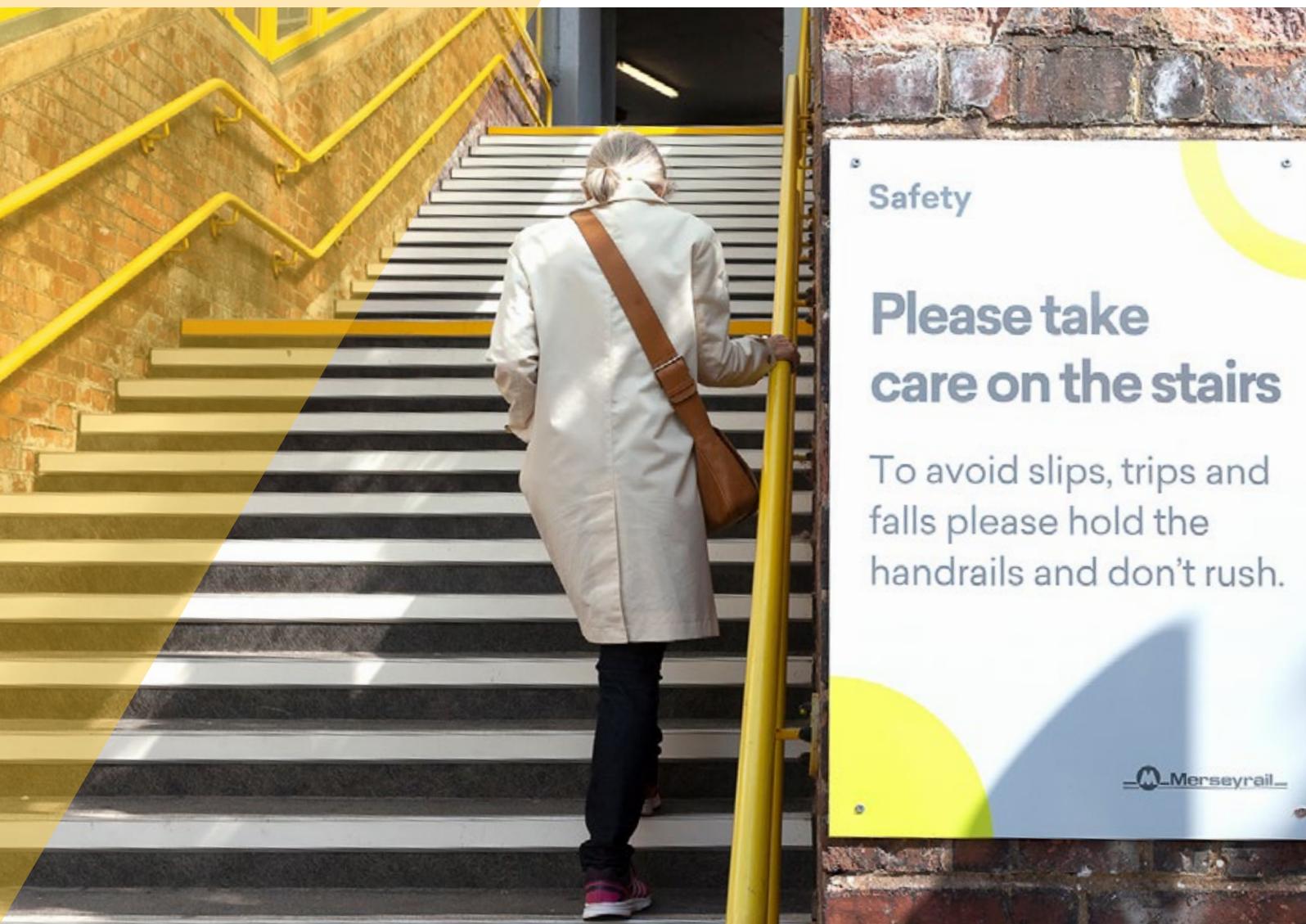


# Sefton's older people at the heart of local and regional partnership working

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Age-friendly  
communities  
case study

[ageing-better.org.uk](http://ageing-better.org.uk)



# Age-friendly Sefton



**In 2014 the Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority was formed, bringing together the City of Liverpool and the Boroughs of Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.**

Sefton has the highest proportion of over 65s of all six local authorities in the Liverpool City Region. In 2018 Sefton joined the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. Sefton's aim was to use the age-friendly framework to build on existing partnership working in the borough, to address issues faced by some older residents such as loneliness, low fixed incomes, and sub-standard housing.

Sefton's Older People's Strategy (2019-2024) shows that older people are working to improve health, care, and housing, and improve transport, communication, and access to information. This strategy links closely to the borough's 2030 vision which guides long-term planning. The overall goal is to create an environment where people get involved, develop their own solutions, and help one another.

There is also a thriving voluntary and community sector in Sefton, with many opportunities for older people to participate. The charity Sefton Advocacy is the lead organisation for Sefton's age-friendly work, facilitating six area-based Older Persons' Forums across the borough, where older people can meet and take part in decision-

making. With a local network of over 400 older people, these groups shaped, and are helping to implement, the Older People's Strategy.

Members of the Older Persons' Forums make up a borough-wide partnership, Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens (SPOC). Its meetings are also attended by providers of services to older people from the public, voluntary, community and health sectors. SPOC was formed in the mid-2000s by Sefton Council, with support from Sefton CVS, and now plays a key role as the steering group for Sefton's Age-friendly work. Its aim is to challenge negative stereotypes of older people, and to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect. SPOC is now recognised as one of the most effective partnership groups in Sefton.

An example of this is how SPOC has helped to influence and inform the way people of all ages and abilities can travel in the region.

### Merseytravel

Merseytravel is the strategic transport advisor to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and is responsible for transport delivery in the region. In 2017 a representative from Merseytravel began attending SPOC meetings so that members could raise concerns about transport directly, and to give information about any transport-related schemes that could affect older people in the area. Merseyside is committed to working with local transport operators to make travelling around the region more accessible. Part of this work includes offering free travel by bus, train and ferry, for anyone over 60 who lives on Merseyside, after 9.30 am on weekdays and any time on weekends and bank holidays.

Initially forum members concerns were quite specific, such as dissatisfaction with the frequency of buses on a particular route.





However, direct contact with Merseytravel enabled members to take a more strategic view across Sefton and beyond. Members began to give input into city-wide transport issues such as the Big Bus Debate in 2018 which asked for views on the future of bus services in the region, such as franchising the network, an enhanced partnership approach, or a continuation of the existing system.

In 2020, a new fleet of accessible trains are being tested on the rail network and they will offer level access to platforms, wider aisles, CCTV, alarms, and more space for wheelchairs. Older representatives from SPOC were invited to view the new train model to test their user-friendliness and provide feedback and suggestions.

At the same time, many of the stations on the network are old, and bringing them up to modern accessible standards is a challenge. One example is Hillside Station in Sefton.

### **Working together for changes to Hillside Station**

In 2018 the Department for Transport announced 'Access for All Programme', a £300million fund to provide step-free access for passengers at rail stations. Hillside Station was identified by Merseytravel as a station which would need further modernisation.

Built in 1923 between Liverpool and Southport, Hillside Station has daytime trains every 15 minutes and serves the famous Royal Birkdale golf club which attracts thousands of passengers every year. With no lift at the station, the platforms are reached by 32 steep steps making it difficult for many people to access, including local residents. While some people can use stations further away instead, many older residents are excluded from the train network.

Making the case for this funding had Merseytravel draw on its involvement with SPOC to gather local testimonies. The older representatives and forum members went a step further, initiating a peer consultation with neighbours, friends and other groups they were part of, to ensure a diverse range of experiences were included as they knew this was a chance to make Hillside station usable for many. Two key findings were: passengers wanted to see all stations made accessible, and many passengers felt long ramps could be a barrier to access.

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**“The local public transport system is really good and inexpensive, particularly for older people. So it is important to address the outstanding issues with access, like the steps at Hillside, to make sure everyone can benefit.”**

**Brian Clarke OBE, Chair, SPOC and Southport Older People’s Forum representative**

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**“It was important for us to demonstrate the need for the lifts at Hillside and that local residents were fully behind the proposal.”**

**Tony Killen, Rail Development Advisor (Stations), Liverpool City Region Combined Authority**

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The strength of local support enabled Merseytravel to make a successful bid for funding two new lifts at Hillside Station. The work is due to begin in 2021 and when completed the station will be fully accessible. This will increase independence and expand opportunities for local residents.

In 2019 Merseytravel was absorbed into the Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority to deliver its transport policy. The SPOC representative’s role changed to deal with a much wider range of issues, including housing, jobs and skills, culture, and the environment. The insights gained and relationships built in two years of involvement

**“Having lifts and level access on to the trains gives me the independence to travel like everyone else, without depending on other people for help or having to let them know in advance.”**

**Fiona Caplan, Southport Access for Everyone (SAFE)**



in SPOC has paid dividends and has meant the representative will continue, bringing this broader scope to age-friendly developments in Sefton.

The partnership between the Sefton and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has since developed further with SPOC now represented on the Age Friendly Liverpool City Region Steering Group. Locally and

across the city region the experiences and perspective of older people will continue to inform and support age-friendly improvements.

This development brings a wider strategic focus and broader scope to the relationship beyond transport that includes housing and spatial planning, jobs and skills, digital connectivity, culture and the environment.

**“Unlocking this funding means we’ll be able to build on the tremendous work we’ve been doing to make our city region rail network the most accessible in the country.”**

Liverpool Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram



Let's take action today for all our tomorrows.  
**Let's make ageing better.**



UK Network of Age-friendly  
Communities

The Centre for Ageing Better creates change in policy and practice informed by evidence and works with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities. Ageing Better is a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

