

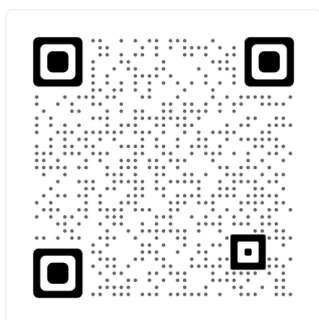
World Health Innovation Summit - WHIS Seniors

Turning Ageing Into Opportunity

Policy Briefing
Senior-Centred Entrepreneurship as a
Strategic Urban & Global Health Priority



Innovative & Collaborative



Content Index



- | | |
|--|--|
| 01. Executive Summary | 05. Senior Nurseries |
| 02. The Strategic Challenge | 06. Global Practice & Evidence |
| 03. Seniors as an Innovation & Economic Asset | 07. WHISSeniors & WHIS Chapters: Implementation Model |
| 04. Cities' Role: Enable Conditions, Not Delivery | 08. Policy Alignment |
| | 09. Recommendations |
| | 10. Conclusions |

1. Executive Summary



Global cities and communities are experiencing rapid demographic transition. By 2050, over 1.5 billion people worldwide will be aged 65 and above, representing nearly 16% of the global population (United Nations, 2022). Yet most urban systems health, welfare, and community services remain structured around dependency-based care models.

This mismatch presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Older adults represent one of the largest underutilised human capital assets globally with experience, leadership capacity, social capital, and time to contribute meaningfully to communities, innovation, and wellbeing.

WHISSeniors, delivered through WHIS Chapters in partnership with GSPA, provides a scalable, community-led framework to activate this potential through social prescribing, prevention, and senior-led entrepreneurship.

“Older adults are not just beneficiaries of care they are community leaders, mentors, and innovators. WHISSeniors Chapters enable cities to transform ageing into a societal asset while strengthening health, social cohesion, and local innovation.”

— Gareth Presch, CEO WHIS & GSPA

Gareth Presch

Gareth Presch, CEO WHIS
& GSPA

2. The Strategic Challenge



Demographic Reality

- By 2030, the number of people aged 60+ is projected to reach 1 billion globally.
- In Europe, older adults account for 25–30% of urban populations in many cities.
- Loneliness and social isolation affect up to 40% of older adults, significantly increasing risk of depression and physical decline (Age UK, 2023).

System Reality

- Welfare and health systems remain largely care-focused.
- Seniors are rarely positioned as co-creators, leaders, or contributors to urban innovation.
- Urban service models do not leverage the skills, experience, and networks of older adults.

Economic and Social Risk

- Rising care and health costs, estimated at 3–5% of GDP in many developed countries.
- Reduced social cohesion and weakened intergenerational engagement.
- Underutilised human capital and lost innovation potential.

3. Seniors as an Innovation & Economic Asset



Older adults bring:

- Leadership and organisational experience
- Tacit knowledge and advanced problem-solving skills
- Mentorship capacity for younger generations
- Deep community networks and social capital
- A desire for purpose, contribution, and meaningful engagement

Third-Age Entrepreneurship combines:

- Social value creation
- Micro-enterprise and peer-led initiatives
- Volunteering, mentoring, and knowledge sharing
- Local service innovation

Mobilising these capabilities transforms seniors from care recipients into active societal and economic contributors.

4. Cities' Role: Enable Conditions, Not Delivery



Cities and communities are most effective as enablers and orchestrators rather than direct service providers.

4.1 Space as Platform

- Provide low-cost, accessible neighbourhood spaces (vacant retail, libraries, schools after hours).
- Support walkable, intergenerational hubs aligned with the 15-minute city principle.
- Create peer-led co-creation platforms rather than service-only facilities.

4.2 Procurement & Micro-Funding Innovation

- Seed funding, grants, vouchers, and challenge-based awards for senior-led initiatives.
- Lightweight commissioning and co-ownership models.
- Public-private partnerships with local businesses and foundations.

Potential financing mechanisms include:

- EU Social Innovation Funds and Horizon Europe grants
- National ageing or prevention funds - Social Impact Bonds (Outcome Based Payments)
- Local authority small grants and social prescribing budgets (GSPA)
- Corporate CSR programmes targeting health, wellbeing, and inclusion

4.3 Legal & Organisational Facilitation

- Promote cooperatives, social enterprises, and time banks.
- Simplify governance structures for senior-led initiatives.

4.4 Brokerage & Ecosystem Orchestration

- Connect senior initiatives with universities, startups, NGOs, and health systems.
- Embed senior hubs within living labs and innovation districts.
- Enable structured intergenerational collaboration.

4.5 Narrative Reframing

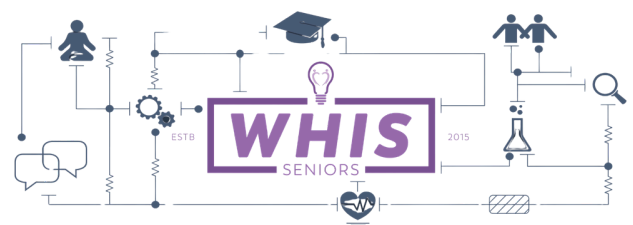
Shift from:

- “Ageing” → Experienced citizen
- “Care” → Capability
- “Retirement” → Third-age entrepreneurship



5. Senior Nurseries

Senior Nurseries represent a fundamental shift in how cities and communities engage with older adults. Rather than operating as traditional, staff-led centres focused primarily on care and programmed leisure activities, Senior Nurseries are peer-led, capability-driven spaces designed to cultivate leadership, innovation, and intergenerational exchange. In this model, older adults are not passive recipients of services. They are co-creators, mentors, social entrepreneurs, and community anchors. Activities are not predetermined or centrally designed; instead, they emerge organically from the interests, skills, and lived experience of participants. This creates dynamic environments where ideas can develop into community initiatives, micro-enterprises, mentoring networks, and local problem-solving platforms. Senior Nurseries are intentionally intergenerational. They are embedded within neighbourhoods and accessible community spaces — such as libraries, vacant retail units, schools after hours, or shared civic buildings ensuring visibility and integration within daily urban life. By aligning with principles such as the 15-minute city, they support walkability, inclusion, and local resilience.



Functionally, Senior Nurseries operate as:

- Community innovation and co-creation hubs
- Early-stage incubators for senior-led social enterprises
- Mentoring and knowledge exchange platforms
- Living labs for healthy ageing, prevention, and social impact

This approach reframes ageing from a narrative of decline to one of contribution and enterprise. It transforms the concept of retirement into a “third age” of purposeful engagement — where experience becomes an economic, social, and health asset.

By shifting from care-focused infrastructure to capability-focused ecosystems, Senior Nurseries enable cities to activate one of their most valuable and underutilised resources: experienced citizens.



6. Global Practice & Evidence



Global examples demonstrate that enabling models are effective:

- Japan: Senior cooperatives delivering cafés, repair, and childcare services with municipal facilitation.
- Nordics: Co-housing and service co-production integrating autonomy and social enterprise.
- Netherlands: Self-organising neighbourhood teams such as Buurtzorg.
- UK: Social prescribing and senior-led community enterprise linked to health systems.
- EU Living Labs: Seniors as co-designers, testers, and mentors.

Common principle: Cities provide enabling frameworks — not rigid, standardised programmes.

7. WHISSeniors & WHIS

Chapters: Implementation Model

WHISSeniors operationalises this global policy vision at community level through:

- Community-owned, peer-led Chapters
- Social prescribing and wellbeing hubs
- Intergenerational engagement networks
- Senior-led social and micro-enterprise initiatives
- Connection to the global WHIS knowledge-sharing network

Anticipated Outcomes

- Reduced social isolation (affecting up to 40% of seniors globally)
- Improved community wellbeing and resilience
- Activation of senior mentoring and leadership roles
- Expansion of micro-enterprises and volunteer-led initiatives
- Strengthened preventative health systems



**Accelerate
Digital
Transformation**



**Nurture
Innovation
Culture**



**Gain Optimal
Impact in Public
Contribution**

8. Policy Alignment



WHISSeniors aligns with internationally recognised frameworks and standards for healthy, age-inclusive communities:

- World Health Organization Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)
- WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework
- Social prescribing and prevention strategies
- Silver Economy growth and innovation agendas
- Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Health & Wellbeing)
- ISO 25553 – Ageing Societies: Age-Inclusive Organisations, ensuring that WHISSeniors Chapters are structured to actively include older adults in leadership, co-creation, and community enterprise.

By embedding ISO 25553 principles, WHISSeniors transforms prevention and senior engagement from informal programmes into structured, investable community assets. This alignment enables local authorities, health systems, and investors to treat healthy ageing and prevention as measurable, standards-based interventions that deliver social, economic, and health returns.

9. Recommendations

1. Recognise seniors as urban innovation assets and integrate their capabilities into city planning and economic development.
2. Embed WHISSeniors Chapters into local and national healthy ageing strategies, ensuring alignment with WHO frameworks and ISO 25553 standards.
3. Fund senior-led hubs through grants, micro-funding, and public-private partnerships, positioning them as structured, investable prevention assets.
4. Facilitate cooperative and co-creation governance structures, enabling peer-led enterprise and intergenerational collaboration.
5. Integrate seniors into urban innovation ecosystems, living labs, and sustainability programmes, strengthening measurable health, social, and economic outcomes.
6. Monitor and evaluate outcomes using internationally recognised indicators to scale effective models globally, including social impact, wellbeing metrics, and prevention ROI.

10. Conclusion

Senior-centred entrepreneurship is not a peripheral social programme — it is a strategic global opportunity.

Through WHISSeniors Chapters, WHIS and GSPA provide a tested, scalable, and standards-aligned framework to:

- Activate senior capability
- Reduce social isolation
- Strengthen communities
- Advance preventative health
- Enable local innovation

By embedding ISO 25553 and other age-inclusive frameworks, healthy ageing becomes a driver of societal, economic, and community value.

“Mobilising seniors’ skills and networks transforms cities and communities — turning ageing into opportunity.”

— Gareth Presch, CEO WHIS & GSPA

Innovative & Collaborative

© 2026 World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS) and Global Social Prescribing Alliance. All rights reserved. WHISKids™, WHISatWork™, WHISSeniors™, WHISGreen™, and WHISTech™ are programme initiatives of the World Health Innovation Summit.

Materials may not be reproduced, distributed, or implemented in whole or in part without prior written permission. Content is provided for policy, research, and programme development purposes.

Disclaimer

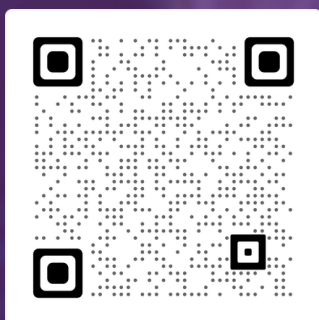
The information, frameworks, and tools provided are intended to support innovation in health, wellbeing, and social prescribing. They do not constitute medical, legal, financial, or investment advice. Implementation should be adapted to local policy, regulatory, and healthcare contexts.

This document is provided for information and partnership discussion purposes only.

Nothing contained herein constitutes or should be interpreted as:

- an offer to sell securities
- a solicitation of investment
- or a financial promotion under applicable regulation.

Any potential collaborations, licensing arrangements, or partnerships will be subject to separate contractual agreements.



www.whis.world

info@whis.world