

Report on “Jockey Club Age-friendly City Project”
Age-friendly Practice of Yuen Long District (2019-2021)

Submission Date: December 2021

Summary

In order to improve the elderly residents’ physical and mental well-being and promote age-friendliness in Yuen Long District, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (the “Trust”) funded the Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies of Lingnan University (LU-APIAS) and four non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including Pok Oi Hospital Mrs. Wong Tung Yuen District Elderly Community Centre (博愛醫院王東源夫人長者地區中心), Yan Chai Hospital Wan Shing Memorial Social Centre for the Elderly (仁濟醫院尹成紀念老人中心), Tin Shui Neighbourhood Elderly Centre of The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council (鄰舍輔導會天瑞鄰里康齡中心), and Yan Oi Tong Tin Ka Ping Neighborhood Elderly Centre (仁愛堂田家炳長者鄰舍中心), to carry out five district-based programmes (DBPs) between 2019-2021 under the Jockey Club Age-Friendly City Project.

The above five programmes covered six domains under the age-friendly city framework of the World Health Organization (“WHO”), namely ‘Outdoor spaces and building’, ‘Transportation’, ‘Social participation’, ‘Respect and social inclusion’, ‘Communication and information, and ‘Community support and health services’.

Various activities were implemented to fulfil the needs of the elderly and to enhance the age-friendliness in the district, such as floriculture course, brain game training, nostalgic culture day, home visits to the needy elderly and rural residents, self-guided tour of the transport infrastructure, creating a leaflet introducing Yuen Long District, workshops with various themes (e.g., TheraBand; learning about the elderly services in Yuen Long District), human library activities, and intergenerational STEM scheme and so on. Many age-friendly ambassadors and rural befrienders were trained and actively involved in implementing the programmes. Direct and indirect beneficiaries reached over 3,800 and 10,018, respectively.

Further Information

1. Please give details on how different parties collaborated in your age-friendly practice, such as in project and financial management.

The close collaboration among the government, district council, NGOs, and academia is the foundation of successfully conducting the district-based programmes. The government and Yuen Long District Council (YLDC) endorsed the idea and direction of building an age-friendly community in Yuen Long District. The project initiator and funder, Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust provided vital financial support for the NGOs to provide services and execute the five programmes. Despite the impact of pandemic, the NGOs paid concerted efforts to design and implement the activities. They also actively reached out to other stakeholders, such as secondary schools, Yuen Long Women's Club, and the management office of housing estates for synergy collaboration and publicity. Besides serving as the Professional Support Team for Yuen Long District, LU-APIAS initiated a district-based programme benefiting the residents living in rural areas and conducted a comprehensive evaluation on the outcome of the programmes. The evaluation result will be an essential reference for the future development of the age-friendliness in the district.

2. Please elaborate on the role of the elderly in the age-friendly practice.

Elderly residents were the beneficiaries of the district-based programmes, benefiting their physical and mental well-being. At the same time, many of the elderly were recruited as the project ambassadors. They were well trained with relevant knowledge and skills, and been involved in implementing the activities. These project ambassadors fully utilized their potential. They are empowered through involving in different tasks, such as assisting health check-ups, conducting outreach services, leading the TheraBand workshop, shooting videos to introduce the concept of an age-friendly city, sharing their experience as Human Library with the public, and so on. Moreover, the project ambassadors were encouraged to give their feedback on the age-friendliness in Yuen Long District and the services provided in the programmes. Their opinions were collected and reflected to the YLDC and relevant stakeholders. Their voice is very helpful for the service improvement and the future development of the age-friendly community in the district.

3. Have you received any feedback on your age-friendly practice from your target group?

The majority of the participants satisfied with the DBPs. They reflected that their confidence improved by obtaining new knowledge and completing tasks in the activities. Their social network strengthened and expanded while they enjoyed the activities with their family members and the new friends known from the programmes. They gained a sense of belonging through participating in the activities. It reflected that accessible elderly centres are essential to support the well-being of elderly populations in the district. Those active participants have a better sense of well-being than those who did not attend activities from elderly centres.

Students, teachers and parents were involved in some programmes, such as the intergenerational STEM scheme organized by LU-APIAS. Through interactions and home visits, the young generation better understands the older generation's needs. Some students were surprised by the elderly participants' passion and capability, which changed their stereotyping of senior citizens. It is advised to organize more inter-generation activities to foster an inclusive and harmonious community.

The elderly participants, especially the AFC-ambassadors and rural befrienders, have a better understanding of the age-friendly city through training and voluntary work. They have strengthened their sensitivity to age-friendliness and perceived the programmes' improvement in various AFC domains. They felt honored and empowered to contribute their concerted efforts to developing the age-friendly community and were willing to continue to serve the community in the future.

4. Do you plan to extend the coverage of your age-friendly programme?

The success of the district-based programmes laid a solid foundation for organizing similar activities and facilitated the development of an age-friendly community in Yuen Long District. The YLDC and those NGOs who participated in the AFC programmes became familiar with the concept of an age-friendly city and gained rich experience facilitating relevant activities. Thus, they can continue their leading role in promoting age-friendliness in the district. Besides, the trained project ambassadors have formed a talent pool passionate about contributing to the local community. The ambassadors will become valuable human resources for future age-friendly activities. Last but not least, the programmes' organizers have successfully engaged different stakeholders in Yuen Long District and promoted the concept of an age-friendly city. The stakeholders have expressed recognition towards the AFC concept and will support relevant activities conducted in the future.

5. Would you impart your experiences, such as matters that need more attention to and room for improvement?

Various factors contribute to the success of the district-based programmes. Firstly, the design of the activities thoroughly considered the need of the elderly and covered different age-friendly domains. Though the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic limited the implementation of the offline activities, the organizers showed great flexibility and adjusted the activity design timely. Hence, many elderly residents were attracted to join in the online activities and learned about the concept of the age-friendly city efficiently. Secondly, the organizers made efforts to assist the elderly to fully realize their potential by engaging them in the decision-making process. For example, in the programme “The Growth of Public Transit, The Progress towards Aged Friendly”, the elderly participants were encouraged to create their route for exploring the age-friendly facilities instead of following the one recommended by the organizer, which gave a chance to the participants to utilize their innovation capability. Thirdly, the participants highly appreciated the supportive and hardworking volunteers and staff. Their efforts ensured the smooth progress of the activities and the participants’ positive experience. Fourthly, the collaboration with other stakeholders provided extra resources for the organizers to mobilize and expand the influence of the programmes to a broader range of residents in the community.

Despite the successful experience mentioned above, there is still room for the organizers to improve their services further. It is suggested that the organizers should seek support from more village representatives for future programmes so that more elderly residents in the rural areas could benefit from the programmes. More youngsters' involvement is also considered important in enhancing the harmony in the age-friendly community. Besides, some participants opined that it is necessary to consult the elderly for the programme planning in the future, as it can help ensure the design of the activities to better meet the elderly residents’ needs.

6. What were the challenges and how to address them?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely influenced the implementation of physical activities, and the breakdown of the service delivery has negatively affected both the physical and mental well-being of the elderly. Thus, the organizers have endeavoured to provide more virtual/online activities. Besides, they also tried to continue the necessary offline support for the needy elderly, such as delivering epidemic prevention supplies to those vulnerable residents. All these collective actions demonstrated love and concern to elderly residents.