# Design
Age
Ideas

Royal College of Art

DESIGN AGE ®
INSTITUTE

No. 1-4

Design Age Institute

The Design Age Institute is the UK's national strategic unit for design and the healthy ageing economy. We bring together designers, businesses, researchers and communities to help address the challenges and opportunities of an ageing society.

Based at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art and funded in 2020 by Research England, Design Age Institute partnership brings together skills and expertise from world-leading organisations in research, design, innovation and learning – the U.K.'s National Innovation Centre for Ageing at Newcastle University, the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, the International Longevity Centre U.K. and the Design Museum.

Design Age at the RCA

The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (HHCD) focuses on Inclusive Design processes and projects. We take a people-centred design approach that involves people in the design process. HHCD is the longest-running centre for design research at the RCA.

The HHCD has a rich history in design for ageing. In 1989 Helen Hamlyn established a foundation dedicated to improving the lives of older people. She funded the original DesignAge programme at the RCA in 1991 to explore the design implications of an ageing population, publishing the first *'Designing For Our Future Selves'* publication in 1993[1], coining the term inclusive design in 1994[2], exhibiting *NEW OLD*[3] at the Design Museum in 2017 and beyond.

"We have to conduct our lives as far as possible not simply in remembrance of our former but in the presence of our future selves."
— Peter Laslett, A Fresh Map of Life, 1989

Design Age Institute draws on this expertise and continues to explore and share how designing for age benefits our health and happiness as individuals and our wellbeing as a society.

> I have, for a long while, been concerned about those people traditionally overlooked by designers – people who are excluded due to age or physical disability, for example.
>
> The aim of our centre is to address these marginalised groups in society by developing practical applications of academic and creative thinking in co-operation with commercial partners. The centre should effect real change by putting a socially inclusive approach firmly into the mainstream of design practice.
>
> — Lady Helen Hamlyn

DAIdeas Series

We all want desirable products, services, and environments that help us age well. By 2043, 1 in every 4 people in the U.K. will be age 65+, making designing for our future selves more urgent than ever.[4] The **Design Age Ideas** series of short reports shares research and provocations to help all of us reimagine and realise desirable design for healthy and happy ageing.

The **Design Age Ideas** series aims to help piece together the puzzle of ageing well by curating the work of Design Age Institute, our partners, and external findings into content that provokes further curiosity and critical engagement with how we design for age.

As consumers, users, and citizens, we are all either limited or enabled by design each day of our lives. Whether you are responsible for creating design or not, we all are impacted by how design does or does not respond to what we want and need. That's why it's important to collaboratively consider **Design Age Ideas** that can help shape a positive future for ourselves and for our society.

"With life expectancies at birth creeping ever closer to 100 years by the end of the 21st century this will be <u>a century of centenarians.</u>"

— George W. Leeson, Oxford Institute for Population Ageing

DAIdeas

No. 1-4

Design Age Ideas Series No. 1-4 are each a short report that begin to piece together the design age puzzle.

Design Age Institute Ideas No. 1 sets the scene by exploring ageism in the U.K. and how negative views on ageing limit our ability to use design to achieve positive outcomes.

Design Age Institute Ideas No. 2-4 focus on how we, as consumers *and* creators, can reimagine and realise desirable design for healthy and happy ageing. We ask how we want to spend our time and our money when we are older and how design can help us do so.

1 Undo Ageism

Undoing Ageism unpacks the impact of ageism and helps make the design age puzzle visible.

2 Blame the Design (or lack of it)

Blame the Design shows how design impacts our health and happiness so we can identify when poor design is making the puzzle more difficult to solve.

3 Design Age Better

Design Age Better shares how we can begin to collectively, collaboratively solve the design age puzzle.

4 Demand Desirable Design

Demand Desirable Design considers how we demand desirable design to piece together the future we want.

Undoing
Ageism

No. 1

"I don't see anything wrong with a wrinkle. It's kind of a badge of courage."

— Iris Apfel, businesswoman, interior designer, and fashion icon

Undoing Ageism

Is your attitude towards ageing negative or positive?

Negative −

Imagine 15-30 years down the road. You're no longer able to do the things you love to do. You haven't found any activities to replace what you've lost. You feel like a burden, you feel invisible, and you dread the future.

Positive +

Imagine 15-30 years in the future. You're doing the same things you've always loved to do. You also discover new activities you find rewarding. You feel growth as a person. You look forward to the future.
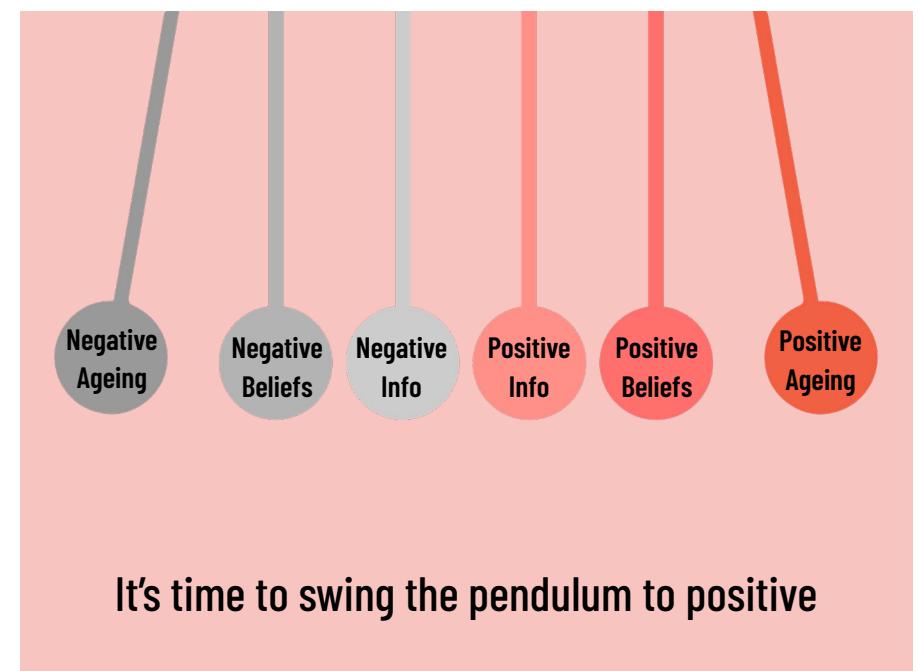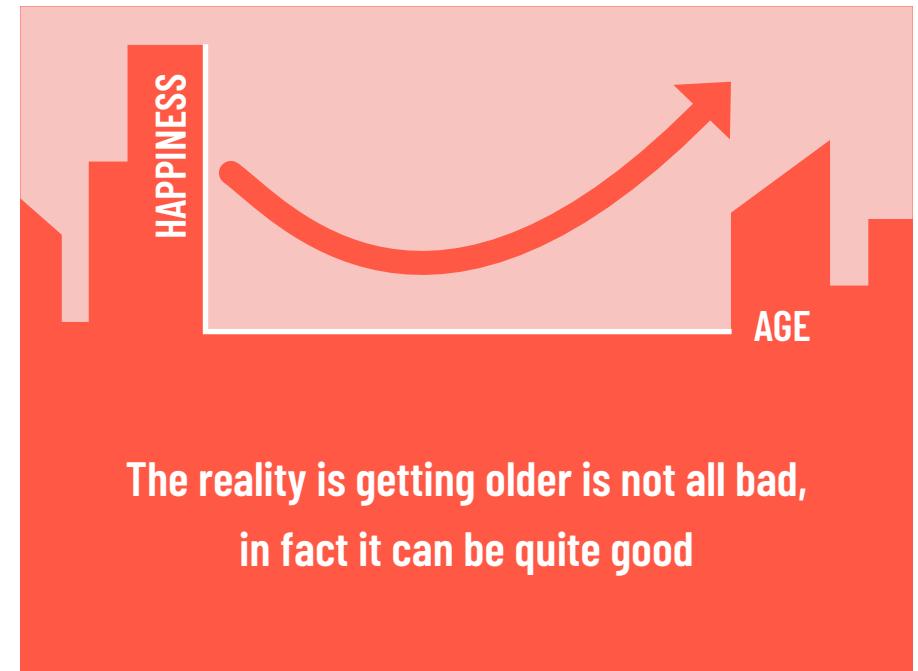
Our ageist society sells us the negative outlook of ageing everyday. This is inaccurate, harmful, and potentially unlawful.

Inaccurate: It is untrue that everything gets worse as we age. In fact, we report greatest life satisfaction in later life.[5]

Harmful: Research shows that people with a negative outlook on ageing die earlier[6] and report worse health[7] than those who view ageing positively.

Unlawful: The equality act of 2010 states it is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of age.[8]

This is why it is so important to undo ageism. It's a massive problem to solve - ageism is the most common prejudice.[9] We, as a society and as individuals, create and proliferate ageism. Fortunately, this means we can also undo it.

The reality is getting older is not all bad, in fact it can be quite good

It's time to swing the pendulum to positive

Before we discuss *how* to undo ageism, let's consider why it is so pervasive. Our partners at the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing dive into the origins of ageism in the U.K. in their Design Age Institute report '**The Development of the Healthy Ageing Economy'**.

Oxford found 3 institutional structures that historically defined older people as a separate group from everyone else:

1. ALMSHOUSES (CHARITABLE HOUSING)
"Older people became homogenised into this group needing help and support (away from the community [in Almshouses])."
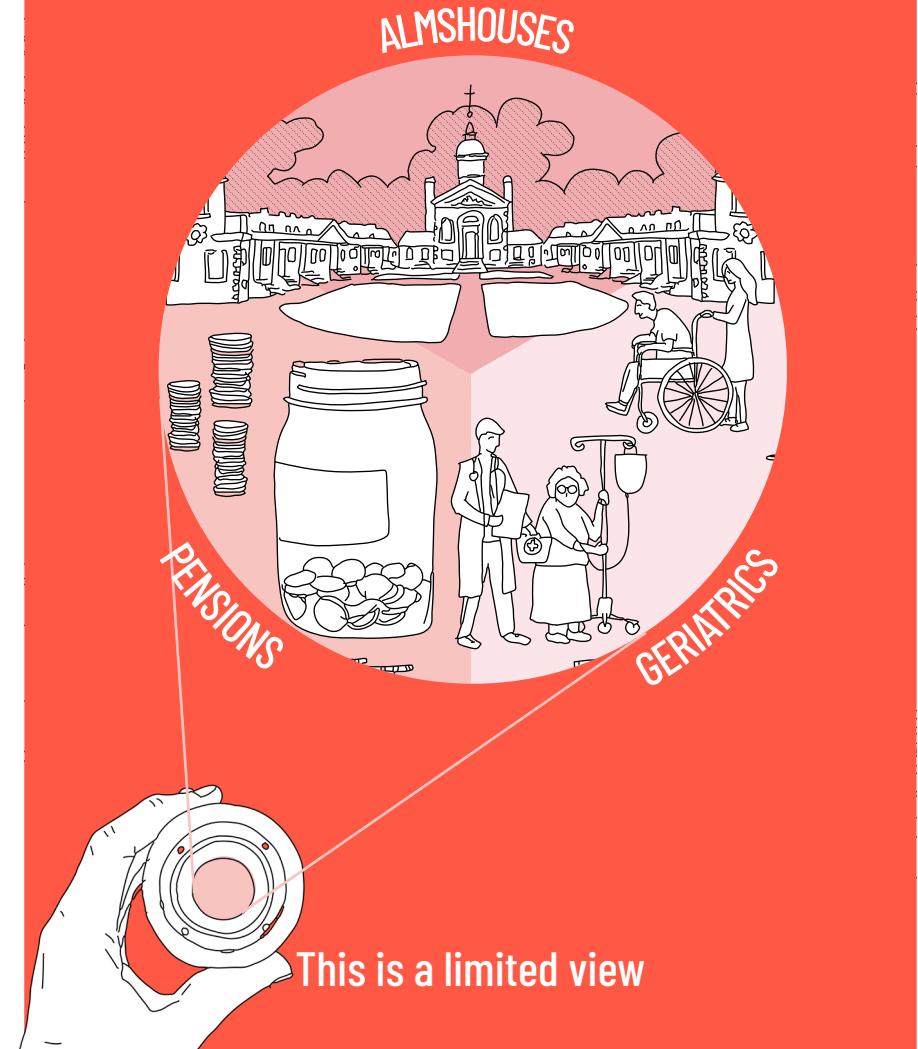
2. PENSION SYSTEMS
"A statistical definition of old age, [leading us to] treat and understand older people collectively as a group in a chronologically defined phase of life."

3. GERIATRICS (AS A MEDICAL SPECIALITY)
"Geriatrics is born as a discipline around 1840. Medicine had a monopoly on even the social construction of old age. As a result, the research focused on ill health and on combating ill health in later life."[10]

Ageism and negative outlooks on ageing predominantly defined later life in the U.K. for over a century - it's time for a change. If we define people based on negative ageist stereotypes, we do not see the full picture nor an accurate picture. By actively undoing ageism, we can expand our view to see the opportunities of ageing and how older people are an asset to society.

3 institutional structures historically defined, segregated, and stereotyped older people

ALMSHOUSES

PENSIONS

GERIATRICS

This is a limited view

"Ageism means society doesn't value older people or invest in ways to help people age well." — Centre for Ageing Better

Healthy, happy ageing begins the moment we're born - if our systemic cultures and individual behaviours don't support ageing well, it harms us all across all ages. If we continue to accept ageism, negative health outcomes will continue to be more likely to prevail due to effects such as stereotype embodiment and stereotype threat:
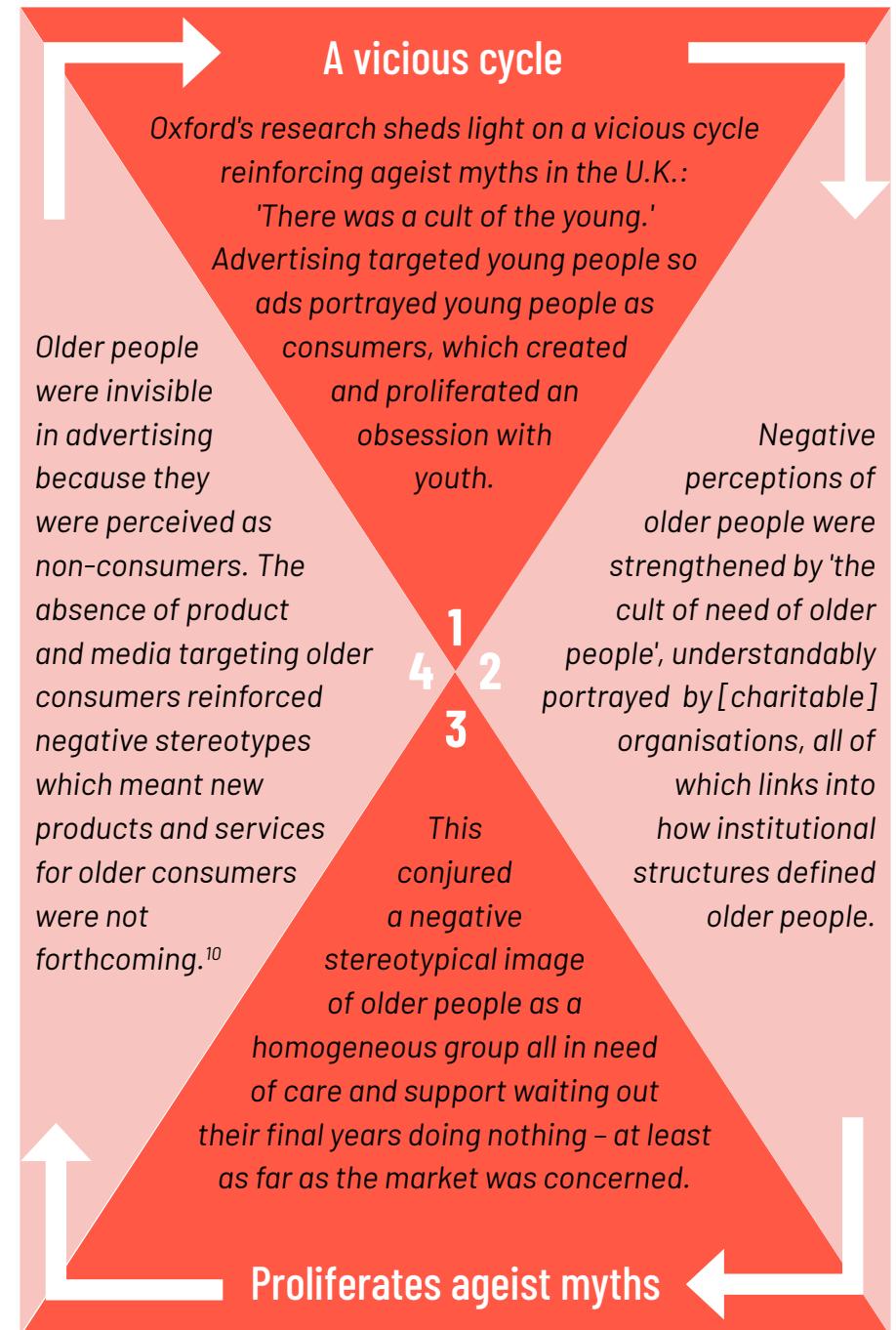
Stereotype embodiment

"Stereotypes are embodied when their assimilation from the surrounding culture leads to self-definitions that, in turn, influence functioning and health."[11]

Stereotype threat

"Ageism can also lead older adults to experience stereotype threat. For example, when completing a cognitive task, older adults often experience stereotype threat — they are aware that their behaviour could confirm to themselves and/or the people watching them the negative stereotypes about age-related senility and cognitive declines. In response, older adults often underperform on cognitive tasks compared to their potential."[12]

Ageism creates a vicious cycle where older people are not seen, are negatively perceived, are negatively portrayed, and become excluded. Ageism relies on myths being reinforced. If we bust ageist myths and seek true facts about ageing, we can look to break vicious cycles and begin shaping virtuous ones.

A vicious cycle

Oxford's research sheds light on a vicious cycle reinforcing ageist myths in the U.K.: 'There was a cult of the young.' Advertising targeted young people so ads portrayed young people as consumers, which created and proliferated an obsession with youth.

Older people were invisible in advertising because they were perceived as non-consumers. The absence of product and media targeting older consumers reinforced negative stereotypes which meant new products and services for older consumers were not forthcoming.[10]

1 **2** **4** **3**

Negative perceptions of older people were strengthened by 'the cult of need of older people', understandably portrayed by [charitable] organisations, all of which links into how institutional structures defined older people.

This conjured a negative stereotypical image of older people as a homogeneous group all in need of care and support waiting out their final years doing nothing – at least as far as the market was concerned.

Proliferates ageist myths

Historical definitions of age in the U.K. are steeped in ageism, so in order to design age, we want to first reconsider how we define age. Take a moment to ask yourself the following questions:

What is your Chronological Age?
When we ask "how 'old' are you?" we mean: what is your chronological age? Your chronological age is the amount of time that has passed since you were born in terms of years, months, days, etc. When asked to define our age, this is how we most often respond.

What is your Biological Age?
What would you guess is your biological age? Biological age is also known as physiological or functional age. This definition of age accounts for various lifestyle factors that can shorten or extend lifespan, including diet, exercise, and environmental exposures.[13] Medical professionals can more formally assess our biological age but in lieu of that, take your best guess.
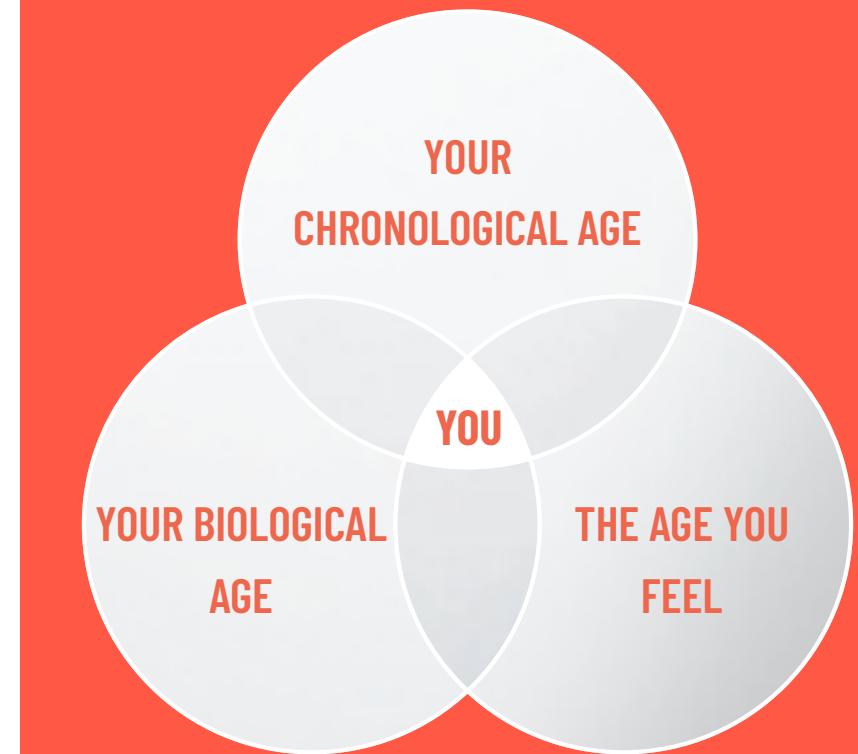
What is the Age you Feel?
What age do you feel inside, in your head (and your heart)? This may also be referred to as your subjective age, your mental age, or your psychological age. This may change on any given day, or many ages may resonate with you, so on average, what age do you feel?

Did you answer the same age for each question?
Most people we've polled do not answer the same age for all 3 questions. This suggests that our chronological age does not define us.

What's (chronological) age got to do with it?

YOUR CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

YOU

YOUR BIOLOGICAL AGE

THE AGE YOU FEEL

What age determines the decisions you make?

Which definition of age determines the decisions you make?
If you reflect on how these ways of defining age may impact how you make decisions, do you think your chronological, biological or the age you feel most impacts the decisions you make? Your answer may change depending on what the decision is, whether it's where you live, what you eat, where you work, what activities you take part in, and how you spend your time.

Do you think industry accounts for this?
Our partners at the International Longevity Centre UK (ILC-UK) found that *"Market research into older consumers is weak. Segmentation by age is poor, normally grouping together all consumers aged over 65. This severely restricts marketing possibilities."*[14]

If industry only considers chronological age when designing, developing, and marketing the products, services, and built environments available for people to use and live in, we are at risk of being stereotyped by ageist assumptions rather than understood as diverse individuals. Therefore it is critical that we ask:

"What are the design assumptions at work here? Do we care whom we are including — and whom we are excluding — by our design choices?"
— Shefaly Yogendra, The age of un-empathy

Design Age Institute hope these questions help each of us think critically about how we define age and how we design for age as a result. Designers: ask if and how older people, and your future self, are included in the design process? And also consider what is at risk if older people, or your future self, are excluded.

Stop Stereotypes

ASSUMPTIONS

Ban Assumptions

Blame the Design (or lack of it)

"Very little design is actually great, very little of it is even any good, most of it is mediocre, and an enormous amount of it is damn right bad."

— Alice Rawsthorn, design critic & author

No. 2

Blame Design (or lack of it)

"Everything created by people has been designed. The problem is lots of it has been designed badly."
— Colum Lowe, Director, Design Age Institute

We often blame ourselves before we blame design.[15] It's easy to forget that people are responsible for the products and services we use and the built environments we inhabit. If designed badly - or not designed at all - our health and happiness can be at risk.

Take a moment to think about all the ways you want to spend your time now and in the future. How would you feel if design prevented you from doing so? This is a reality for *many* people who are excluded by design. Bad design often disproportionately impacts older people (who will make up 24% of the population by 2043[4]) and disabled people (who make up 22% of the U.K. population based on those who reported a disability in 2020-21[16]).

The Equality Act 2010 states: *"it is not enough simply to prohibit discrimination, we must take steps to advance equality, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster good relations between different groups in society."*

We all have a unique experience of the world - we benefit when design responds to diversity. If design excludes or harms people, we should blame it, name it as bad design, and demand better.

The Institute's '<u>Designing the Everyday for a Less Frustrating Later Life</u>' Report with u3a calls out examples of bad design.
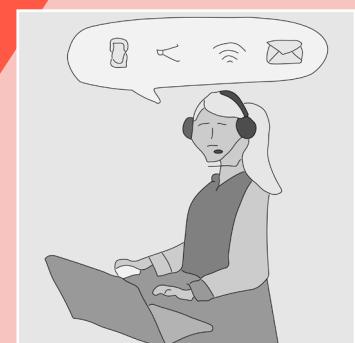
What makes design bad?

products

"1 in 3 of all ages regularly finds it hard to read small print and that same number have trouble with heavy or fiddly objects."[17]

services

"I can't get hold of a real person when I have a problem. I can't see the app interface very well, it's confusing. I spend hours on call waiting. I can't get good financial advice."[18]

environments

Over-crowded transportation environments can evoke feelings of anger, stress, danger, discomfort, anxiety, exhaustion, alienation, humiliation, and more.

Design Age Institute battles against bad design that reduces people's ability to age well. But what does it mean to age well? Many factors may determine your ability to age well. We focus on how wellbeing is impacted by physical, mental, social, and economic considerations. The following research helps explain this focus:

The World Health Organization (W.H.O) defines health as: *"a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."*
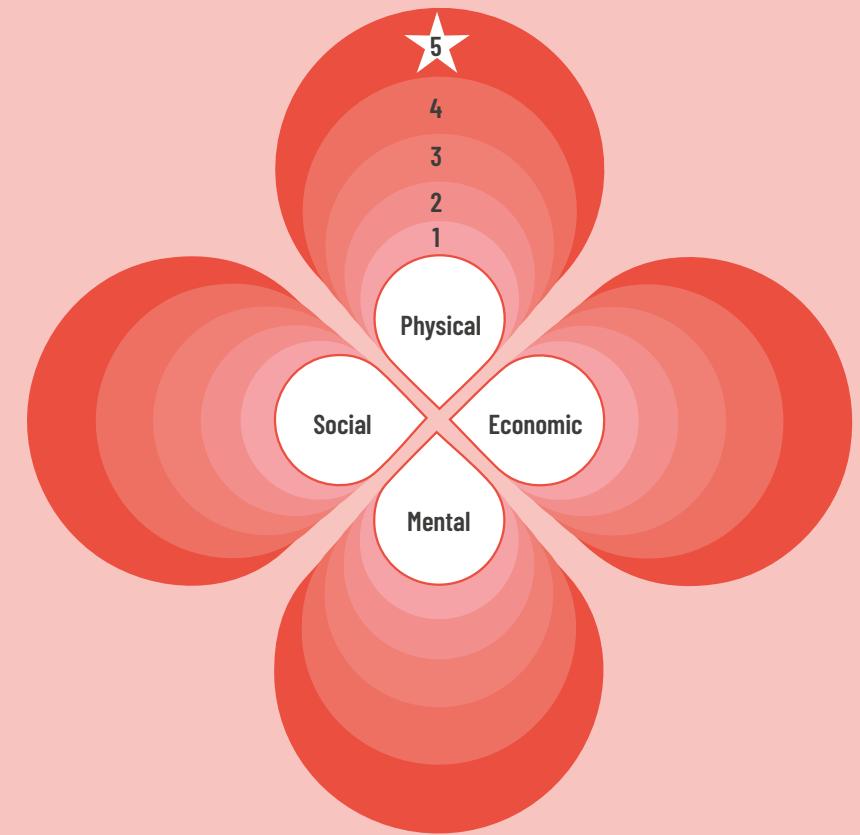
The Centre for Ageing Better research found: *"the key dimensions of a good later life include health, financial security and social connections. These priorities were evident regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or socio-demographic characteristics."* [19]

The longest study on ageing well, the Harvard Study of Adult Development, shows how meaningful social connections critically influence health outcomes, suggesting that *"the key to healthy aging is relationships, relationships, relationships."* [20]

Oxford explains that *"the most significant risk factors affecting health outcomes are smoking, poor nutrition, obesity, insufficient physical activity and excessive alcohol consumption. Healthy lifestyle behaviours, and positive lifestyle changes made at any stage in life, can increase healthy life expectancy. Health throughout the life-course can also be affected by the environment."* [21]

The Design Age Institute's Director Colum Lowe created **The Hamlyn 4-Leaf Clover** so we can assess these four key areas to consider how we can age well through life's transitions.

How do you rate your well-being today?
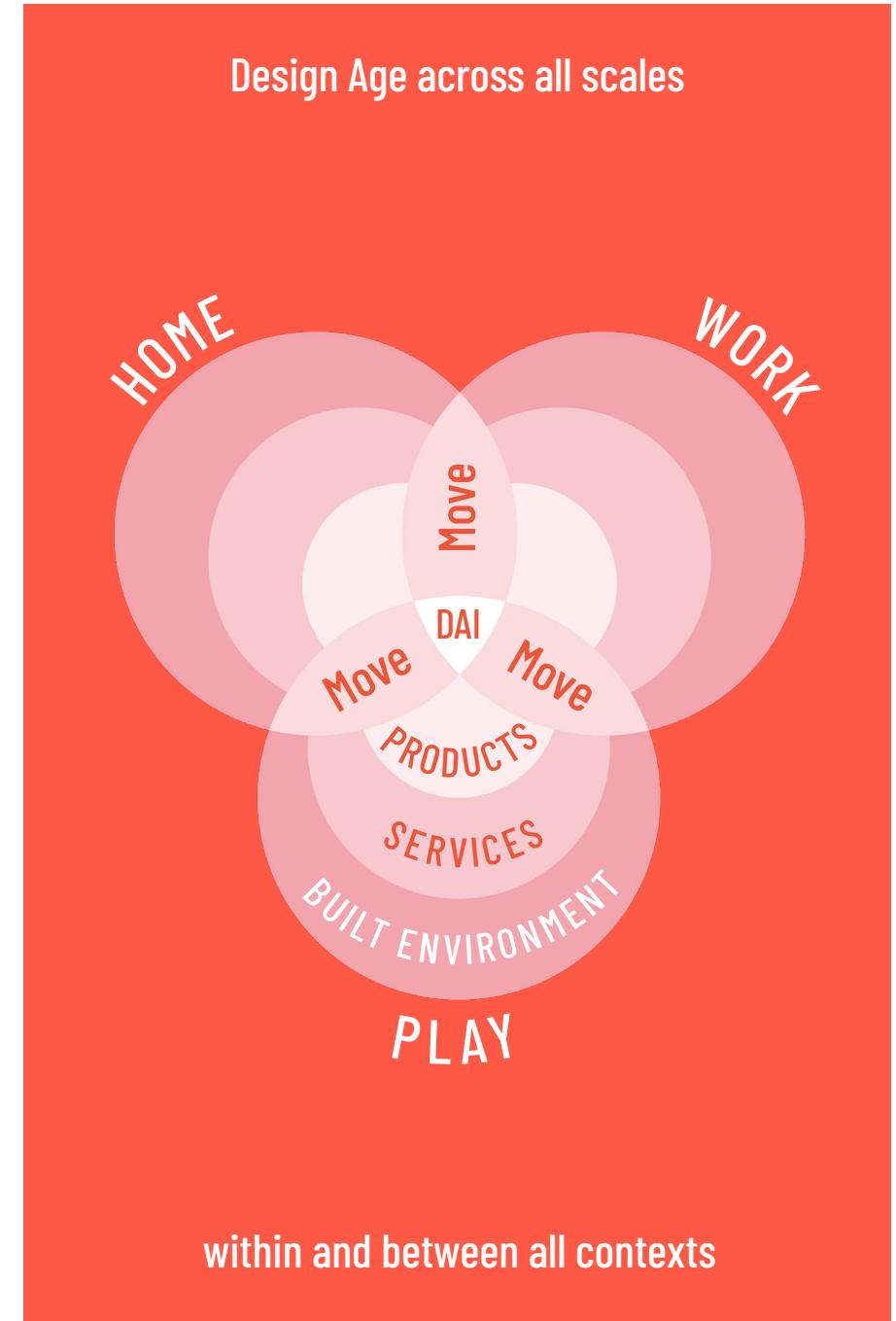
How do you predict you will feel in the future?

Badly executed design may ignore or be unaware of the diverse social, mental, physical, and economic considerations required for ageing well. This comes at a cost: *"Badly designed places impose costs on their occupiers, their neighbours, and on society. Economists describe this kind of cost as a negative externality, when someone does something that doesn't cost them but creates costs for other people."*[22]

To design for ageing well, and prevent bad design that stops us from doing so, we need to consider all scales of design in all contexts. That's why our scope crosses all contexts, from our **home**, where we **work**, where we **play**, and the journeys where we **move** in between. We also address all scales, from **products**, **services**, to our **environments**, and how they work together.

This Design Age Ideas series focuses on how we want to spend our time and our money. This question helps us assess what products, services, and environments make our visions for the future possible and provokes design opportunities to fill the gaps. This links design to the *'longevity economy'* and taps into what International Longevity Centre U.K. call the *'longevity dividend'*:

"We must be aware of age and ageing to maximise the longevity dividend. But an age-neutral approach is likely to reap rewards. Age discrimination penalises both the old and the young, and is at the heart of the retirement consumption puzzle. All this is within the context of ensuring that new, more environmentally and socially sustainable products and services are equally attractive to older consumers. It helps no one in the long term to encourage unnecessary consumption by older people or any other consumer group."[23]

Design Age across all scales

HOME · WORK · PLAY

Move · Move · Move

DAI

PRODUCTS

SERVICES

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

within and between all contexts

People over age 50 are predicted to spend 63p of every pound spent by 2040.[24] Yet ILC-UK found that, regardless of income, spending as a share of income decreases and savings increase:

"Consumption flattens out soon after retirement and falls at older ages. The decline in spending appears to be persistent over time and common to most western countries. It is mainly expenditure on so called "non-essential" items (e.g. recreation, restaurants, hotels) that declines as people get older, while expenditure on essential items remains steady (except clothing and transport). The drop in income during retirement cannot fully explain the drop in spending. Spending as a share of income also falls at older ages and savings increase; 80 year olds have been estimated to save an average of £5,870 a year. Spending falls as people get older regardless of their position in the income distribution. The importance of this drop in spending depends if it is unexpected and/or unwanted or if it is voluntary."[23]
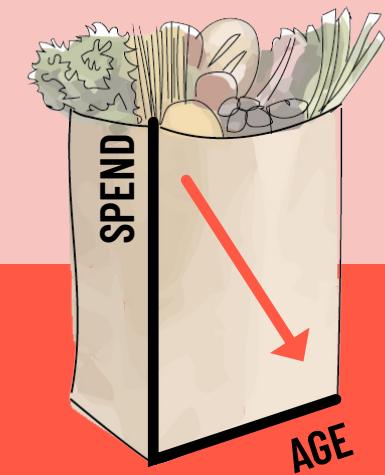
Is design limiting our choices for how we spend our time and money? Joint report with ILC-UK, **'Money well spent? Overcoming barriers to spending in later life'**, highlights how inaccessible design often excludes older people from participating in society and in the economy. One older person interviewed stated that it comes down to access. ILC Director David Sinclair expands this by calling for more elegant access and better choices that meet both our wants and needs. The report recommends policies that help us access financial guidance and inclusive design processes that lead to more accessible and desirable products, services, and environments. The aim is to create desirable and equitable choices for how people participate in society and in the economy.

Unpacking the retirement consumption puzzle

Older people will spend 63p of every pound spent

Yet we save more & spend less as we age

SPEND

AGE

Is this by choice or is bad design limiting us?

Bad design directly contributes to 5 of 10 barriers to spending in later life and may indirectly contribute to the rest:

Barriers to spending indirectly related to bad design:

10. We want to leave money to others: Access to a better designed world may put less reliance on inheritance

9. We don't have enough money: Good inclusive design should be affordable

8. We don't know how long we'll live: This future uncertainty is negatively influenced by ageist stereotypes

7. We don't need or want as much:
We may have enough and we may be wiser consumers who know what we do or don't want

6. Age discrimination: Ageist stereotypes create bad design that perpetuates age discrimination

Barriers to spending directly related to bad design:

1. Our health gets worse: Our health declines without health-benefiting products, services, environments
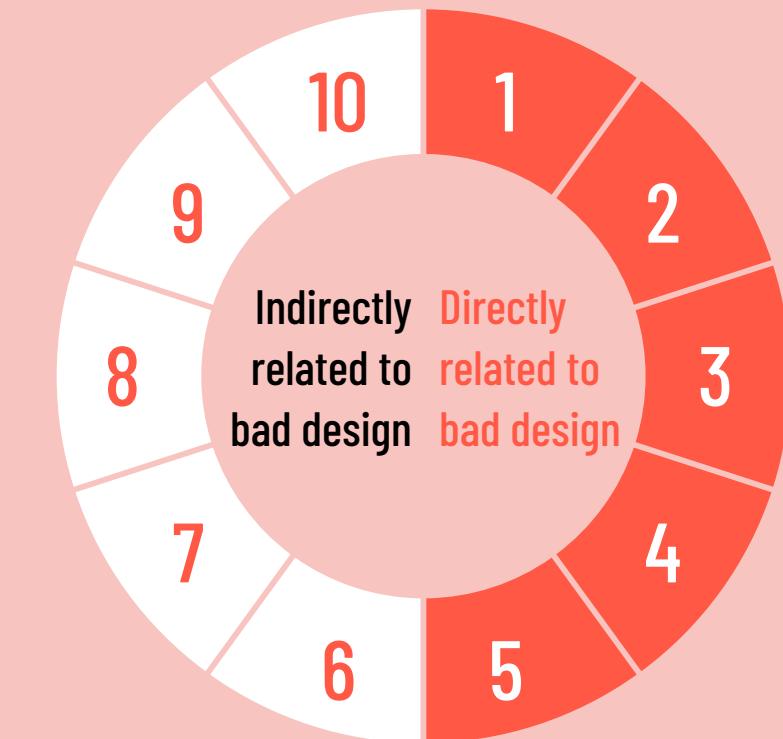
2. We can't get to – or around – the shops: Lack of access (physical, mental, or social) prevents us from spending time and money as we like

**3. We can't find suitable products or services:** What we need does not exist or is not desirable

4. PR/Marketers don't remember or understand us: Assumptions and/or ignorance lead to poor marketing

5. The digital divide: Digital design is not inclusive and intuitive enough

ILC-UK's Barriers to Spending in Later Life

Indirectly related to bad design

Directly related to bad design

10 9 8 7 6 1 2 3 4 5

Blame bad design for it's role in each barrier

Bad design limits our ability to spend our time and money meaningfully, equitably, and healthily in our home, work, places of play, or on the move. This impacts us as a society and as individuals:

Individuals

The individual benefits of having access to spend on healthy goods and services include:
• support healthy ageing
• improve our cognitive health
• reduce isolation and loneliness
• support independent living[25]
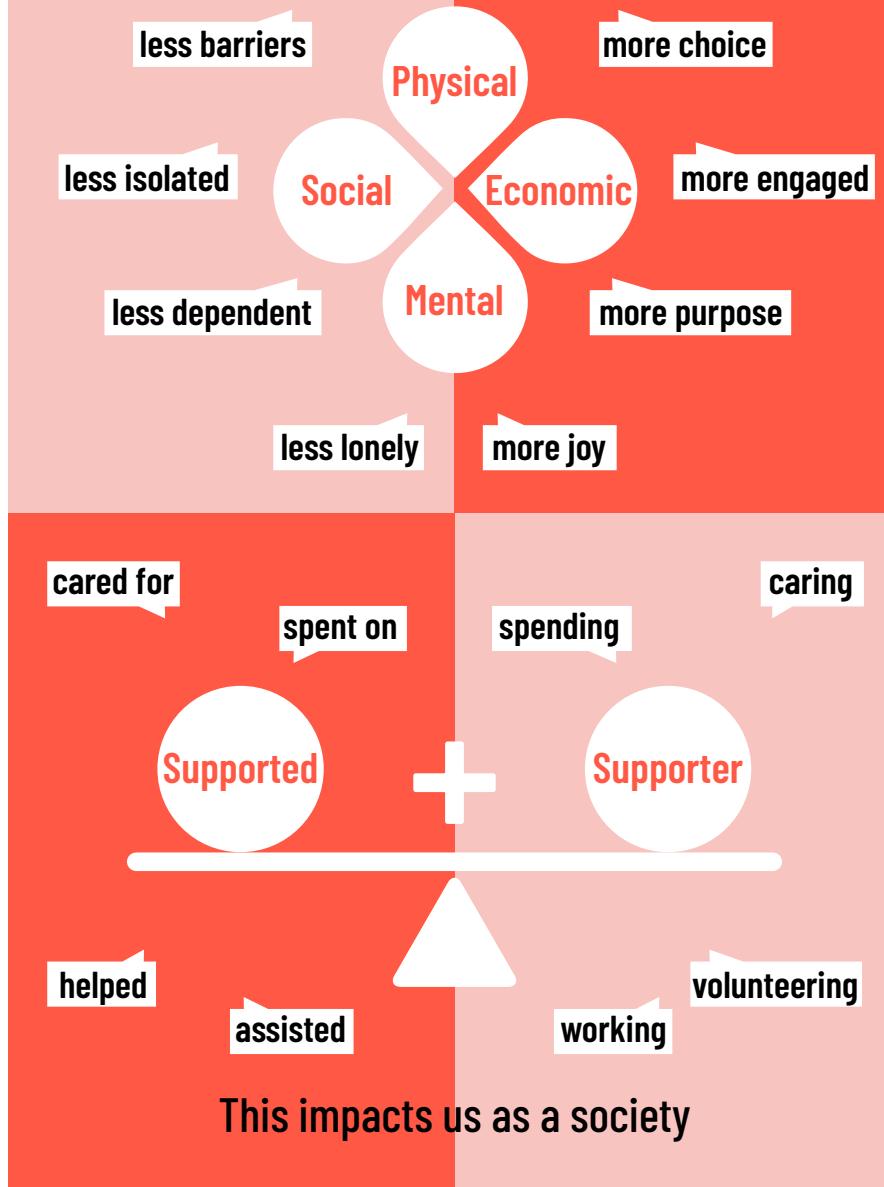
Society

Societal benefits from the formal and informal contributions of older people from spending, working, volunteering, and caring are significant and should be valued.

• Spending: "*As our population ages, our economy will become more reliant on older people's spending.*" If people aged 75+ spent at the same rate *as younger people this could add 2% to consumption's GDP impact per annum by 2040.*[23]

• Working: *"People aged 50 and over earned 30% of total earnings (£237 billion) in 2018 and this will rise to 40% by 2040 (£311 billion)."*[23]

• Volunteering/caring: *"Informal contributions of people aged 50 and over amounted to £226.1 billion of economic output in 2017 – around 11.3% of GDP."*[26]

Bad design is also an opportunity to design age better.

This impacts us as individuals and as a society

less barriers • Physical • more choice
less isolated • Social • Economic • more engaged
less dependent • Mental • more purpose
less lonely • more joy

cared for • spent on • spending • caring
Supported + Supporter
helped • assisted • working • volunteering

This impacts us as a society
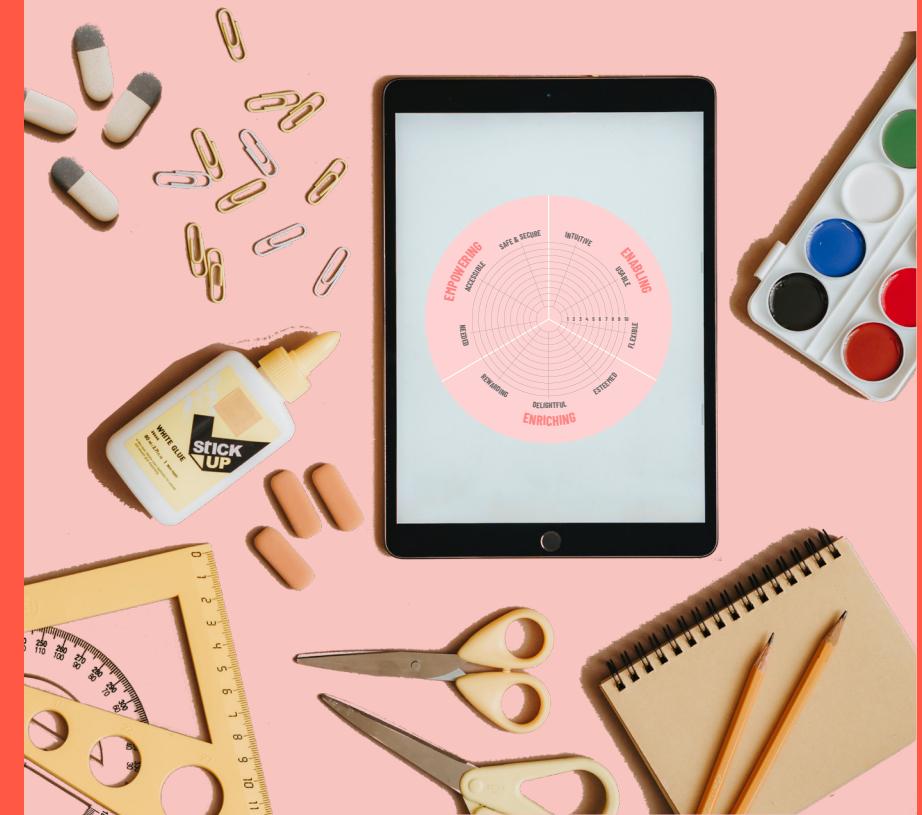
Design
Age
Better

"To foster healthy ageing, we need to work together. Older people must be central to and fully engaged in this collaboration."

— Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, W.H.O. Older person, UN Representative

No. 3

Design Age Better

Bad design may make our life worse — but good design can make our life better. This is especially true for designing age.

Growing older doesn't mean we suddenly want the design around us to be *'Big, Beige, and Boring'*, as Joe Coughlin, Director of MIT AgeLab, reminds us. In fact, we might even have greater expectations for design after decades of learning what we like.

What does it mean to design for ageing well? Design for ageing well not only means reducing barriers and enhancing usability but it also means increasing desirability and social inclusion. The Institute discussed this in the *'Designing a World for Everyone'* talk at the Design Museum, September 2021. Key responses included:

"Design the universal for the hyper personal"
— Nic Palmarini, Director of NICA

"Design should carry us across the life course. I've got one life, I want it to be as good as possible. I want an environment that supports me across that life course".
— Sarah Harper, Director at OIPA
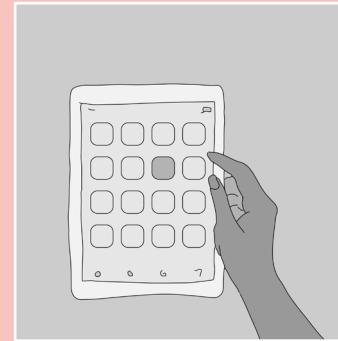
"The role of the designer is to come up with imaginative solutions, find different ways of addressing the issue, and also interrogate the problem, not just accept the brief but challenge the assumptions and go back to basics."
— Jeremy Myerson, Helen Hamlyn Professor of Design

Now the question is, how do we do it? How do we make things *so compelling, so desirable, without forgetting usability, that people will want them'*, as Jeremy Myerson provocates.[27]

What makes design good?
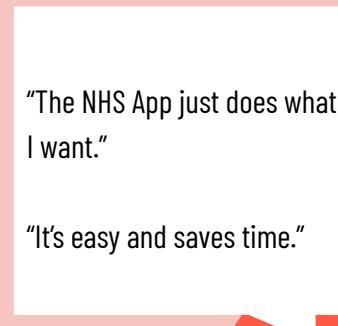
products

"Easy to use, intuitive, let's me connect with others."

"I've used it for so long that I understand it. It is multifunctional and high spec."
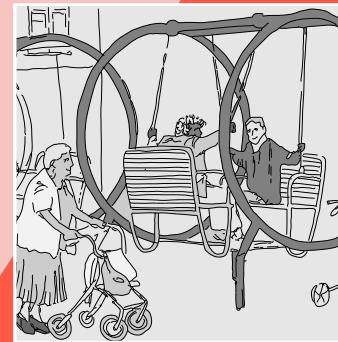
services

"The NHS App just does what I want."

"It's easy and saves time."

NHS

environments
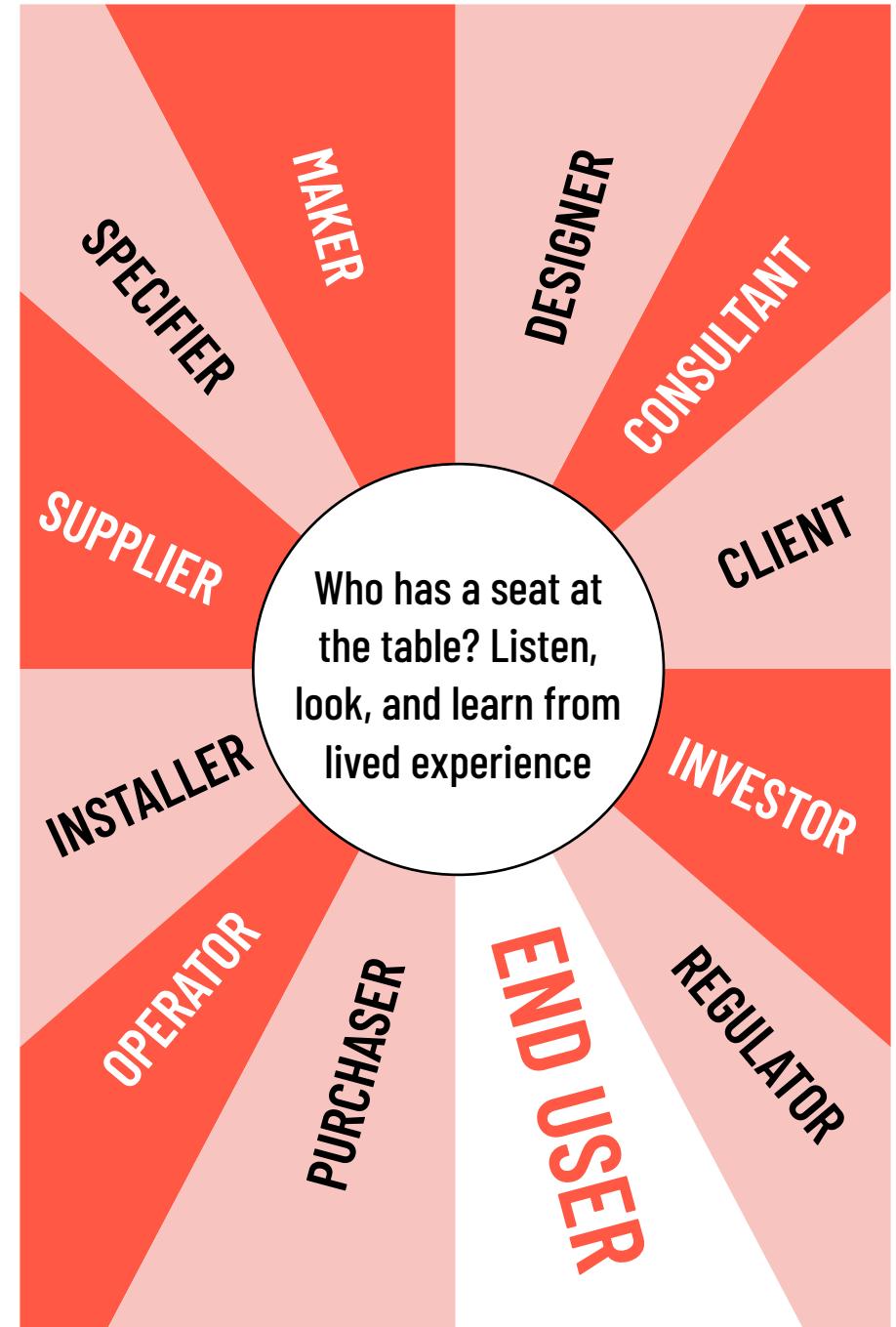
"Accessible, inclusive public parks and playgrounds for all ages because they are fun, free, intergenerational, connective, and health-supporting."[28]

We believe the best way to design for ageing well is to design **with** older people. The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design has 30 years of experience of person-centred design prioritising listening, looking, and learning from lived experience to discover the best possible design outcomes. The HHCD coined the term inclusive design in 1993, with Roger Coleman describing it as:

"Central to [design's role in overcoming challenges] is the integrating power of user-centred Inclusive Design. This consumer-based approach is about [how design can] delight the end-user, rather than stigmatise and alienate. It takes us closer to good design as opposed to 'special needs' design. Good design is about making conscious, well-informed decisions throughout the design process. A great product, service, [or environment] is typically built on a foundation of understanding the real needs of the user and other stakeholders. In short, good design and Inclusive Design should be seen as inseparable and essential."[29]

Design Age Institute continues this trajectory by taking an age-inclusive design approach. Whether supporting, managing, consulting, or advocating for design for healthy ageing, the Institute looks to understand how design fits user's needs and wants. Jeremy Myerson describes 3 means to achieve better design: *social activism, intense collaboration, and creative design.* We believe collaboration across all stakeholders that actively prioritises voices of users can generate more creative design outcomes.

"The world needs open, collaborative teams of artists, designers, scientists and tech innovators who can imagine a better world and then set about building it." — Paul Thompson, RCA Chancellor

Who has a seat at the table? Listen, look, and learn from lived experience

MAKER · DESIGNER · CONSULTANT · CLIENT · INVESTOR · REGULATOR · END USER · PURCHASER · OPERATOR · INSTALLER · SUPPLIER · SPECIFIER

To design age better, it is important to be able to assess whether or not design helps us age well. Design Age Institute use an Age-Inclusive Design Evaluation tool to do this. This tool was initially inspired by The Age of No Retirement's 10 Intergenerational Design Principles[30] published by George Lee and Jonathan Collie with help from Rama Gheerawo, the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design team, and informed by industry and user testing.

Age-Inclusive Design Evaluation (ADE) tool:
DAI's evolution of this tool focuses on a 3-E approach, defined as:

Empowering: "To make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights."
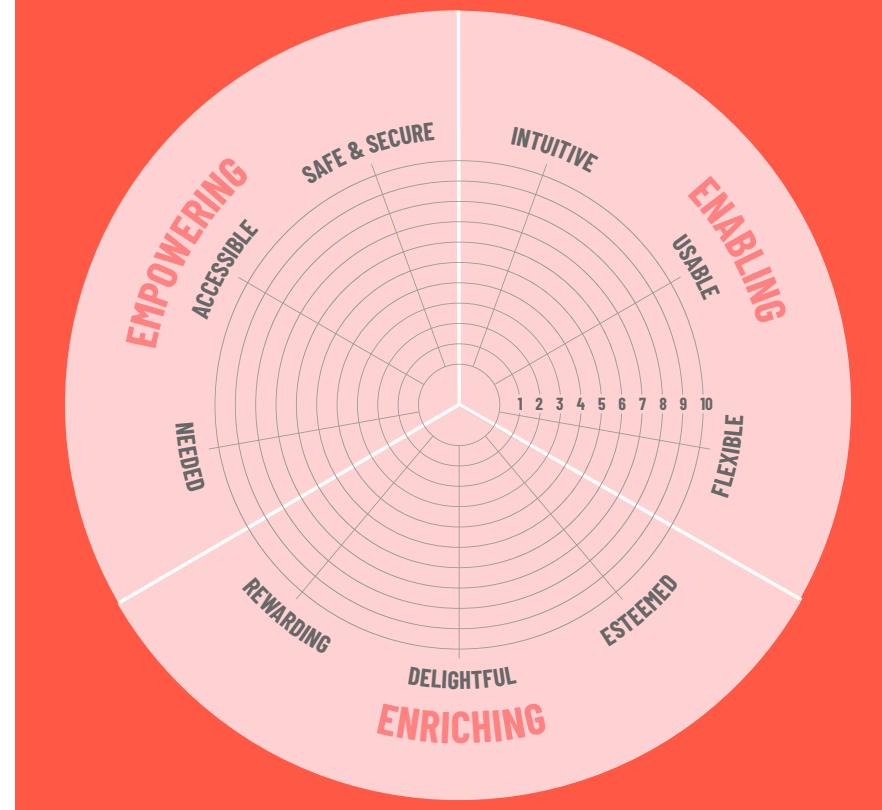
Enabling: "To give (someone) the authority or means to do something; make it possible for."

Enriching: "To improve or enhance the quality or value of."

The purpose is to help users, designers, and clients thoughtfully evaluate products, services, and environments to ensure design meets people's needs *and* wants. Ideally, the tool is used early and often: to set the brief, inform the process, and support user testing. The tool can be used across all design scales and contexts. While the importance of each element may change based on the particular use of a design, Design Age Institute believe the 3-E approach can help us create a more equitable, inclusive society.

Find more information about our design tools, including the Design Evaluation Tool, on the Design Age Institute website.

How do you evaluate the design around you?

EMPOWERING · SAFE & SECURE · INTUITIVE · ENABLING · ACCESSIBLE · USABLE · 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 · NEEDED · FLEXIBLE · REWARDING · ESTEEMED · DELIGHTFUL · ENRICHING

The 3 E's can lead to more Equity

To better understand the design evaluation tool, let's evaluate the Revolving Armchair by Charlotte Perriand (1928). Start by framing the design evaluation tool elements as questions, whether to ask yourself as a critical consumer or for designers to ask their users:

Empowering:
1. Do I feel safe/secure?
2. Do I need it?
3. Is it accessible?

Enabling:
4. Is it intuitive?
5. Can I use it?
6. Is it flexible?

Enriching:
7. Am I proud it's mine?
8. I am delighted by it?
9. Is it rewarding?

The design process requires a deep dive into each of the 9 elements to identify and respond to further design considerations. For instance, to answer *"Is this design accessible for my user, myself, or my future self?"* first requires asking many further questions that expand our ideas of what meaningful access is and why it matters, such as:

Physical Access	**1.**	Will I be able to lower myself to sit down?
	2.	Will I be able to stand up?
	3.	Can I lift it up to position it where I want?
	4.	Does it support my back and posture?
Cognitive and Sensory Access	**5.**	Is there enough contrast to see the chair?
	6.	How does the material feel against my skin?
	7.	Does it make any sounds?
	8.	Will the metallic glare bother me?
Broader Access	**9.**	Can I afford it?
	10.	Other types of access I should be considering?
	11.	What other questions should I be asking?
	12.	Who else should I be asking?

How do you evaluate the design around you?

DO I FEEL SAFE AND SECURE?

IS IT INTUITIVE?

IS IT ACCESSIBLE?

AM I ABLE TO USE IT?

DO I NEED IT?

IS IT FLEXIBLE?

IS IT REWARDING?

AM I PROUD TO HAVE IT?

I AM DELIGHTED BY IT?

Will this empower, enable, and enrich your life?

Asking person-centred inclusive design questions early and often is key to understanding what people need and want in order to feel Empowered, Enabled, and Enriched by design. Design Age Institute use the 3-E design evaluation tool process with our Pathfinder Innovation Programme. The Institute supports, develops, and invests in projects that help bring healthy ageing related products, services, and environments to market. With 30 projects to date, the Pathfinder Innovation Programme addresses a range of healthy ageing themes, from caring for our hearing health with Hearing Birdsong (Kennedy Woods), staying active with Walkable (Michael Stranz), supporting flexible working with Home Office to Age in Place (Northumbria University) and improving our housing with Let the Light In (Clarion Housing).

Central to Design Age Institute's role in the Pathfinder Innovation Programme is ensuring a person-centred, inclusive design approach is taken to break down ageist stereotypes and biases. No design is perfectly inclusive for all people, but it is important to take time in the design process to genuinely consider: Who does this design include? And who does this design exclude? Designing with diverse users provides greater awareness around the ways design may exclude people and ideas for how design can better include people. By shifting the power traditionally held by industry to consumers and users, the likelihood of creating *negative externalities* is reduced and the opportunity for agency, choice, and a shared sense of belonging increases.

See our Pathfinder Innovation Programme to learn more about the projects our Design Management team is helping to bring to market through person-centred age-inclusive design.

Who does design exclude?

I have no power and I have no choice.

I have a voice and I have a choice.

Who does design include?

Asking inclusive design questions can also help us better understand each other. This is not only good for us as individuals but also as connected social creatures.

Age-inclusive design provides the opportunity for more exposure to more people across all walks of life. Many 'generational divide' narratives are based on inaccurate ageist stereotypes, polarising us and pitting us against one another, fueling age-segregation.

The good news is most of us don't believe it: *"Contrary to media representations of intergenerational conflict, 80% of people believe older adults have a wealth of experience and perspectives to offer society today."*[31]
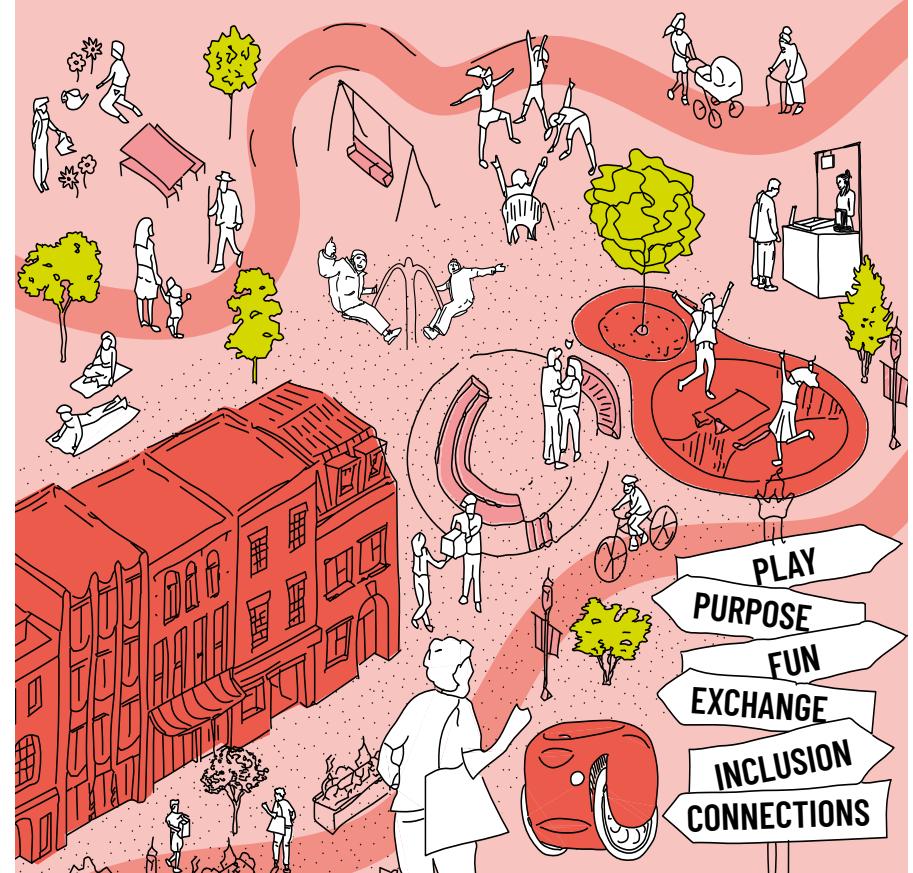
Age-inclusive design can help to break down generational divides by laying the groundwork for a shared sense of belonging that exposes our commonalities and shared interests we may not have otherwise seen. Age-inclusive design can also help foster an intergenerational, interdependent society. While we all want to be independent from medical care, Director of the National Innovation Centre for Ageing's Nic Palmarini reminds us that:

"We are all interdependent. Being dependent is not something bad — society is based on interdependence, and it's time we suggest an interdependent design that can show the beauty and power of dependency as a societal construct."

From affording agency in the most private spaces of the home to bridging divides and fostering connection in the most social places, better design has the capacity to be beneficial for all.

"Social engagement is one of the most evidence-based strategies for health and longevity."

— Dilip Jeste, Director of the Global Research Network on Social Determinants of Mental Health

PLAY
PURPOSE
FUN
EXCHANGE
INCLUSION
CONNECTIONS

Demand Desirable Design

"Design has shifted from a commercial tool for business to a cultural platform to address challenges around ageing, climate and health."

— Jeremy Myerson,
Chair of Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design

No. 4

Demand Desirable Design
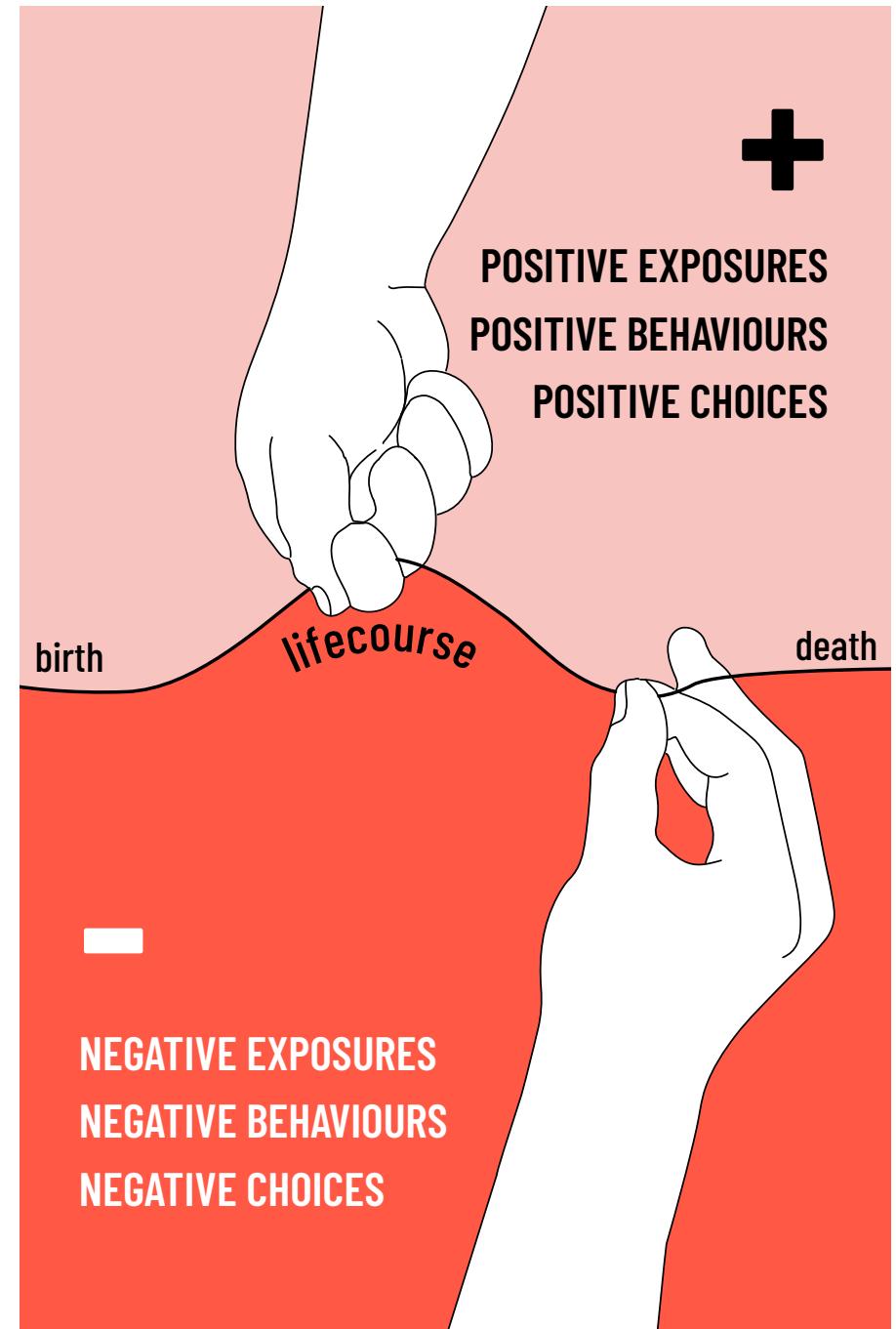
Demanding desirable design for ageing well is good for all of us.

"How will the culture of older people develop? How can this culture be harnessed to drive healthy ageing and a healthy ageing economy? What will older people demand of a healthy ageing economy?"

These provocations by Oxford Institute of Population Ageing in **'An overview of Policies for Older Adults Report'** can help us all think about what we will demand as we age. It's important to not only consider what we want in later life, but also how our choices across our lifetime will help get us there. Oxford's research shows we will benefit from **'a life course approach',** which is *"based on the fact that events in later life are the result of behaviours and decisions made in early phases of one's life on the one hand and social expectations and pressures on the other hand."*[32] This also includes the environments we are exposed to throughout our life.

A life course approach recognises that our decisions today effect our lives tomorrow, which is why we believe it is important for design to help us experience healthy, happy ageing throughout our entire life. The U.K. government reiterates this by stating: *"Investing in the health of people from earlier on in the life span is important, as it will help them to stay well in older age and continue contributing to the UK economy."*[33]

We appreciate many people may not have the luxury of time and money to invest in their future self, so Design Age Institute aims to share information that helps us decide what matters to us.

+

POSITIVE EXPOSURES
POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS
POSITIVE CHOICES

birth   lifecourse   death

–

NEGATIVE EXPOSURES
NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS
**NEGATIVE CHOICES**
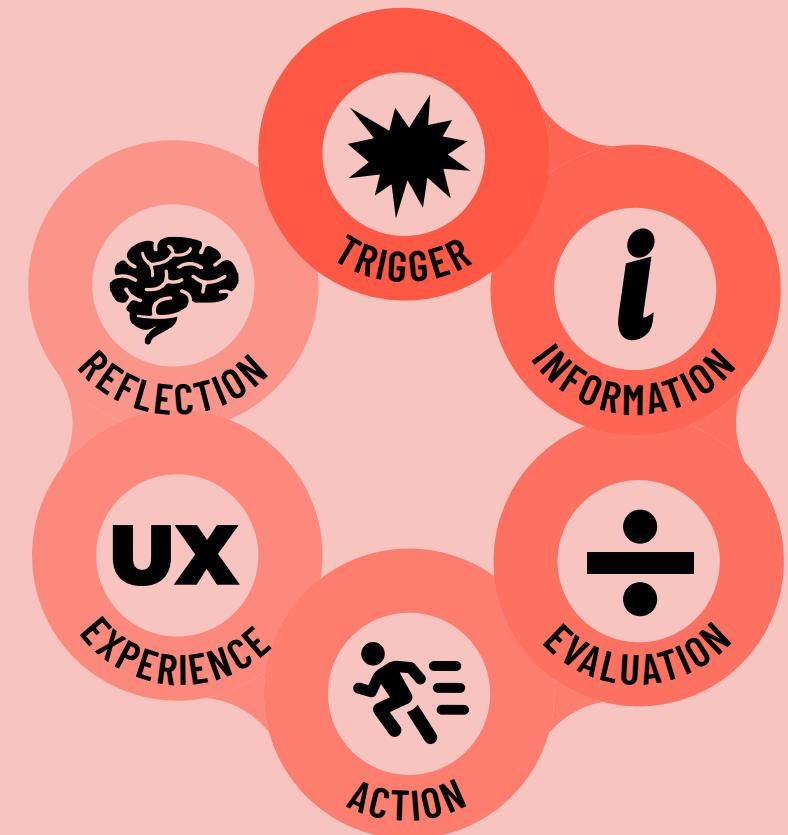
If design teams take an age-inclusive, person-centred approach from the start it can create impactful top-down change. We can also use our power as citizens to create bottom up solutions, call for systemic change, and demand desirable design.

This requires us to feel motivated to make demands that are beneficial for ourselves and our communities. This means we need to explore what motivates us in the first place. There are both 'carrots' and 'sticks' involved. Some people may be motivated to avoid 'sticks' such as any legal repercussions from not complying with regulations or the equality act, or any reputational risks that may result from excluding people.

We like to focus on the 'carrots'. We believe that design for our future selves can be so desirable that we are motivated to think about it, demand it, choose it, and use it. At the moment, many people do not have the time, capacity, or interest to think about what our future self may want and need. Design Age Institute believe if people are exposed to more diverse, desirable choices, it could make planning ahead easier and more appealing, giving people greater opportunities for a healthy, happy lifespan.

To create more desirable choices, designers need to understand consumer behaviour before, during, and after we engage with design. Colum Lowe, Design Age Institute Director, outlined Psychology of Action steps to remind us that when we design a product, service, or environment, we need to understand the process people go through to engage with that design, starting with the trigger that sets off the series of steps from choice, decision, use, to our feelings and reflections on the experience.

What changes do we believe in?


How do we demand change?
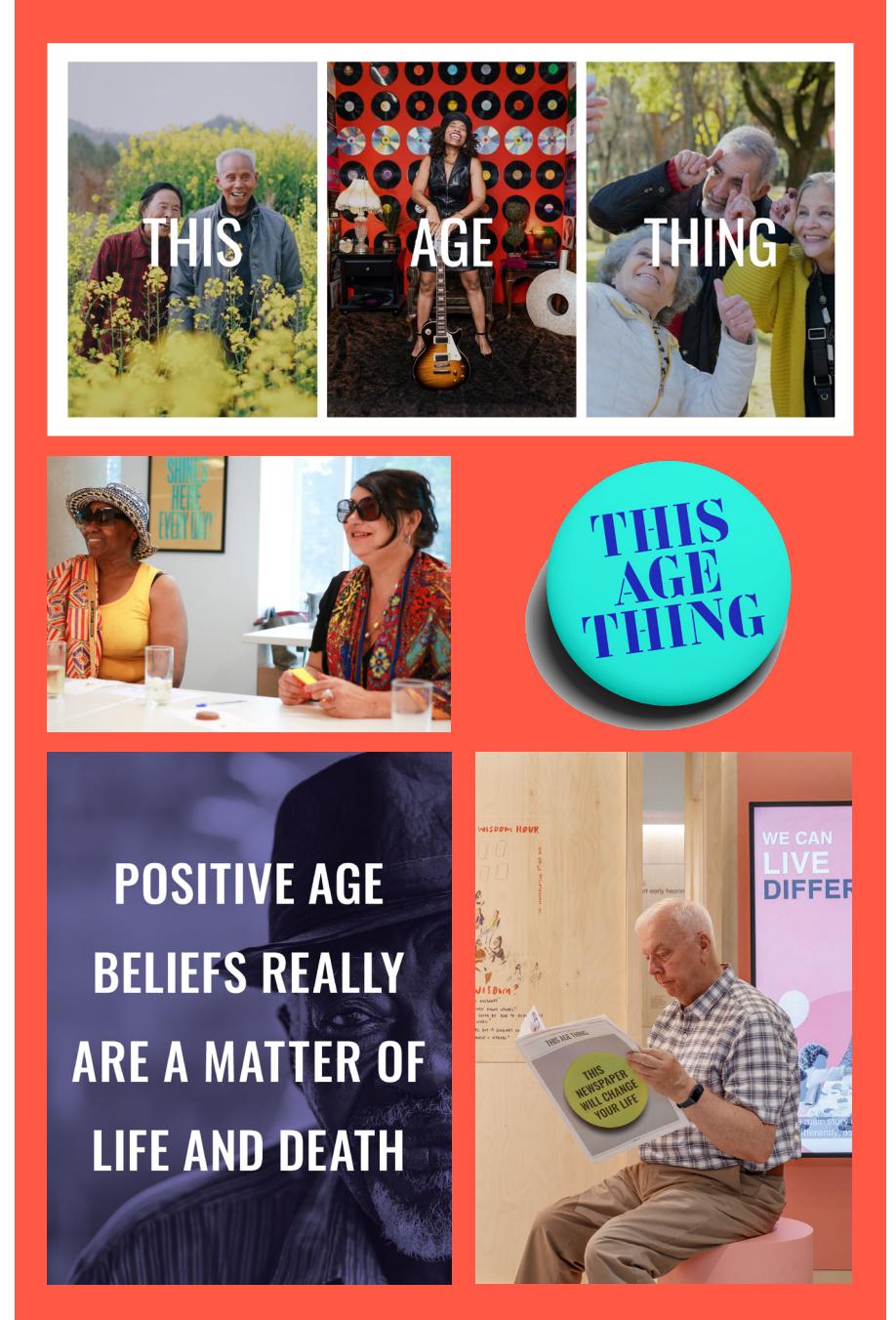
To evoke meaningful change across our life course, we need to believe in the cause and understand what's at stake. To help facilitate this, Design Age Institute created a community platform, This Age Thing, where we can learn, listen, share, discuss, debate all things age.

This Age Thing is a community, a platform, and a resources of advocates of ageing well. Both Design Age Institute and This Age Thing are inspired by the idea that good design, based on the experiences of real people, can help to radically transform the products, services and environments that will help all of us to age not only healthier, but also happier. We take an affirmative approach to ageing and aim to make visible what has often been invisible: the real stories and true facts of ageing.

Many corporations and charities are already aligned in this vision for the future, which Oxford Institute of Population Ageing describe in their reports: '**A Review of Charitable Organisations**'[34] and '**A Review of Corporate Organisations Working With and For Older People as Part of the Healthy Ageing Economy**'[35].

By listening to and learning from real people, we can better advocate for greater design processes, policies, and practices. Oxford explains that *"inappropriate policies (or indeed the lack of any policies at all) could lead to problems rather than challenges and opportunities."* The same can be said of design and industry, so we will continue to explore how we demand the *right* age-inclusive processes and practices.

Find out more about this This Age Thing at thisagething.co

POSITIVE AGE BELIEFS REALLY ARE A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Design Age Institute are learning, discussing, and sharing how ageism, design, health, supply, and demand influence each other. Our aim is to break vicious cycles and promote virtuous circles.
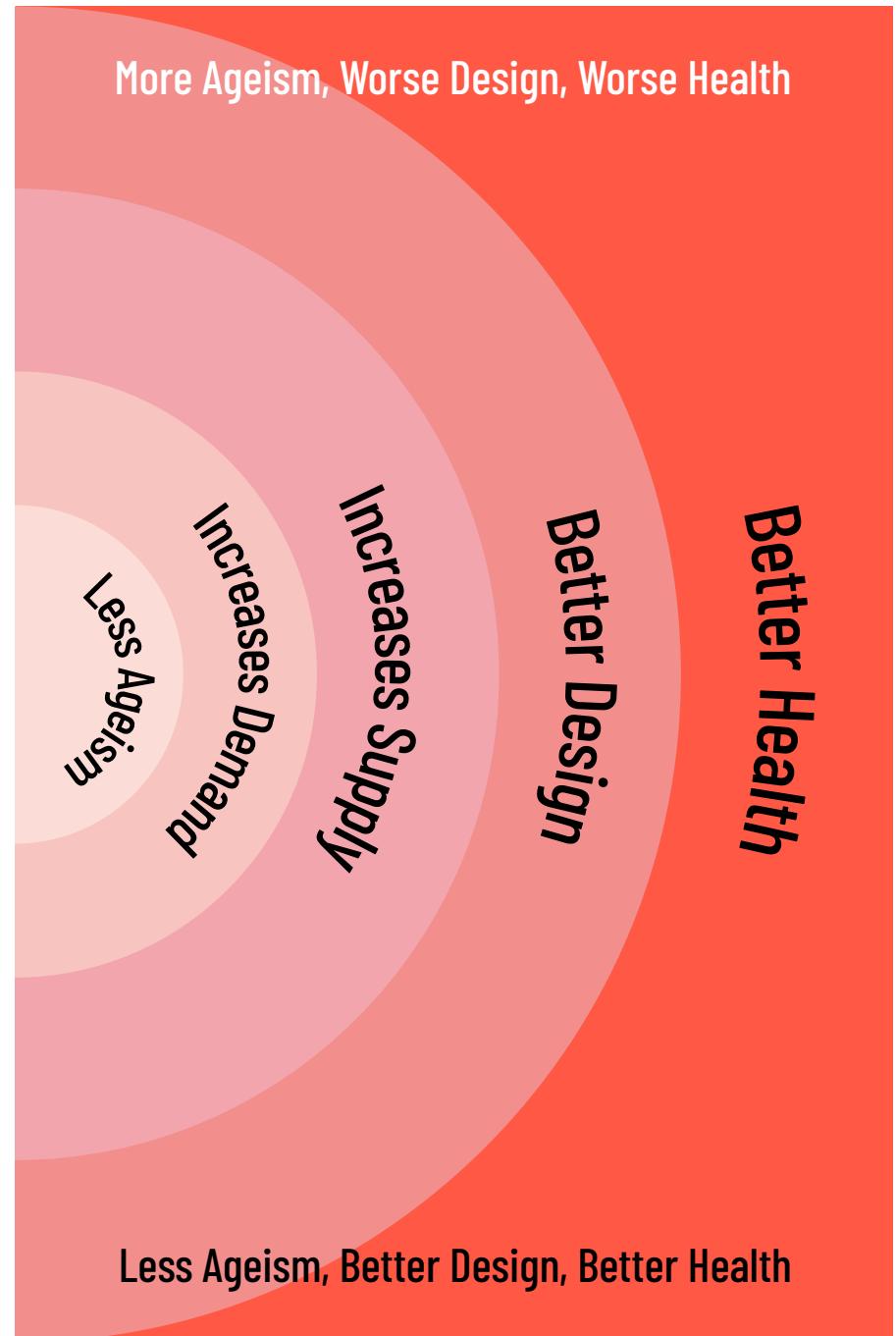
We see ageism as a root cause that starts a negative cycle:

1. Ageism leads to of limited demand due to lack of exposure
2. Lack of demand leads to limited supply due to lack of perceived need or want
3. Limited supply provides bad or no design options
4. This reduces the opportunity for health benefiting outcomes
+. This proliferating cycle causes a negative ripple effect

The good news is design can be an important lever to break vicious cycles and catalyse virtuous circles that promote healthy, happy ageing:

1. Less ageism can increase demand due to increased exposure to diverse realities of later life
2. This increased exposure leads to increased supply due to a better understanding of real needs and wants
3. This increased supply provides better and more design choices
4. This increases the opportunity for health benefiting outcomes
+. This can undo negative cycles and start a positive effect

Better design of desirable products, services, and environments can help reduce ageist stereotypes, increase demand, and therefore increase supply for a rapidly growing number of people. By reversing negative ripples we can start positive waves.

More Ageism, Worse Design, Worse Health

Less Ageism

Increases Demand

Increases Supply

Better Design

Better Health

Less Ageism, Better Design, Better Health

DesignAge Do's

1 Do Undo Ageism

- Do check your bias and ageist assumptions
- Do challenge generational divides
- Do avoid ageist language

2 Do Blame the Design

- Do consider how design helps or hinders our health
- Do think critically about barriers caused by bad design
- Do call out design that excludes or limits people

3 Do Design Age Better

- Do involve older people throughout the design process
- Do evaluate the 3 E's to design age better
- Do take time to ask inclusive design questions early & often

4 Do Demand Desirable Design

- Do think about the needs and wants of your future self and our future society
- Do value and share your unique lived experiences
- Do demand the design industry raise their standards

Ways to get involved

Ways to get involved with Design Age Institute:

Design Age Institute — www.designage.org

Help the Design Age Institute design and demand better choices for our future selves. Designers, keep an eye out for our competitions. Join our **Design Age Institute mailing list** to learn about our projects, policy recommendations, petitions and more.

This Age Thing — www.thisagething.co

Check out This Age Thing to explore and reflect on your future self and our future society. Join our **Community Insights Group** to be the first to hear about upcoming consultations, focus groups and design activities.

Learn more about our partner's work and research:

Oxford Institute of Population Ageing
www.ageing.ox.ac.uk

International Longevity Centre – UK
www.ilcuk.org.uk

the Design Museum
designmuseum.org

UK National Innovation Centre for Ageing
uknica.co.uk

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