

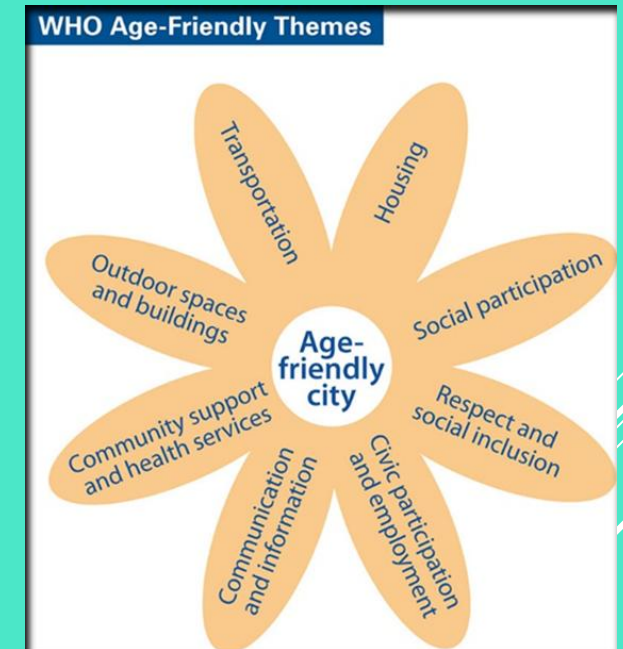
# Age-friendly communities: Widening our gaze

Designing Cities for Every Age – Age Friendly Cities &  
Communities Symposium - 17 November 2025

Sara Napier PhD

# NZ commitment to WHO AFCC framework

- WHO Age friendly cities and communities framework
- UN Decade of Health Ageing: Plan of action 2021-2030
- Age friendly Aotearoa New Zealand



**Communities are safe, accessible  
and inclusive**

# Unprecedented ageing population

- NZ Currently 17% aged 65 years and over
- Expected to reach 33% by 2078 (Stats NZ, 2024)
- Hyper ageing - > 20% over 65
- Number over 85 years to triple by 2051


# Regional and rural areas in NZ ageing faster

- Much higher proportion of older adults
- E.g. Marlborough, Tasman, West Coast, Northland > 20% over 65
- Internal migration trends – out-migration of young adults, older adults choosing regional and rural lifestyle
- Evidence on ageing in rural and remote communities is lacking
- Ensuring rural ageing equity



# Rural age-friendly Research projects with colleagues

2016



**JCN** *Journal of Clinical Nursing*

Journal of  
**Clinical Nursing**

REVIEW

An integrative review of the factors related to building age-friendly rural communities

Stephen Neville, Sara Napier, Jeffery Adams, Carol Wham and Debra Jackson

2021



Received: 5 July 2020 | Revised: 10 January 2021 | Accepted: 18 January 2021  
DOI: 10.1111/ajag.12930

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Australasian Journal on Ageing | WILEY

**Beginning on an age-friendly journey: Barriers to implementing age-friendly initiatives**

Stephen Neville<sup>1</sup> | Sara Napier<sup>2</sup> | Kay Shannon<sup>1</sup> | Jeffery Adams<sup>3</sup>

2023



Journal of Rural Studies 100 (2023) 103033

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

**Journal of Rural Studies**

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jrurstud](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jrurstud)

Age-friendly attributes of a rural town in Aotearoa New Zealand

Sara Napier<sup>a,\*</sup>, Stephen Neville<sup>b</sup>, Jeffery Adams<sup>c</sup>, Lynne Taylor<sup>d</sup>

2024



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Ageing in place in a rural town in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Deweyan transactional perspective

Sara Napier<sup>a,\*</sup>, Stephen Neville<sup>b</sup>, Jeffery Adams<sup>c</sup>

2025



Journal of Clinical Nursing

WILEY

Journal of  
**Clinical Nursing**

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OPEN ACCESS

**The Development, Implementation and/or Sustainability of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Programmes: Findings From an Umbrella Review**

S. Neville<sup>1</sup> | S. Napier<sup>2</sup> | J. Montayre<sup>3</sup> | M. Silulu<sup>4</sup> | E. Tautolo<sup>4</sup>



# Warkworth age-friendly study

Napier, S., Neville, S., Adams, J., & Taylor L. (2021)

# Warkworth: A rural service town

- Current population just under 7,000
- Hyper ageing town - population > 65 is 26.2%
- Rodney Local Board - Auckland Council
- Age-friendly Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau tauawhi kaumātua
- Preference to remain in familiar community
- How age-friendly are rural communities in NZ?
- How age-friendly is Warkworth?





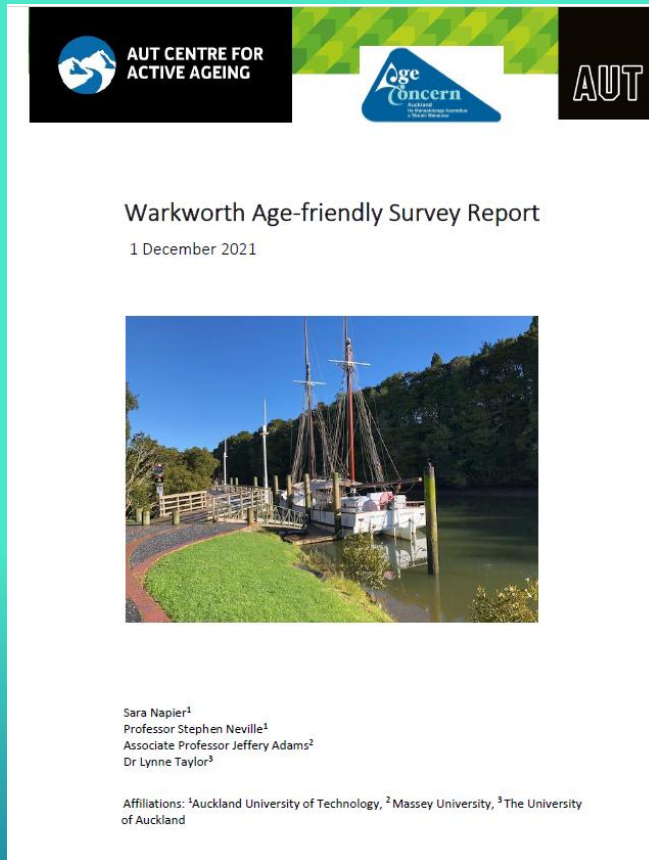
## Multiple sources of data

- Age-friendly survey
- Walking interviews with older people
- Interviews with retail and service operators
- Relevant documents



## A case study

# AGE-FRIENDLY SURVEY



- ▶ 210 people 65+ completed the survey
- ▶ 95% NZ European
- ▶ Two-thirds female
- ▶ Over a third had lived in Warkworth area 21 years +
- ▶ Respondents rated level of agreement with statements and 4 open-ended questions focused on improvement

Age Concern North Shore are acknowledged for use of the original survey tool



**94% thought Warkworth was a good place to live**



**Most liked living in the area (98%), felt safe during the day (99%) and night (90%)**



**Local business and service staff were helpful (93%)**



**Wide range of activities and groups (88%)**



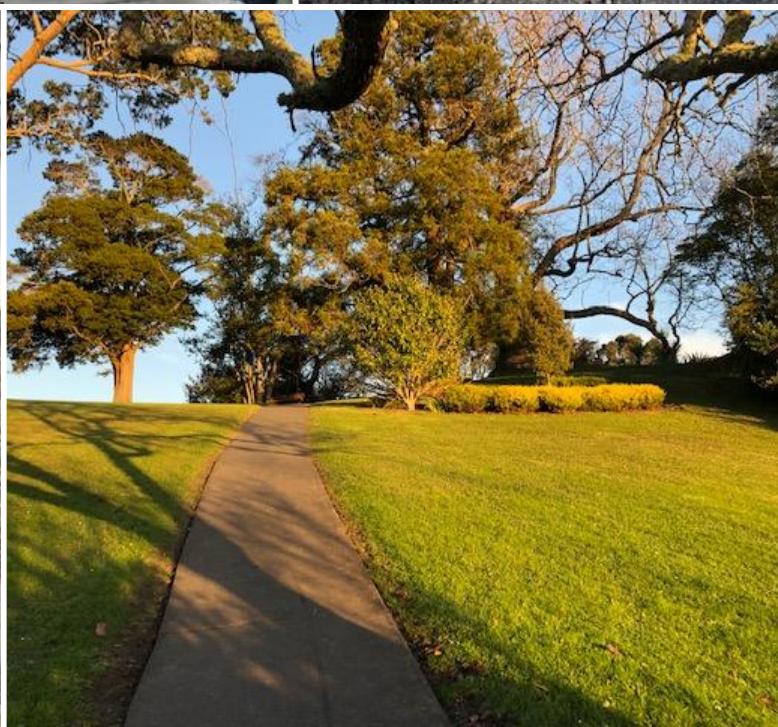
**Multiple features of the physical, social and service environment need improvement**



**Identified priorities and opportunities to improve age-friendliness**



# Survey results

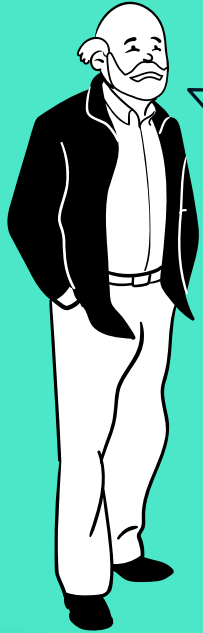


- ▶ Established town - history and heritage
- ▶ Rural identity
- ▶ The river – “the jewel in Warkworth’s crown”
- ▶ Older people as custodians
- ▶ Looking to the future - preparing for change
- ▶ Involved in the community
- ▶ Social isolation and loneliness
- ▶ Supportive of local businesses
- ▶ Library and information centre provided a hub
- ▶ Retirement village in the main street
- ▶ Having local information
- ▶ Disconnection from local government

## Walking interview findings (n=15)

# Walking interview participants

## Social environment



*Come into town, it's something, a bit of company in town and talking ... after 20 years people get to know you*



*It's very respectful, that's why it's nice to be here because a lot of people are like that*

## Physical environment



*You'll get a rainy day and you'll never find a car park anywhere*



*We have had problems with the footpaths ... they are only attended to when someone has fallen and badly hurt themselves*



- ▶ Lack of official age-friendly policies
- ▶ Informal practices – impromptu
- ▶ Very responsive to older people as customers and locals
- ▶ Local business owners and operators went ‘the extra mile’ – high level of goodwill
- ▶ Physical assistance
- ▶ Social engagement with older customers was reciprocal

**Retail and service operator interviews (n=16)**

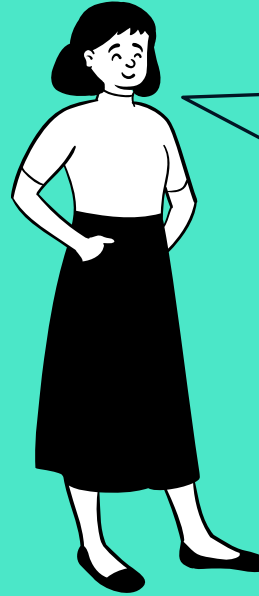
# Retails and service participants

## Spontaneous socialising



*We have plenty of regulars that pop in just for a natter ... it is a bit of a social thing for a lot of them*

## Accessibility



*This centre table here ... it moves right out of the way so a wheelchair can get through. We're very geared to the older generation*

## Value informal feedback



*They've got to a ripe old age and they've got opinions which we love and they tell us what they like and don't like*

# Key insights and recommendations



- ▶ Older adults willing to share extensive knowledge of their environment
- ▶ Build on existing strengths & infrastructure
- ▶ Engage collaboratively at local level
- ▶ Walking and talking with older adults
- ▶ Support and expand social hubs
- ▶ Opportunity to improve during time of rapid growth and ageing population



## Concluding comments

- Inclusive communities are key to ageing well
- Equitable opportunities for age-friendliness
- Widen our gaze towards the regions, and rural and remote communities

**Thank you**  
**Questions welcome**

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