located or accessible within a given community or neighbourhood, examples include primary health care, social, financial or legal advice etc.
- **Green spaces:** a healing natural environment, defined as an environment with room for plants/trees, animals, fresh air, sunlight and means for residents to experience these different elements.
- **Modifiable Risk Factors:** in medical terms, a modifiable risk factor can be defined as something that increases your risk of developing a particular disease or condition, but that can be modified to reduce your overall risk. A classic example would be smoking as a modifiable risk factor for lung cancer. In the case of brain health and dementia, there is currently consensus evidence for twelve modifiable risk factors: less education, high blood pressure, obesity, hearing loss, depression, diabetes, physical inactivity, smoking, and social isolation, high alcohol intake, head injury and air pollution.
- **Residents:** members of the community who live in the local neighborhood/estate or are directly involved in implementing the project. They may be tenants of a housing body, be owner occupiers or rent from a private sector or other landlord.
- **Social determinants of brain health:** The social determinants of brain health are similar to those for general health, and include poverty, exclusion, and isolation all of which can contribute to poor brain health outcomes for individuals across their life course.
- **Social determinants of health:** The social determinants of health (SDH) are defined by the World Health Organisation as '' the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life''.
- **Universal design**: in the context of housing and architecture, Universal design can be defined as the design and composition of an environment that allows it to be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.
- **Wider community stakeholders/wider community:** other people or organizations living or active in the area where the project is undertaken. These can include people who are directly supporting the residents, such as care workers, or local health teams.

Introducing the Brain Health Community Framework

As illustrated in Fig. 1, this brain health community model comprises six pillars, that are informed and underpinned by six key values.

The model proposes that the life course approach to brain health is the cornerstone to health and wellbeing; therefore developing an understanding amongst all stakeholders of the concept of brain health and means by which we can protect it is an essential activity to successfully implement the model.

Identifying key stakeholders, understanding their information needs and where power lies in the community/wider system is also essential. A values-based approach, centred on equity and equality, with the goal of promoting collective and individual security is also core to the concept. The social determinants of brain health are similar to those for general health. Poverty, exclusion, and social isolation all can contribute to poor brain health outcomes for individuals, and for this reason, social justice is also a key value that underpins the model.

Engaging with both the immediate and wider community to co-develop the overall initiative, and creating the conditions that foster such engagement in the longer term is also a key part of the approach. In addition, aspiring to create 'cultural safety' and promote diversity, while being conscious of potential tensions arising from differing perspectives, or cultures are additional core components.

Supporting lifecourse brain health through designing and adapting the physical environment with long-term economic, community, and environmental sustainability in mind, including consideration of the inclusion of natural elements, (from the simplest form such as, access to sunlight and fresh air to more complex forms such as community green spaces/gardens, and animals, to supporting intergenerational communities through age-friendly and age-adapted design, and giving a level of autonomy in terms of personalisation both at a community and individual level, with creativity viewed as a key means of building community and supporting well-being, and access to cultural engagement is prioritised (libraries, museums, galleries, theatre/music venues etc.). Physical health is supported through encouraging and designing for physical activity, and supporting and enhancing access to health services (both primary and secondary/tertiary). Finally access to transport services, digital infrastructure and access to educational services are also considered highly important.

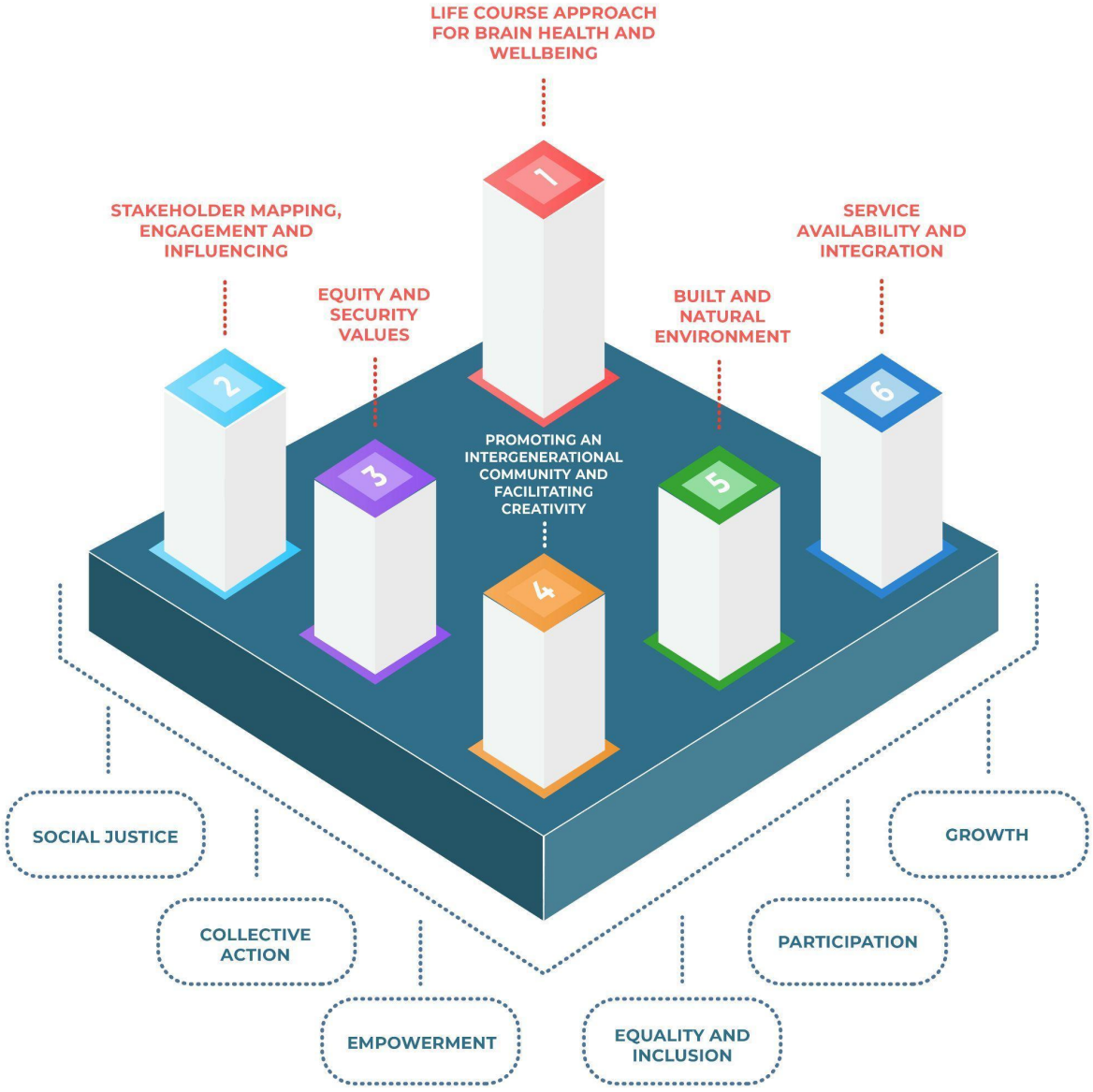

Fig 1: graphic presentation of the brain health-friendly community model.

The Brain Health Friendly Community Approach Is Built On Six Pillars:

Pillar 1: Life course approach for brain health and wellbeing; This is a foundational pillar, that sets the agenda for creating a comprehensive approach to brain health, emphasizing a life course perspective, protective factors, physical activity, measurement, diversity and empowerment, improvement opportunities, and a holistic approach to addiction and trauma. Additionally, it focuses on reducing stigma and building an understanding of brain health as a positive health promotion concept. Raising awareness of the importance of brain health from early childhood, through education and health-promoting activities and programs, is a key aspect of this pillar. This is done at a community-wide level, focusing on the benefits, risks, and degeneration of brain health. Additionally, promoting creativity and using an evidence-based approach is a core aspect. Increasing awareness at a level of decision makers (local-regional-national) is also another key element.

Pillar 2: Stakeholder mapping, engagement and influencing; Stakeholders are mapped and integrated with local and community groups to ensure inclusiveness and consideration of all

perspectives. A politically engaged approach to promoting change focuses on securing political buy-in and engagement at local, regional, and national levels. Key to this pillar is the identification and formation of joint initiatives and providing support to community champions who can drive these initiatives forward. Understanding all of the key stakeholder e.g. political and policy actors, and where power lies is crucial to navigating the complex political and community landscape and ensuring success.. In addition, access to resources will be important. Finally, in the interest of sustaining and scaling these approaches more widely, it is important that successes of the initiatives are effectively communicated to key stakeholders at all levels.

Pillar 3: Equity and security values; Underpins the aim of creating equitable, safe, and inclusive communities. The equity and values-based approach prioritizes fairness and respect while considering the impact of trauma, violence, and power dynamics on healing and safety. Personal identity and social inclusion are important factors, along with a focus on privacy, safety, and community in homes. The pillar seeks to create a balance between stability and change, with an appropriate tenure model and personalized approach. The recognition of home as both a safe and potentially traumatizing place is central, with a focus on empowering residents and stakeholders in the wider development of the community and its culture.

Pillar 4: Promoting an Intergenerational Community and Facilitating Creativity: Creating a community that fosters engagement, cooperation, and support among its members, where the contribution people of all ages can make is valued, and a culture of care and caring to support brain health is fostered. Viewing the community as both the immediate neighbourhood/setting, and the wider community in the locality. Recognising the agency of residents and other community members in place making and setting their own cultural and community agenda, adopting co-creation as central practice. The community environment should be friendly and accepting, allowing individuals to be themselves, with a strong emphasis on cultural safety and choice. Intergenerational connections and community interaction also support brain health and wellbeing, building trust, stimulating social behavior, and reducing loneliness and social isolation and creativity, culture, and creative approaches are integrated as essential means to promote well-being and build community.

Pillar 5: Built and Natural Environment; Through an understanding of the impact of our environment on our brain health and neuro- development, designing physical environments and community spaces that prioritize sustainable, accessible, and pleasant and well-maintained spaces that improve quality of experience. It emphasizes a greater connection with nature and the integration of digital elements to create holistic built environments that support brain health and wellbeing by encouraging inclusion, social interaction, play and physical activity, safety and the reduction of stress. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of universal design principles to accommodate all members of the community, support independence, and protect privacy. Finally, the inclusion of public art elements in overall design or adaptation is an integral part of the approach.

Pillar 6: Service availability and integration; Enable a community to access or develop a range of services and resources to meet the needs and interests of its residents throughout their life, encourage intergenerational connection and support physical and brain health. This includes the availability of leisure options, secure and affordable homes, access to information and cultural services, and linkage with important services such as early years care, schools, education, and healthcare and the integration of these services into the community itself.

Values base: The brain health friendly community approach is informed and underpinned by the following values:

- ***Social Justice:*** *Promoting a just society involves supporting policies and practices that challenge injustice, poverty, inequality, discrimination and social exclusion, and valuing diversity of identities and approaches.*
- ***Collective action:*** *Emphasising the right of members to collectively influence the work of the organisation. This requires practitioners to focus on the potential benefits for communities and not just the benefits to individuals.*
- ***Empowerment:*** *Involving an approach that leads people and communities to be resilient, organised, included and influential.*
- ***Equality and Inclusion****: Ensuring fairness, equality and transparency in dealing with all stakeholders, regardless of their background.*
- ***Participation:*** *Participatory identification of needs and interests, and the formulation of responses by the community or group concerned is central to their ability to continue to influence outcomes*
- ***Growth:*** *Encouraging growth, openness and a growth mindset at a personal, organizational, and community level.*

This values driven approach is informed in part both by existing values frameworks for community engagement work, and the GBHI core values.

References:

1. Chen, Y., Demnitz, N., Yamamoto, S., Yaffe, K., Lawlor, B., & Leroi, I. Defining brain health: A concept analysis. International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 2021; 37, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.5564
2. Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2020 report of the Lancet Commission. Lancet. 2020 Aug 8;396(10248):413-446. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30367-6
3. Karakas, T. & Yildiz, D. Exploring the influence of the built environment on human experience through a neuroscience approach: A systematic review. *Frontiers of Architectural Research,* 2020; 9**,** 236-247. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2019.10.005
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7. What is community development? Scottish community development (2025) https://www.scdc.org.uk/who/what-is-community-development#:~:text=Community%20development%20is%20fundamentally%20based,equality%20and%20respect%20for%20diversity
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Implementation Strategies and considerations

General implementation approaches

Recognising the unique position each implementation case will present, the implementation strategies and considerations presented here frame a 'menu' of approaches, and are not intended to be prescriptive. Similarly, the language used is general, and should be adapted to local norms and legal and/or contractual requirements. Finally - reflective of the values base of the framework - one element to be considered central in all approaches should be the inclusion of stakeholders in the development of the implementation plan.

At a high level, the following elements should all be considered:

1. Constant evolution and change that involves creativity
2. Community asset mapping for brain health
3. Design for brain health and connections
4. Co-creation and co-development
5. Constant needs analysis
6. Evidence-informed approaches
7. Capturing outcomes and impact

Overview of implementation approach

Implementing a complex programme of interventions requires careful planning, prioritisation, execution, and evaluation. There are several key areas that should be addressed.

Appointing an Implementation Team is key to successful implementation of interventions. The factors for consideration when putting together an implementation team include:

- Composition of implementation teams: Implementation teams should consist of a variety of individuals, including program managers, front-line staff, technical experts, and external consultants. The composition of the team should reflect the needs and goals of the implementation effort.
- Team dynamics: Effective implementation teams require effective communication, collaboration, diversity and leadership. Teams should have clear roles and responsibilities as well as decision-making authority.
- Time and resource allocation: Implementation teams need dedicated time and resources to be successful. This may include training, funding, and other support to help the team members carry out their roles effectively.
- Sustainability: Implementation teams should consider the sustainability of the intervention after the initial implementation phase. This may involve planning for ongoing and support, as well as developing strategies for scaling up or replicating the intervention in other settings.

Once the Implementation Team is established, they should write an implementation plan. Implementation plans provide a structured approach to carrying out any intervention and help to ensure that the implementation effort is efficient, effective, and accountable. Implementation plans also offer:

- Clarity: An implementation plan provides a clear and concise description of the intervention, including its goals, objectives, and expected outcomes. It will also identify what implementation theories, models and frameworks are required to plan and guide the implementation initiative.
- Guidance: An implementation plan provides guidance on how to carry out the various tasks and activities involved in the implementation effort.
- Accountability: An implementation plan can help to establish accountability for the implementation effort.
- Monitoring and evaluation: An implementation plan will establish a system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation effort.

In summary, the initial approach recommended is the establishment of an Implementation Team that will design the implementation plan, identifying the stages, activities and resources for the intervention.

Complex interventions such the incorporation of this framework in all or part, require detailed implementation planning and consideration to ensure success. Above all, the wellbeing of community members should be a guiding principle - and the implementation team needs to be aware of the danger of raising expectations which cannot be met, or cannot be supported in the longer term.

Resources

1. CES Guide to Implementation - Centre for Effective Services (2022) https://implementation.effectiveservices.org/

Pillar 1: Life course approach for brain health and wellbeing

This is a foundational pillar, that sets the agenda for creating a comprehensive approach to brain health, emphasizing a life course perspective, protective factors, physical activity, measurement, diversity and empowerment, improvement opportunities, and a holistic approach to addiction and trauma. Additionally, it focuses on reducing stigma and building an understanding of brain health as a positive health promotion concept. Raising awareness of the importance of brain health from early childhood, through education and health-promoting activities and programs, is a key aspect of this pillar. This is done at a community-wide level, focusing on the benefits, risks, and degeneration of brain health. Additionally, promoting creativity and using an evidence-based approach is a core aspect. Increasing awareness at a level of decision makers (local-regional-national) is also another key element.

Principles

1. **Building brain health awareness and understanding through education and advocacy:** This principle focuses on promoting education and health-promoting activities related to brain health, with a focus on increasing awareness of the benefits, of taking a brain health approach among community members from an early age. The goal is to take a community-wide approach to brain health awareness.
2. **Life course approach to brain health and well-being:** This principle emphasizes the importance of taking a life course approach to brain health and well-being, considering the impact of experiences and environmental factors throughout a person's life on their brain health.
3. **Focus on protective factors:** This principle focuses on identifying and addressing protective factors related to brain health, including social, environmental, and organizational factors. The goal is to create a supportive environment that promotes brain health and well-being.
4. **Evidence-based approach:** This principle prioritizes using an evidence-based approach, drawing on scientific research and data to inform decisions and activities related to brain health promotion. The goal is to ensure that activities and programs are effective and based on the latest knowledge and best practices.
5. **Physical activity:** This principle prioritizes physical activity as an important factor for promoting brain health and well-being.
6. **Promotion of creativity and co-creation, empowerment through independence and autonomy:** This principle emphasizes the importance of promoting creativity and co-creation, which can help stimulate the brain and promote overall brain health, while empowering individuals by promoting independence and autonomy, helping to build resilience and supporting overall well-being.
7. **Promote intersectionality and diversity:** This principle emphasizes the importance of understanding and considering the unique experiences and needs of different groups and communities.
8. **Find and share economic, social, and personal improvement opportunities:** This principle focuses on identifying and sharing opportunities for economic, social, and personal improvement that can positively impact brain health and well-being.
9. **Brain health approach to addiction and trauma:** This principle emphasizes the importance of taking a brain health approach to addressing problematic drug and alcohol use and trauma, considering the impact of these experiences on brain health and well-being, and seeking to

promote healing and resilience. In particular being cognizant of the impact that class, poverty and social exclusion can have on brain health.

10. **Measurement and evaluation:** This principle emphasizes the importance of measurement and evaluation in order to assess the effectiveness and impact of activities and programs related to brain health.

Enablers

1. Positive legacy of other previous or ongoing health promotion activities or community initiatives fostering openness to new concepts.
2. Adequate funding and support.
3. Well integrated community.
4. Access to expertise in the field of brain health, and capacity building at the staff/team level.
5. Access to a 'library' of appropriate and accessible materials giving information on brain health.
6. Access to cultural spaces and opportunities to participate in creative activities.
7. Implementation frameworks, evaluation strategies, and the means to adapt.
8. Culture of co-creation and engagement to ensure community buy in, and relevance of initiatives to local context and needs.

Barriers

1. Misinformation, or existing stigma regarding brain health, mental health, dementia, etc.
2. Lack of trust/poor communication between community and implementation team.
3. Pre-existing psycho-social issues, or community tensions.
4. Infrastructural, funding, or services deficits.
5. Lack of awareness at the level of local or national decision-making, leading to deprioritization.
6. Lack of funding for community based initiatives

Implementation Strategies

1. *Building brain health awareness and understanding through education and advocacy:*

    - Developing educational materials and programs that are accessible and engaging for community members of different/diverse ages, capacities and backgrounds.
    - Collaborating with community organizations and leaders to increase awareness and support for brain health promotion.
    - Utilizing social media and other digital platforms to share information and resources related to brain health in the community.

2. *Life course approach to brain health and well-being:*

    - Considering the impact of childhood experiences, as well as factors such as education, employment, and social support, on brain health throughout the lifespan.

- Developing programs and interventions that are tailored to the specific needs of individuals at different life stages.
- Encouraging individuals to make healthy lifestyle choices that can support brain health across the lifespan.

3. *Focus on protective factors:*

- Identifying and addressing environmental and social factors that can impact brain health, such as air pollution, social isolation and discrimination, nutrition, physical activity, and education, among others.
- Creating supportive environments that promote healthy behaviors and provide opportunities for social connection and engagement.
- Providing resources and support for individuals who may be experiencing stress or other challenges that can impact brain health.

4. *Evidence-based approach:*

- Regularly reviewing scientific research and data to ensure that brain health promotion activities and programs are based on the best available evidence.
- Conduct evaluations of programs and interventions to determine their effectiveness and impact and make improvements as needed in an iterative fashion.
- Collaborating with researchers and other experts in the field to stay up-to-date on the latest developments in brain health research.

5. *Physical activity:*

- Promoting physical activity as a key factor in promoting brain health and overall well-being.
- Providing opportunities for individuals to engage in physical activity that is enjoyable and accessible, such as group exercise classes and community sports leagues considering different ages and the needs of residents.
- Educating individuals on the benefits of physical activity for brain health and providing resources and support to help them incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.

6. *Promotion of creativity and co-creation, empowering through independence and autonomy:*

- Encouraging individuals to engage in creative activities that stimulate the brain, such as art, music, and writing.
- Providing opportunities for individuals to collaborate and co-create with others, such as through community-based art projects or group exercise classes.
- Supporting individuals in developing skills and abilities that promote independence and autonomy, such as financial literacy and self-advocacy.

7. *Promote intersectionality and diversity:*

- Understanding the impact of social determinants of brain health, and how poverty, class and social exclusion can negatively affect an individual's brain health.
- Ensuring that brain health promotion initiatives are inclusive and accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities.
- Recognize and address the unique challenges and experiences that different communities may face in relation to brain health.
- Collaborate with community organizations and leaders to promote cultural competency and sensitivity in brain health promotion efforts.
- Address complex issues that might arise (discrimination against minorities) by promoting positive behavior and respect, through campaigns, materials, and the implementation of behavior protocols, and clear rules against negative behavior.

8. *Find and share economic, social, and personal improvement opportunities:*

- Identify and share resources and opportunities that can support economic, social, and personal well-being, such as job training programs and community development initiatives.
- Providing support and resources for individuals who may be experiencing financial or other challenges that can impact brain health.
- Collaborating with community organizations and leaders to promote economic and social equity and support overall community well-being.

9. *Brain health approach to addiction and trauma:*

- Recognizing the impact that addiction and trauma can have on brain health and well-being.
- Providing resources and support for individuals who may be experiencing problematic drug or alcohol use or trauma, such as counseling and support groups.
- Develop interventions and programs that promote healing and resilience and address the underlying factors that can contribute to problematic drug or alcohol use and trauma.

10. *Measurement and evaluation:*

- Establish clear objectives for brain health promotion activities and programs.
- Developing measures and evaluation tools to assess the effectiveness of activities and programs in achieving their goals.
- Regularly reviewing and analyzing evaluation data to make improvements and adjustments as needed.

Further resources

1. Optimising brain health across the life course: WHO (2022)https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240054561

2. Walsh S, Govia I, Wallace L, Richard E, Peters R, Anstey KJ, Brayne C. A whole-population approach is required for dementia risk reduction. Lancet Healthy Longev. 2022 Jan;3(1):e6-e8. doi: 10.1016/S2666-7568(21)00301-9. PMID: 36098322.
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Pillar 2: Stakeholder mapping, engagement and influencing

Stakeholders are mapped and integrated with local and community groups to ensure inclusiveness and consideration of all perspectives. A politically engaged approach to promoting change focuses on securing political buy-in and engagement at local, regional and national levels. Key to this pillar is the identification and formation of joint initiatives and providing support to community champions who can drive these initiatives forward. Understanding all of the key stakeholder e.g. political and policy actors, and where power lies is crucial to navigating the complex political and community landscape and ensuring success.. In addition, access to resources will be important. Finally, in the interest of sustaining and scaling these approaches more widely, it is important that successes of the initiatives are effectively communicated to key stakeholders at all levels.

Principles

1. **Stakeholder mapping and integration:** Mapping stakeholders and integrating them with local and community groups helps to ensure that the needs and perspectives of different groups are considered and addressed.

2. **Broader awareness of brain health:** Raising awareness of the importance of brain health and its impact on society across all levels of government is key to promoting change and progress.

3. **Understanding policy influencers and decision makers:** Understanding the political actors and forces involved in brain health initiatives is essential for navigating the political landscape and effectively communicating with political leaders.

4. **Political buy-in and engagement:** Involvement and support from both local and regional and national political stakeholders are crucial to the success of brain health initiatives/communities.

5. **Identification and formation of initiatives:** Identifying and establishing brain health/community initiatives is crucial to promoting and improving brain health.

6. **Support for champions:** Providing support for individuals who are passionate about brain health and want to make a difference, can help to drive change and progress.

7. **Communication of learnings:** Sharing and communicating learnings from brain health initiatives to influence policy are important in promoting the continued development and improvement of brain health initiatives and communities.

Enablers

1. Existing relationships at local regional and national policy level
2. Expertise and capacity to adequately map stakeholders
3. Local and national ‘intelligence’ i.e understanding of where power lies, and who are the gatekeepers to resources and services.
4. Structure and resources to support dissemination and advocacy

Barriers

1. Embedded power structures at any level prevent effective implementation, acting as 'gatekeepers' to services, funding, or permissions.
2. Loss of interest/buy in from stakeholders at the community level, due to previous experience or slow progress.
3. Failure to align with/influence regional or national priorities.

Implementation Strategies

1. *Stakeholder mapping and integration:*

    - Identify all stakeholders involved or who could be impacted by the initiative/project.
    - Consider how to integrate and engage with these stakeholders to ensure their needs and perspectives are considered and addressed.
    - Develop a plan for ongoing communication and collaboration with stakeholders.

2. *Broader awareness of brain health:*

    - Develop a communication plan to raise awareness of the importance of brain health across all levels of government, especially locally.
    - Engage with local media outlets to increase the visibility of brain health issues.
    - Partner with community groups and organizations to promote brain health education and advocacy.

3. *Understanding political actors and decision makers:*

    - Research and identify the key political and policy stakeholders.
    - Research the resources available for brain health initiatives and the community.
    - Understand their motivations, priorities, and potential barriers to progress.
    - Develop a strategy for effectively communicating with political and policy leaders.

4. *Political buy-in and engagement:*

    - Develop relationships with local, regional and national, to build support for brain health initiatives.
    - Provide clear and concise information on the benefits and impact of brain health initiatives and how they align with the priorities of political leaders.
    - Consider how to engage with political leaders in a way that is most likely to motivate them to take action.

5. *Identification and formation of initiatives:*

    - Identify the specific brain health issues and needs that must be addressed across all stakeholders and groups within the community
    - Develop a plan on how to address these issues, including specific initiatives and programs that can be implemented, the time to do it, and the necessary budget. Map out how existing programmes and initiatives can be incorporated into this plan to identify cost savings and synergies.

- Consider how to measure the effectiveness of these initiatives and adjust them as necessary.

6. *Support for champions:*

   - Identify individuals who are passionate about brain health and community engagement, and are likely to take action and make a difference.
   - Provide training, resources, and support to these individuals to help them become effective advocates for brain health initiatives.
   - Consider ways to recognize and celebrate the contributions of these champions.

7. *Communication of learnings:*

   - Develop a plan on how to share learnings from brain health initiatives with the local community, policymakers and other stakeholders.
   - Consider how to effectively communicate the impact of brain health initiatives and the importance of continued investment in these initiatives.
   - Use data and evidence to support the effectiveness of brain health initiatives and to inform future decision-making.

Further Resources

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Pillar 3: Equity and security values

Underpins the aim of creating equitable, safe, and inclusive communities. The equity and values-based approach prioritizes fairness and respect while considering the impact of trauma, violence, and power dynamics on healing and safety. Personal identity and social inclusion are important factors, along with a focus on privacy, safety, and community in homes. The pillar seeks to create a balance between stability and change, with an appropriate tenure model and personalized approach. The recognition of home as both a safe and potentially traumatizing place is central, with a focus on empowering residents and stakeholders in the wider development of the community and its culture.

Principles

1. **Equity and values-based approach:** This approach prioritizes fairness and respect, and seeks to address systemic inequalities.
2. **Understanding trauma, violence, and power dynamics:** The impact of trauma, violence, and power dynamics on healing and safety, and the consequences for brain health, are considered in decision-making processes.
3. **Personal identity and societal inclusion:** Personal identity and social inclusion are important factors, and the approach seeks to foster a sense of belonging and inclusiveness.
4. **Privacy, safety, and community in homes:** The focus is on ensuring that homes are safe, private, and supportive places that foster community.
5. **Balance between stability and change:** The approach seeks to create a balance between stability and change so that residents can feel secure while also embracing new opportunities and experiences.
6. **Appropriate tenure model and personalization**: An appropriate tenure model and tailored approach are used to ensure that residents have a sense of control and ownership over their homes and communities.
7. **Recognition of home as both a safe and a potentially traumatizing place:** The approach recognizes that home can be both a source of comfort and security, as well as a place where trauma can occur, and seeks to address these dual realities.
8. **Empowerment of residents and stakeholders in the community and cultural development:** Residents and stakeholders are empowered to play a role in shaping their communities and cultural experiences.

Enablers

1. Existing values-based, or trauma-informed approaches.
2. Existing level of community integration and engagement.
3. Stable community, with lower levels of crime and antisocial behavior.

Barriers

1. Prevalence of shorter-term tenure, insecurity, and inappropriate home-making model
2. Tensions within family units, or between residents may not be visible and may be difficult to address.

3. Issues such as antisocial behavior, crime, etc. may be difficult for the community to address.

Implementation Strategies

1. *Equity and values-based approach:*

    - Awareness of systemic barriers that contribute to inequalities in housing, such as discriminatory policies or practices, and attempting to address them where feasible in the context of the project.
    - Ensuring that resources and supports are distributed fairly and equitably, based on need.
    - Providing opportunities for community engagement and input to ensure that the approach reflects the values and needs of diverse groups/intersections.

2. *Understanding trauma, violence, and power dynamics:*

    - Ensuring that decision-making processes are trauma-informed and take into account the impact of past trauma on residents.
    - Understanding and considering power imbalances in the housing context, such as those between landlords and tenants, or between different groups within a community.
    - Providing resources and support for residents who have experienced trauma or violence, and ensuring that they have a safe and supportive environment in which to heal.

    - Understanding the impact that trauma and adverse experiences have on an individuals life long brain health

3. *Personal identity and societal inclusion:*

    - Acknowledging and respecting the diversity of identities and experiences within a community, and ensuring that everyone feels welcome and included.
    - Fostering a sense of community and connection among residents, while also celebrating and valuing individual differences.
    - Providing opportunities for cultural expression and education, and recognizing the importance of cultural heritage and traditions.

4. *Privacy, safety, and community in homes:*

    - Ensuring that residents feel as safe and secure as possible in their homes, with adequate locks, lighting, and other safety features, as well as reduction of hazards or barriers for accessibility.
    - Providing common spaces and amenities that foster community and social connections.
    - Respect residents' privacy and personal space, while also promoting opportunities for social interaction and community-building.

5. *Balance between stability and change:*

- Recognizing the importance of stability and predictability in housing, particularly for vulnerable populations such as the elderly or those with disabilities.
- Providing opportunities for residents to participate in decision-making and community-building activities, and to contribute to positive changes in their communities.
- Balancing the need for stability with the potential benefits of change, such as increased opportunities for social connections or access to new resources.

6. *Appropriate tenure model and personalization:*

- Raise awareness of wider community tenure models that exist that may more appropriately meet the needs of residents, such as social, affordable, co-op, or ownership models.
- Ensuring that residents have a sense of control over their living environments, with opportunities for personalization and customization.
- Promote security of tenure (security of tenure is usually established either in legislation or in lease agreements) and ensure residents understand their tenure rights through signposting/education/information, and what residents can do if their rights are breached (i.e. who is responsible for enforcing tenants' rights, what recourse do residents have if their security of tenure is breached, e.g. via an illegal eviction).
- Recognise that past experience and relationships with landlord/housing inform how secure people feel.
- Understand effect of broader economic issues, e.g. housing affordability, can have on people's attitudes towards tenure and security.
- Facilitate adequate and fast support, and resources for residents who may need assistance with home maintenance or repairs.

7. *Recognition of home as both a safe and a potentially traumatizing place:*

- Acknowledging the potential for home to be a site of trauma, such as in cases of domestic violence or child abuse.
- Providing resources and support for residents who may have experienced trauma in their homes, and ensuring that appropriate safety measures are in place.
- Promoting a sense of safety and security in the home, while also recognizing the potential for residents to experience emotional or psychological distress.

8. *Empowerment of residents and stakeholders in the community and cultural development:*

- Providing opportunities for residents to participate in decision-making and community-building activities.
- Empowering residents to take an active role in shaping their communities and cultural experiences, and providing resources and support for community-led initiatives.
- Recognizing the importance of community engagement and collaboration in building strong and vibrant communities.

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Pillar 4: Promoting an Intergenerational Community and Facilitating Creativity

Description:

Creating a community that fosters engagement, cooperation, and support among its members, where the contribution people of all ages can make is valued, and a culture of care and caring to support brain health is fostered. Viewing the community as both the immediate neighbourhood/setting, and the wider community in the locality. Recognising the agency of residents and other community members in place making and setting their own cultural and community agenda, and adopting co-creation as central practice. The community environment should be friendly and accepting, allowing individuals to be themselves, with a strong emphasis on cultural safety and choice. Intergenerational connections and community interaction also support brain health and wellbeing, building trust, stimulating social behavior, and reducing loneliness and social isolation and creativity is viewed as an essential means to promote well-being and build community.

Principles

1. **Facilitate community engagement, cooperation, awareness, integration, and support throughout the course of life:** This principle aims to create a community that is actively engaged with each other, working together cooperatively, and aware of each other's needs and perspectives. Support and integration are also emphasized to ensure that everyone has the resources they need to thrive, and integration with the wider community in the locality is key.
3. **Friendly and accepting community environment, with the possibility for Individualization and freedom to be oneself, "Cultural safety" and supporting choice:** This principle prioritizes creating a community environment that is friendly, accepting, and allows for individuality and freedom of expression. "Cultural safety (ensuring respect for cultural and social differences in the provision of services)" a key approach in ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued and that their choices are respected.
4. **Creativity as a means to build community and well-being:** This principle recognizes the power of creativity to bring people together and promote well-being. The goal is to create a community where creativity is encouraged and celebrated as a means of fostering connection and well-being for all members.

Enablers

1. Existing sense of trust within community
2. Legacy of previous community activity or interventions
3. Access to outlets for creativity and cultural amenities

Barriers

1. The concept of ‘cultural safety’ and ‘freedom of expression’ may be less well accepted by certain cultures, or individuals, and this can create tensions that can be hard to address.
2. Wider communities may have a bias against residents if they are seen to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

3. Pre-existing experience and trauma may make residents less open to engaging with one another and the wider initiative.
4. Lack of access to cultural facilities/opportunities to engage in creative activities.

Implementation strategies

1. *Facilitate community engagement, cooperation, awareness, integration, and support throughout the course of life:*

    - Engage all members of the community (who wish to be involved) in the planning process to ensure their needs are heard and incorporated into the design of community programs and resources.
    - Foster collaboration between community groups and local organizations to provide comprehensive support for all community members.
    - Ensure that community resources are easily accessible and available to all members, regardless of socioeconomic status or other barriers.
    - Create opportunities for community members to engage with one another in meaningful ways, such as through shared hobbies or interests, community events, or volunteer opportunities.
    - Promote awareness of community resources and opportunities through outreach efforts, such as community events, newsletters, or social media.

    - Create opportunities for community members to learn from one another and share their skills and experiences.
    - Promote trust-building activities such as community dialogues, cultural celebrations,
    - Address issues of social isolation and loneliness by developing programs and resources that promote connection and socialization among community members. The goal is to create a vibrant community where people feel connected to one another.

2. *Friendly and accepting community environment, with the possibility for individualization and freedom to be oneself, "cultural safety" and supporting choice:*

    - Create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other identity factors.
    - Encourage individuality and self-expression through community events, art installations, or other creative outlets.
    - Develop policies and practices that promote "cultural safety," such as training staff on cultural competency and implementing practices that respect the unique needs of diverse community members.
    - Support residents in making choices about their lives, such as housing preferences, community involvement, and personal goals.

3. *Creativity as a means to build community, well-being and support brain health:*

    - Encourage creativity through community art projects, writing groups, music clubs, or other opportunities.
    - Promote the benefits of creative expression for personal well-being, stress relief, and mental health.

- Incorporate creative elements into community design, such as public art installations or murals.
- Provide opportunities for community members to collaborate on creative projects or participate in community-wide arts events.
- Ensure that creative & cultural resources (such as museums, galleries, theatres etc.) and opportunities are accessible to all members of the community, regardless of socioeconomic status or other barriers.
- Create awareness of and support access to existing cultural resources and activities in the area.

Further Resources

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Pillar 5: Built and Natural Environment

Through an understanding of the impact of our environment on our brain health and neuro-development, designing physical environments and community spaces that prioritize sustainable, accessible, and pleasant and well-maintained spaces that improve quality of experience. It emphasizes a greater connection with nature and the integration of digital elements to create holistic built environments that support brain health and wellbeing by encouraging inclusion, social interaction, play and physical activity, safety and the reduction of stress. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of universal design principles to accommodate all members of the community, support independence, and protect privacy. Finally, the inclusion of public art elements in overall design or adaptation is an integral part of the approach.

Principles

1. **Design with nature:** This principle focuses on designing communities and physical spaces with easy access to natural elements such as green space, sunlight, flora and fauna. Both the aesthetic and hands-on aspects of these elements are emphasized, and a focus on making the maximum possible use of these elements in a given environment (i.e. in some cases, access to open spaces may be difficult, but lighting, indoor 'greening' and ventilation may be possible). It also involves supporting biodiversity and provision of shelter and food for the local wildlife (birdhouses, plants suited for insects and birds, room for beehives).
2. **Respect context and create a sense of place:** This principle recognises the importance of the local context to ensure that communities create a sense of place and identity to support wellbeing.
3. **Accessible, age-inclusive spaces through a universal design approach:** This principle emphasizes designing communities and physical spaces that are designed or adapted for use by people of all ages, abilities and disabilities. The goal is to create a community that is playful, inclusive and accessible to everyone.
4. **Design for community interaction, and intergenerational connections, building trust, stimulating social behaviour, and preventing loneliness:** This principle focuses on designing environments that facilitate interactions between people of all ages, building trust, and reducing loneliness. The goal is to create a vibrant community where people feel connected to one another. On a practical level it means creating community-shared spaces that stimulate play, social connection, engagement, and physical activity.
5. **Environments that create a balance between social interaction, safety and privacy**: This principle prioritizes designing communities and physical spaces that provide a continuum of public to private spaces that encourage interaction at one end, and protect residents' and visitors' safety and privacy at the other. This ensures that everyone has a choice and access to a diversity of spaces where they can feel safe and secure within the community.
6. **Pleasant, healthy, well-maintained physical spaces:** This principle prioritizes pleasant, healthy (e.g. good air quality and acoustic conditions), clean, functional, and

well-maintained physical spaces within a community. This creates a positive environment and improves the quality of experience for residents and visitors.

7. **Stress-reducing and therapeutic environments:** This principle prioritizes designing communities and physical spaces that are calming and stress-reducing. The goal is to create environments that reduce stress for residents and visitors, while also providing therapeutic spaces and environments that promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
8. **Inclusion of Public Art**: exploration of avenues to include public art should be a core consideration of this in this pillar– for example as the output of a process of co-creation with/within the community (community arts project) or through incorporating art pieces in overall space. This supports the aesthetic aspects of the community and placemaking, makes art more accessible, and provides opportunities for engagement, creativity, and discussion which support wellbeing and brain health.
9. **Sustainable, adaptable and resilient places:** This principle emphasizes creating communities and physical spaces that are environmentally and economically conscious, and that are adaptable and resilient. The goal is to ensure that these spaces are sustainable over the long term.
10. **Access and integration of digital technology and innovation**: This principle recognizes the importance of integrating digital technology and innovation into communities and physical spaces. The goal is to ensure that everyone has access to these resources and can take advantage of them.

Enablers

1. Funding opportunities and ability to make physical changes to existing infrastructure, or opportunity to 'build in' adaptations/enhancements to green/brown field development and create public art projects.
2. Good understanding of community context and priorities alongside existing best practice frameworks.
3. Access to adjacent services to support infrastructure developed locally (ie broadband etc.)
4. Aligning with national initiatives or local authority planning to capitalise on synergies that may exist (e.g age-friendly towns, dementia friendly communities, or healthy cities)

Barriers

1. Existing infrastructure may be difficult or impossible to significantly alter.
2. Limited funding opportunities to support ambition and reliance on external grant funding opportunities.
3. Local governance and power structures may hinder access to shared resources.
4. Available services in wider areas may be poor, and hinder full implementation
5. Conceptions of 'privacy' and 'personal space' may vary significantly from culture to culture.

Implementation strategies

1. Design with nature.
    a. Conduct a site analysis to understand the natural elements present and their potential uses.
    b. Determine the needs, desires, and priorities of the community for access to these elements.
    c. Incorporate natural elements into the design in a way that enhances the aesthetic and function of the space.
    d. Consider alternative ways to bring nature into the space, such as indoor plants and natural lighting.
    e. Consider the sustainability of the natural elements and their impact on the environment.

2. Respect context and create a sense of place.
    a. Consider the needs and desires of the residents when designing shared spaces and community art projects through co-creation.
    b. Incorporate elements that promote socialization, such as seating areas and shared activities.
    c. Improve shared spaces so that they are accessible to all residents.
    d. Encourage community involvement in the maintenance and use of shared spaces.

3. Accessible, age-inclusive spaces through a universal design approach.
    a. Identify barriers to physical access, and where feasible consider proposals that the physical space is accessible to people of all ages, including those with mobility impairments. This can include features such as ramps, handrails, and elevators, and will depend on the legislation and/or universal design principles.
    b. Where practicable design or adapt spaces that can serve multiple purposes to accommodate the identified needs and interests of people of all ages. For example, a community center that has a gym, a library, and a meeting room.
    c. Ensure that the physical space is safe for people of all ages, with measures such as lighting, security cameras, and emergency exits meeting any relevant compliance requirements.
    d. Aim to create a space that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds and cultures, and that celebrates diversity and encourages learning.
    e. Consider accessibility and level of familiarity and digital knowledge when incorporating technology to enhance the user experience, such as touchscreen interfaces, smart sensors, etc.
    f. Consider conducting accessibility audits to identify barriers and prioritize improvements.
    g. Consider the needs of people with disabilities, older people, and families with young children.
    h. Works towards accessibility to all areas of the space, including outdoor areas.
    i. Educate the community on accessibility issues and encourage inclusivity.

4. Design for community interaction, and intergenerational connections, building trust, stimulating social behaviour, and reducing loneliness.
    a. Design public spaces and community areas that promote play, social interaction and safety, such as parks, community centers, or outdoor seating areas.

   b. Incorporate elements that encourage intergenerational connections, such as community gardens, intergenerational sports teams, or mentoring programs.
5. Environments that create a balance between social interaction and privacy.
   a. Consider the needs of residents and visitors for safety and privacy in different areas of the space.
   b. Consider where appropriate, Incorporating physical barriers and design elements that promote safety and privacy.
   c. Establish rules and regulations for behavior that protects safety and privacy.
   d. Ensure accessibility to private spaces for people with disabilities.

6. Pleasant and well-maintained physical spaces.
   a. Create or implement structures and processes to ensure internal and external physical space is well maintained.
   b. Develop an easy-to-access and use system, for reporting and addressing maintenance issues.
   c. Consider opportunities and provide resources and tools for residents and visitors to help maintain the space.
7. Stress-reducing, safe and therapeutic environments.
   a. Incorporate natural elements such as plants, water features, and natural light to create a calming and restorative environment.
   b. Ensure that lighting is appropriate for the space, considering options for dimming and natural lighting to support circadian rhythms.
   c. Design the space to reduce noise nuisance and create a peaceful environment, with features such as sound-absorbing materials and soundproofing.
   d. Choose colors and materials considering the purpose of each space, to create different atmospheres accordingly.
   e. Select furniture and arrange it in a way that promotes relaxation and reduces stress, such as comfortable seating, soft textures, and open spaces.
   f. Provide access to nature through outdoor spaces such as gardens, parks, and walking paths, which can promote relaxation and improve mental health.

8. Inclusion of public art

   a. In consultation with the community include art pieces (pictures, statues etc.) in shared spaces.
   b. Explore the potential within the community to create art, engaging the community in the community arts projects, working with arts practitioners or independently.

9. Sustainable, adaptable and resilient places:
   a. Consider opportunities to use sustainable materials and design techniques to reduce the environmental impact of the space.
   b. Incorporate renewable energy sources and energy-efficient systems.
   c. Consider the long-term economic benefits of sustainable design and maintenance.
   d. Educate the community on sustainable practices and encourage their adoption, such as the use of energy, and reclining-reusing products or sub-products.

10. Access and integration of digital technology and innovation:
    a. Consider access to digital technology for all members of the community, regardless of condition.

b. Integrate technology into the design in a way that enhances its function and accessibility.
c. Consider the privacy and security implications of integrating technology into the space (i.e. vigilance and security systems).
d. Regularly update and maintain technology systems to ensure they remain functional and secure.

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Pillar 6: Service availability and integration

Enable a community to access or develop a range of services and resources to meet the needs and interests of its residents throughout their life, encourage intergenerational connection and support physical and brain health. This includes the availability of leisure options, secure and affordable homes, access to information and cultural services, and linkage with important services such as early years care, schools, education, and healthcare and the integration of these services into the community itself.

Principles

1. **Appropriate and adequate transportation infrastructure:** prioritisation of public and active transport from a health, social equity and environmental perspective.
2. **Availability of leisure services with options for the community:** This principle emphasizes the importance of providing leisure services for the community, with options for residents to choose from based on their interests and preferences.
3. **Lifetime home and support (age and culture appropriate):** This principle prioritizes creating homes and support services that are appropriate for residents throughout their lifetime and are culturally sensitive.
4. **Library/infrastructure for access to information, cultural, and learning services:** This principle focuses on providing libraries or other infrastructure that gives residents access to information, cultural experiences, and learning opportunities.
5. **Linkage with early years care, schools, education, and healthcare services:** This principle prioritizes linking communities and physical spaces with schools, education, and healthcare services to ensure that residents have access to these essential resources.
6. **Embedded services:** This principle recognizes the importance of embedding services within communities and physical spaces, so they are easily accessible to residents and visitors. The goal is to make these services convenient and easy to use.

Enablers

1. Access to adjacent infrastructural services
2. Strong local primary health care and education
3. 'signposting' at the community level in terms of awareness of existing services.

Barriers:

1. Legacy 'top down' or centralised model of service provision, particularly in terms of health services.

Implementation strategies

1. *Appropriate and adequate transportation infrastructure: prioritization of public and active transport from a health, social equity, and environmental perspective.*

- Facilitate where possible, accessible transport options for all including those with disabilities, older adults, and low-income residents.
- Influence transport design policy or adapt transportation infrastructure with safety in mind, including features such as pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, traffic calming measures, and cognitive accessibility issues.
- Prioritize the use of sustainable transportation options such as public transportation, biking, and walking to reduce carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability.

2. *Availability of leisure services with options for the community:*

    - Identify and promote a range of leisure services to cater to the diverse interests and needs of the community, including recreational facilities, cultural activities, and community events.
    - Where feasible ensure that leisure services are accessible to all members of the community, including people with disabilities and older adults.
    - Identify affordable leisure options that include low-income individuals and families.
    - Collaborate with community groups, local businesses, cultural institutions (museums, galleries, music/theatre/arts venues) and other stakeholders to ensure that leisure services meet the needs of the community.

3. *Lifetime home and support (age and culture appropriate):*

    - Design support / services that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including people with disabilities and older adults.
    - Ensure that support / services are culturally sensitive and respectful of the diverse backgrounds and needs of residents.
    - Provide adaptations and support services that will meet the changing needs of residents as they age.
    - Collaborate with community groups and other stakeholders to ensure that homes and support services meet the needs of the community.

4. *Library/infrastructure for access to information, cultural, and learning services:*

    - Highlight specific issues to ensure that libraries and other infrastructure for access to information, cultural, and learning services are accessible to all members of the community, including those with disabilities and older adults.
    - Provide a diverse range of resources that cater to the diverse interests and needs of the community, including books, films, music, and online resources.
    - Collaborate with community groups and other stakeholders to ensure that libraries and other infrastructure for access to information, cultural, and learning services meet the needs of the community.

5. *Linkage with schools, education, and healthcare services:*

    - Collaborate with early years providers schools, education, and healthcare providers to ensure that services meet the needs of the community, and to improve accessibility to all members of the community, including younger people. people with disabilities and older adults.

- Advocate for schools, education, and healthcare services are distributed equitably throughout the community, with a focus on providing access to underserved areas/families.

6. *Embedded services:*

- Ensure that embedded services are easily accessible to all members of the community, including people with disabilities and older adults.
- Collaborate with service providers and other stakeholders to ensure that embedded services meet the needs of the community.
- Design embedded services that can be adapted to meet the changing needs of residents over time, for example for those who are diagnosed with dementia or any other condition, and also for families that grow.

Further resources

1. Integrating community engagement and service delivery – pointers to good practice. Local Government Improvement and Development, September 2010 https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/care-and-health-improvement/integration-and-better-care-fund/better-care-fund/integration-resource-library/communication-and-engagement
2. Humes, H., M. Barrett and B. Walsh (2023). Housing tenure, health and public healthcare coverage in Ireland, Budget Perspectives, Dublin: ESRI, https://doi.org/10.26504/BP202402
3. National programmes for age-friendly cities and communities: a guide. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/9789240068698-eng.pdf

Awareness building brain health infographic prepared for community workshop as part of the project