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Evidence Gap Mapping for Local Ageing Policy: A practical guide and framework
for councils and universities across London

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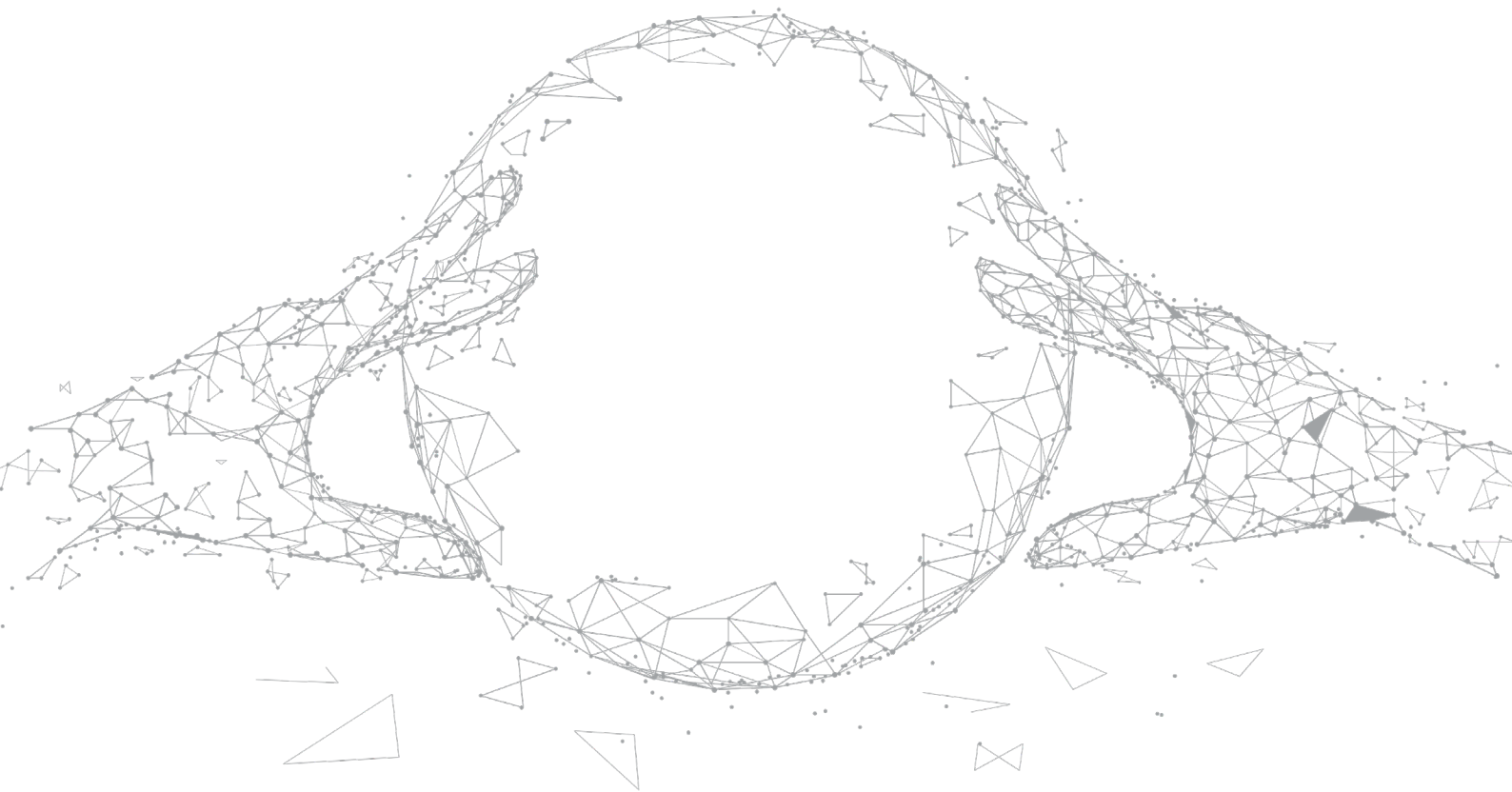
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Evidence Gap Mapping for Local Ageing Policy

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE AND FRAMEWORK FOR
COUNCILS AND UNIVERSITIES ACROSS LONDON**



**LONDON RESEARCH
& POLICY PARTNERSHIP**

Who this guide is for

- Council officers working in policy, research, performance, equalities or service design
- University researchers, research assistants and students supporting local policy teams

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Part A

CONCEPTUAL FRAMING: WHY AN EVIDENCE GAP MAP FOR AGEING POLICY?

The challenge addressed

Ageism remains under-addressed in the UK. Local ageing strategies often draw more on biomedical and social science sources than on arts and humanities research, which explore a broad and deep mix of cultural, historical and experiential dimensions of ageing. This guide commits to mobilising these cultural insights within policy development.

What counts as arts and humanities evidence

For the purposes of this guide, arts and humanities evidence includes peer-reviewed articles, books, policy-relevant reports, curated datasets or public outputs grounded in disciplines such as history, philosophy, linguistics, literature, media and cultural studies, design, arts practice and criticism. It also includes cultural sector research that examines identity, language, meaning, representation, place and participation in relation to ageing. This complements social science and biomedical sources rather than replaces them.

Why cultural evidence matters for local ageing policy

- It reveals how ageing is experienced in place, not only measured by indicators.
- It helps reframe older residents beyond health and care, e.g., identity, language, autonomy, participation and contributions to the cultural life of a place, all of which shape how citizens access and experience local services.
- It strengthens equalities work by showing how narratives and representations affect uptake, access and engagement.
- It supports co-production by connecting lived experience with interpretive analysis.

How the Evidence Gap Map functions

The EGM is a visual and tabular summary of evidence use across a set of local documents. It shows where cultural insights are explicit, implicit or absent, then feeds these findings into quick fixes and targeted evidence requests to strengthen policy making. It is both an analytic tool and a boundary object that supports dialogue between officers, academia and community representatives.

Part B

STANDALONE TOOL: EVIDENCE GAP MAP HOW-TO

This section is self-contained. Officers can use it directly without reading Part A.

Outputs you will produce

- A one page matrix that shows evidence use across policies
- A short summary of top gaps and opportunities ready to lift into reports
- Optional charts for internal sharing

Time and roles

- Small scan of one topic area: 1 to 2 days by one officer plus light peer review
- Multi domain scan: up to 1 week by an officer with support from a university partner

Inputs you need

- An agreed list of policy areas. Suggested starters: Arts and Culture, Digital Inclusion, Equality and Diversity, Health and Wellbeing, Housing, Pride in Place, Social Care, Sustainability, Transport, Youth and Education
- Access to strategies, cabinet papers, service plans and consultation summaries
- The template table below and the codebook in this section
- A simple tagging sheet for themes and evidence types

Note: Quick fixes will usually come directly from the “gaps or opportunities” notes in your table. These are small, actionable changes such as adding a citation, reframing a paragraph or naming lived experience already in use.



Step-by-step method

Step 1. Collect documents

For each policy area, gather the current strategy or plan, any linked action plan and one recent cabinet or committee paper if available. Record the document title, date and type.

Step 2. Code how ageing appears

Read each document for ageing references. Assign one of three presence codes:

- Not mentioned or only listed under equalities without actions
- Biomedical lens with limited cultural or place content
- Culturally informed with identity, language, place, participation, autonomy and clear actions

Step 3. Identify evidence types used

Scan the bibliography, footnotes and hyperlinks. Tick each type that appears: biomedical, social science, legal, cultural, community consultation or lived experience.

Step 4. Mark cultural evidence as explicit or implicit

- **Explicit** if a cultural study, report or dataset is cited by name
- **Implicit** if cultural practice is described but no cultural source is cited

Step 5. Fill the template table

Enter one row per document. Add a short gaps or opportunities note in plain language.

Step 6. Produce the one page matrix

List documents down the side and evidence types along the top. Shade or mark a cell when evidence appears. This reveals where cultural evidence is missing or only implicit.

Step 7. Write the short summary

Name the three most important gaps, the quick fixes available now and the two requests you will send to the evidence request service next. Keep to ten lines.

Template table for data capture

Policy title	Date	Type	Themes covered	Evidence types used	Ageing presence	Cultural evidence (all topics)	Cultural evidence (ageing)	Gaps or opportunities	Notes
			See Appendix I	Biomedical, social science, legal, cultural, consultation, lived experience	Not mentioned, biomedical lens, or culturally informed	Explicit, implicit or absent	Explicit, implicit or absent	One sentence in plain English	Any internal context



Avoid acronyms inside the table to keep it readable for members and residents.

Codebook and decision rules

Evidence types (tick all that apply)

Biomedical: clinical, epidemiological or health services research

Social science: sociology, economics, psychology, policy evaluation and related methods

Legal: statutory or case law sources, regulatory guidance

Cultural: arts and humanities sources as defined in Part A

Community consultation: formal council consultation outputs and summaries

Lived experience: documented resident testimony, co-production outputs or ethnographic accounts

Ageing presence (choose one)

Not mentioned or only listed: ageing appears under a general equalities line with no actions or measures

Biomedical lens: ageing framed mainly by health, care or access with little cultural or place content

Culturally informed: ageing includes identity, language, place, participation and autonomy with actions or measures

Cultural evidence flag (all topics/ ageing specific)

- Explicit cultural evidence: a cultural source is cited by name
- Implicit cultural evidence: cultural practice is described but no cultural source is cited

Boundary cases and tips

- If a document mentions local identity or language but cites no source, mark cultural as implicit
- If a document quotes a museum or library report, mark cultural as explicit
- If a document references Office for National Statistics (ONS) or National Health Service (NHS) data only, cultural is absent

For an example, see Appendix II.

One page matrix exemplar

Layout

- Rows: documents
- Columns: evidence types
- Marker: X for present, I for implicit cultural, E for explicit cultural
- Leave cells blank when absent

Example

Document	Biomedical	Social science	Legal	Cultural	Consultation	Lived experience
Digital Inclusion Strategy (2024)		x	x	I		
Equality and Diversity Strategy (2023)		x	x		x	
Health and Wellbeing Plan (2025)	x	x			x	x
Arts and Culture Strategy (2024)				E	x	

Reading the pattern

- Cultural appears explicit only once, implicit once, absent twice
- **Quick fix:** add one explicit cultural source to Digital Inclusion ageing section
- Targeted evidence request: commission a short humanities review on older residents' digital skills and cultural participation

Data management and sharing

- Store the table and matrix in a shared location with a version date
- Share a one page summary with service leads and the research alignment forum




Visualise and share

- Keep visuals in simple black and white for printing (cost, accessibility, sustainability)
- Optional bar chart: count of documents by evidence type
- Share the one page matrix and a ten line summary with service leads and the research alignment forum

Turn results into action

- Update two live documents (e.g., strategies, cabinet papers, service plans) where ageing is only listed under equalities
- Add one explicit cultural source to a section that now uses cultural material implicitly
- Send two targeted evidence requests to fill the top gaps you found

Light quality checks

- Double-code three documents with a colleague to check consistency 
- Record non-response or not found documents in a short note 
- Keep a copy of each document you coded, or a link and the access date 

One page checklist

- Documents collected and logged
- Ageing presence coded with the rubric
- Evidence types ticked
- Cultural evidence marked explicit or implicit
- Matrix produced on one page
- Short summary written
- Quick fixes identified
- Two evidence requests drafted
- Quality check done on three documents
- Files saved to the shared folder with a version date



Part C

SCALING AND INTEGRATION

Scaling across boroughs and domains

What stays constant

- Evidence types and definitions
- Cultural explicit or implicit rule
- Ageing presence codes

What you adapt

- Policy areas and document list
- Local tags and themes
- Evidence request recipients

Replication checklist for a new borough

- Confirm policy areas and document sources
- Agree on codebook and decision rules with the university partner
- Run a pilot double-coding five documents
- Produce a first matrix and a ten line summary to share with relevant shareholders

For councils planning a workshop or co-production session, use this guide alongside the [Engagement Protocol](#), which explains how to present the EGM and turn the matrix into shared decisions that can feed directly into a [Policy Brief](#).

Integration with council workflows

Position the EGM within existing routines

- Annual strategy refresh and forward plans
- Equality impact assessments
- Cabinet report preparation
- Research alignment forums and evidence request services

Evidence request template

Use a short format that is easy to track.

Requests are usually emailed to the council's evidence lead or research alignment forum, and to the named university partner. Each borough can adapt this to local workflow.

Subject: Request for cultural evidence on [topic]

Context: EGM shows cultural evidence is [implicit or absent] in [document section].

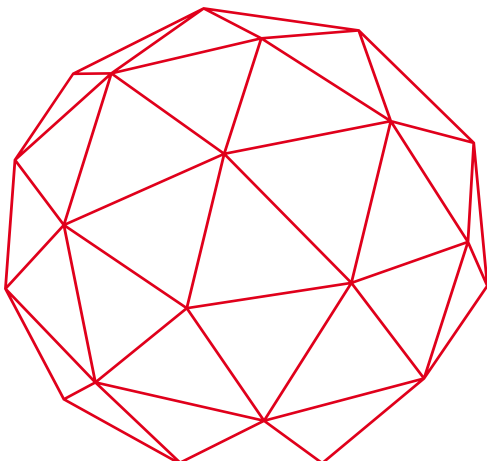
Need: A short review or annotated bibliography of arts and humanities sources on [topic], focused on [place or population].

Use: To update [document] by [date], and to inform [committee or refresh cycle].

Contact: [Officer name and email]

Partner: [University contact]

Deadline: [Date]



Appendices

Appendix I. Tags for themes

Use short tags so you can filter later. Examples: participation, safety, identity, language, place, access, autonomy, creativity, digital skills, public realm, transport, housing, care, finance.

Appendix II. Boundary cases: worked mini examples

- Implicit cultural: A strategy describes older residents facing language barriers with no source cited. Mark cultural as implicit.
- Explicit cultural: A cabinet paper cites a museum report on older volunteers. Mark cultural as explicit.
- Absent cultural: A plan uses ONS tables on ageing and a clinical pathway document only. Cultural is absent.

Appendix III. Quality assurance protocol

- Train coders on the codebook for 30 minutes
- Double-code a sample and reconcile differences
- Record reasons for changes in a short note
- Keep version dates and the access dates for each document

Appendix IV. Data management and versioning

- Store the table and one page matrix in a shared folder titled EGM_[borough][month][year]
- Use a simple naming convention for tables and summaries
- Maintain a changelog and a short readme in the folder

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For further tools and resources, see the accompanying [Engagement Protocol](#), [Policy Brief](#) and related materials in this series.