

Transforming places for later lives

Taking a localities
approach

July 2021



About us

Centre for Ageing Better

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In less than 20 years, one in four people will be over 65.

The fact that many of us are living longer is a great achievement. But unless radical action is taken by government, business and others in society, millions of us risk missing out on enjoying those extra years.

At the Centre for Ageing Better we want everyone to enjoy later life. We create change in policy and practice informed by evidence and work with partners across England to improve employment, housing, health and communities.

We are a charitable foundation, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the government's What Works Network.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge our partners in Greater Manchester, Leeds and Lincolnshire, the steering group and older people representatives of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, and Collaborate CIC in the development of ideas, case studies and ambition in this strategy.

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Executive summary

By 2040, over 40% of the UK population will be aged 50 or over. However, we are not ageing evenly everywhere. Already, one in three local authorities – mostly rural and coastal – have populations with this age profile.

Different localities have distinct assets and challenges. The Centre for Ageing Better believes that by taking these distinctive factors for particular places into account, we can generate solutions that are more likely to be appropriate, locally owned and sustainable. And they can offer lessons for national policy.

We work with localities at three levels:

- Strategic Locality Partnerships. These are long-term, collaborative agreements for a minimum of five years, where we employ locally hosted staff, make ageing a top strategic priority, test new approaches and share what works. Partners act as exemplars nationally and regionally and cover a range of geographic settings and political contexts.
- Building the **UK Network of Age-friendly Communities**. Having adopted the Age-friendly Communities Framework of the World Health Organisation (WHO), members ensure the views of older residents are at the heart of their plans. We provide the secretariat and support to the network and have so far helped it to grow from 14 to over 45 localities, covering some 23 million people.
- We seek to engage and influence local policy makers and practitioners, providing relevant and usable evidence, often arising from our work at the two other levels.

Collectively, this represents a comprehensive, place-based approach to change.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to deepen our impact with Strategic Locality Partnerships, grow the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities and build wider motivation and capability for change around the country. We have set ourselves clear goals to measure success along the path to our vision of a society where everyone enjoys later life.

Background

Our vision is a society where everyone enjoys later life. Working with localities is an essential part of how we achieve this.

By localities, we mean places – from small towns to city regions – where we generate and share learning, influence decision-making and support action locally, with the goal of improving outcomes in later life for the people who live there.

We established our first Strategic Locality Partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2016. Since then, we have formed new partnerships with Leeds City Council and Leeds Older People’s Forum, Lincolnshire County and District Councils, and supported the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities to grow to over 45 places, covering 23 million people.

We focus largely on the role of local and regional authorities. A level of government that has a key leadership and convening role in localities, along with the financial and statutory powers to implement changes that we know can make a difference to how well we age.

By taking localities as our focus and building trusted, reciprocal and long-term partnerships, we have shown that we can increase our impact and help to achieve our vision. This paper sets out some of our learning so far, the rationale for working in and with localities, the approach we take and our ambition over the next 10 years.

The story so far

2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– First Strategic Locality Partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority– Partnership with UK Network of Age-friendly Communities
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Strategic Locality Partnership with Leeds City Council and Leeds Older People’s Forum– First Age-friendly Communities Network Conference
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The UK Network of Age-friendly Communities expands to 24 localities– Greater Manchester becomes the first UK Age-friendly City Region
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Launched Expression of Interest to find a rural and coastal locality partnership
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Third strategic partnership with Lincolnshire County and District Councils– Network membership reaches 44 places covering 22 million people

Why we work in localities



Where we live influences how well we age

The UK is undergoing a massive age shift. In the next 20 years, over two-thirds of the growth in the UK population will be among those aged 60 and over.

However, we are not ageing equally everywhere. For example, a boy born in Richmond-upon-Thames in London can expect to enjoy almost 20 more years of good health than one born in Blackpool (ONS 2019). Regional inequalities are pronounced. Out of the 10 areas where life expectancy is highest, nine are in London or the South East.

By 2040, for the first time in history, over 40% of the UK population will be aged 50 or over.

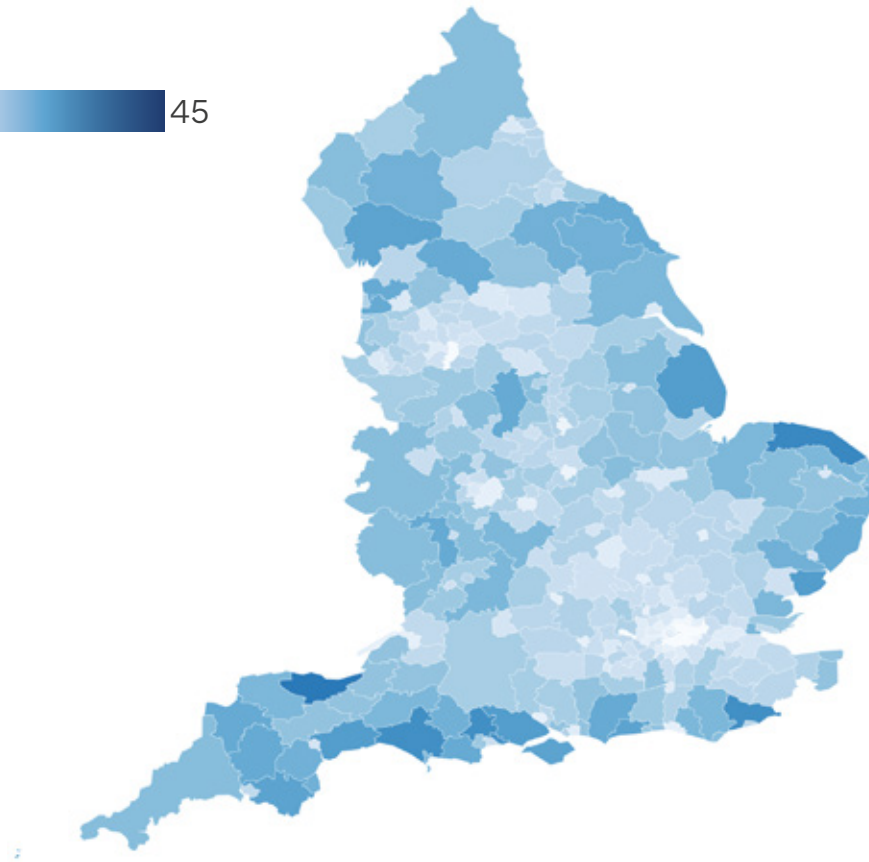
But the rate at which the age profile is changing isn't equal across the country. Already, one in three local authorities – mostly rural and coastal – have populations with this age profile.

Different localities have distinct assets and challenges. By taking these distinctive factors for particular places into account, we can generate solutions that are more likely to be appropriate, locally owned and sustainable.

Percentage of the population age 65+ by local authority

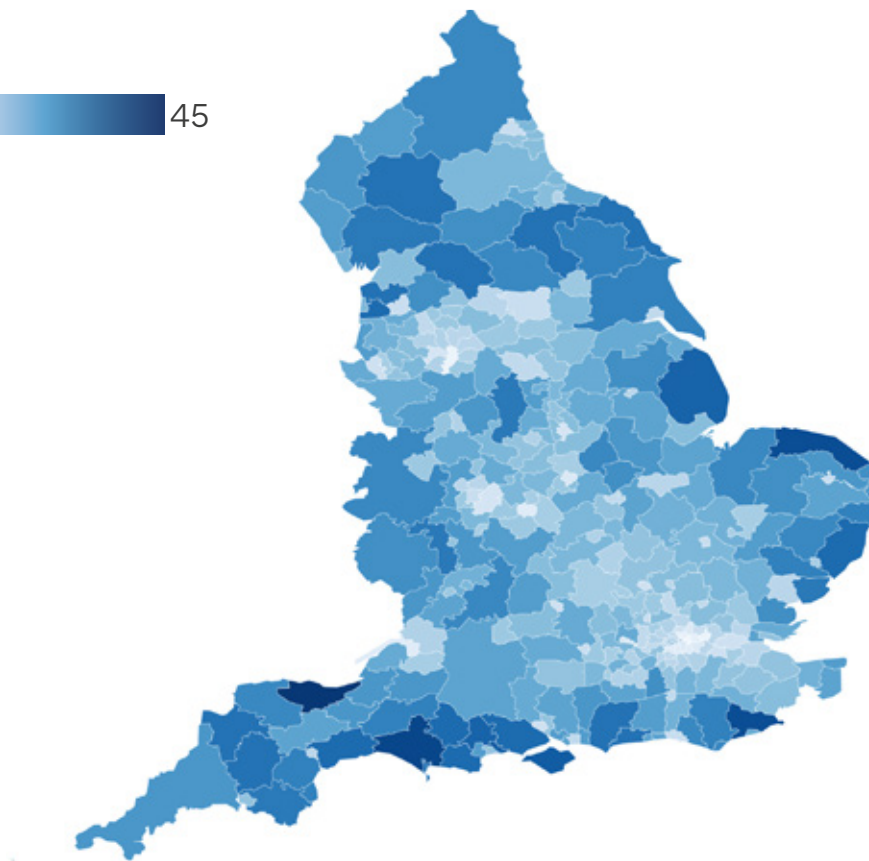
2020

10  45



2040

10  45



Source: ONS, Population projections for local authorities (2018-based)

Ageing is a multifaceted, system-wide issue

No single organisation, sector or agency can create change alone. Focusing on the needs of a specific place can help to identify shared investments, priorities and outcomes more readily than at a national level, where responsibilities and funding are often split across different government departments with few incentives to cooperate.

Working with a locality means that we can make visible the connections between different policy areas as they affect a particular place and group of people who live there. This can unlock policy innovations where different specialities intersect or find routes to change faster than anticipated. For example, by bringing actors together on health and housing in Leeds we have been able to provide evidence and support changes so that people can make timely decisions about their homes as they age.

A range of organisations and interests operate in any given geography – for example local government, health commissioners and providers, local businesses, housing providers, transport authorities and voluntary and community groups. With the right leadership and strategic framework, these different organisations can collaborate around tangible problems in a place and think practically about how each can contribute to solutions. With our partners we have been making the connections needed across sectors to promote age-friendly approaches.

Generating learning for other places

While each local context is different, there are often sufficient similarities to enable shared learning. Localities can draw inspiration and ideas from one another as well as identifying good principles and practice. By working across multiple localities with different contexts, rural to urban, county to city region, we generate solutions that not only respond to the specific context but can also be implemented by others. By growing and deepening our work with the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities, we can spread good ideas and practices and learn about how approaches need to be adapted.

Generating learning for national policy

National policy interventions are implemented locally. They are often translated through different organisations, local contexts and structures. As a result, policy problems, such as uneven or negative impacts on people or other implementation challenges, are often visible first at the local level.

Working closely with localities enables a richer understanding of where best to influence policy change, and at what level. Our work with localities to increase the number of accessible new homes supported and informed our decision to advocate for a change in national regulation. Viability challenges from home builders, and differing contexts around land and housing costs,

were preventing local planners from delivering the housing their communities needed. We set up the Housing Made for Everyone (HoME) coalition calling for national building standards to be raised to be ‘accessible and adaptable’ as a minimum baseline.

Starting with the person

Taking a locality as a focus supports the development of solutions informed by the experience of the people who live there. Local government is directly accountable to its population, and by working to make visible the views and perspectives of people in and approaching later life in a particular place, we can create the momentum for change which might otherwise be difficult to achieve.

Members of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities commit to include the views and aspirations of older adults as they develop and implement their plans. With the UK Network, we can work with older activists to campaign nationally and locally to tackle ageism and the use of negative stereotypes of ageing in public policy.

The wider context

The challenging socio-economic context over the next 10 years is not to be underestimated, either for individuals or for local government. COVID-19 has laid bare and accelerated existing inequalities between people and places. Local authorities are under financial pressure, with COVID-19 following 10 years of austerity; many businesses, voluntary and community groups also face uncertain futures. Despite these challenges there are also positive signs for our shared work. The roll-out of test and trace and vaccinations has highlighted the important role of local implementation in national policy.

Recent developments also offer opportunities for shared agendas and ways of connecting people and places. They include new social movements born out of Black Lives Matter, the large majority of councils which have now declared a climate emergency, and widespread acceleration of digital transformation.

Devolution too may allow plans for economic and social recovery to be shaped by specific local features, such as ageing populations. And finally, considering the relationship between COVID-19 and age, the pandemic has shown the value of approaches like Age-friendly Communities in local organising and intelligence. A promising model for resilience to different shocks or virus resurgence.

Our approach to change in localities

Shifting attitudes – We help to shift the negative local narratives on ageing, promoting a life-course approach, and make the case for all sectors – not just health and care – to collaborate to improve later lives.

Supporting action – We support localities to take risks, providing the time, space and evidence to create the confidence and impetus to take action that will contribute to shared goals.

Stimulating innovation – We test new approaches with our strategic partnerships and use these to inspire other places across the country, particularly through the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities.

Generating learning – We generate knowledge in different localities about what approaches contribute to a good later life.

Influencing public policy – Using our insights, we build consensus for change, alliances and evidence to influence local and national policy.

Our approach



We work with localities at three levels – together they represent a comprehensive, place-based approach to change.

First are Strategic Locality Partnerships. These are long-term, collaborative agreements for a minimum of five years, where we employ locally hosted staff, make ageing a top strategic priority, test new approaches and share what works. Partners act as exemplars nationally and regionally and cover a range of geographic settings and political contexts. Currently, these are with:

- **Greater Manchester** (Combined Authority)
- **Leeds** (City Council and Leeds Older People's Forum)
- **Lincolnshire** (County and District Councils).

Second, we are building a network of places to share and spread good practice through the **UK Network of Age-friendly Communities**. Members are committed to making their locality a place where everyone can enjoy a good later life. Having adopted the Age-friendly Communities Framework of the World Health Organisation (WHO), they take steps to ensure the views of older residents are at the heart of their plans. We provide the secretariat and support to the network and have so far helped it to grow from 14 to over 45 towns, districts, boroughs, counties, cities and city regions, covering close to 23 million people. It also represents a route for us to share and

apply our evidence and insights, to learn about the challenges of implementation and identify innovative examples.

Finally, the actions and decisions of **local policy makers and practitioners** are critical to enable us to achieve our vision. With the right leadership, there is potential for every place to adopt and scale solutions that we have first tested either with our Strategic Locality Partnerships or identified through the Age-friendly Communities network. We will continue to ensure our evidence, insights and action are relevant to both local and national policy makers.

Age-friendly Communities: A Global Movement

The Age-friendly Communities framework was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). It sets out eight interconnected domains that can be used to identify and address barriers in localities to the wellbeing, participation and continued contribution of older adults in their communities – from the accessibility and suitability of housing and transport to opportunities for social participation, volunteering and employment. The framework sets out a collaborative, multi-sectoral and multi-level approach that cuts across traditional policy siloes.

As the UK's affiliate for the WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, Ageing Better is part of an expanding global movement which aims for all places, irrespective of geographical or political differences, to foster the abilities of older people and promote healthy and active ageing. Globally there are more than 1,000 members in more than 40 countries. We are one of 15 national affiliates, from the United States to France and Japan.

This affiliate role offers a range of international relationships, including regional and state governments, research institutions and other national networks, with which we can exchange learning on research, policy and on-the-ground initiatives.

The creation of more communities that foster the abilities of older persons is one of the four pillars of action for member states set by the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021 – 2030. This includes the need for multi-sectoral approaches, and the promotion of national Age-friendly Communities networks as a platform for change globally.

Our ambition



1. Deepen our impact through Strategic Locality Partnerships

Over the next 10 years we will use our Strategic Locality Partnerships to spread and scale our work to other places. We will:

- Implement and accelerate more joint programmes of work in homes, workplaces and communities to tackle ageism, promote healthy ageing and reduce inequalities
- Innovate and pilot new approaches, generating learning that can be shared and used to influence national policy
- Prioritise action in neighbourhoods and with groups that we know are most likely to miss out on a good later life
- Keep ageing high on the agenda in our partner localities, recognising the work they do and helping them to act as exemplars

How we will measure success

- We will set specific goals for individual projects, agreeing them with our partners and reflecting our shared priorities. Examples include:
 - Fulfilling Work – more tailored and effective out-of-work support for the 50+ age group in Greater Manchester

- Communities – increased investment in and support for community-based approaches to ageing, drawing on the evaluation of Leeds Neighbourhood Networks
- Healthy Ageing – local initiatives in active travel to be more targeted to and inclusive of people aged 50-70
- Safe and Accessible Homes – more effective and widespread models to improve the condition and accessibility of existing homes

2. Grow the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities

Over the next 10 years we will expand the Network significantly across the UK and maximise its potential as a vehicle for good ideas to spread, fast. We will:

- Work with national organisations and networks such as Age UK, Public Health England and the Local Government Association (LGA) to promote the network, using the declaration of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing as a basis for encouraging widespread support
- Build online and in-person platforms for people to connect, share and discuss what works to improve later lives
- Seed ideas and disseminate evidence, and in turn learn from the network what works for scale and spread
- Use our role as an affiliate of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities to bring forward the latest and most promising international ideas, evidence and innovation

How we will measure success

Our goals will be:

- Increased membership of the Network across the country – at least 150 within the next five years
- Increased engagement in network events, training and active sharing of learning and good practice, including on our shared priorities of homes, communities, work, health and ageism
- Growth in number of members implementing action plans and adopting relevant performance indicators that drive change in our shared priority areas

3. Build wider motivation and capability for change

Over the next 10 years we will help to ensure localities across the country can benefit from better knowledge and leadership, so that more people can enjoy later life. We will:

- Work with umbrella organisations such as the LGA, County Councils Network, Solace and others to promote successful approaches, including the Age-friendly framework
- Encourage and support the better use of data and other evidence in local decision-making on ageing, including establishing Key Performance Indicators for local plans
- Continue to make our research, evidence and advocacy relevant, timely and useful for local and regional decision-makers
- Make the case for investment and recognise the places that do well

How we will measure success:

Our goals will be:

- More localities taking a collaborative, multi-sector and system-wide approach to ageing, making investments and adopting local and regional strategies for more people to enjoy later life
- More local leaders and practitioners with the awareness and understanding of why and how to act as a result of engagement with our work so that more people can enjoy their later lives

Case studies

CASE STUDY 1 – New approaches to supporting over 50s back into employment

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), with whom the Centre for Ageing Better began a partnership in 2016, identified a higher-than-average unemployment rate among its 50+ population. Tackling this became one of the partnership's early shared priorities.

In 2017 Ageing Better commissioned research by CLES and the Learning and Work Institute in five neighbourhoods of Greater Manchester. This identified that older job seekers would benefit from personalised support that could be flexible around caring commitments and health needs.

Since there was little evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to get people over 50 back into employment, GMCA and Ageing Better set up what is now the 'Greater Manchester Employment Support for Over 50s' pilot programme.

This seeks to co-design and deliver effective employment support for older job seekers, trialling a range of approaches. Project partners include the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), local authorities, housing associations, employers, training providers and voluntary sector organisations.

Ageing Better commissioned human.ly to conduct research among people with lived experience, employers, Job Centre Plus and other stakeholders to identify approaches to trial. After learning what works well and what is less desirable in the context of Greater Manchester (GM), the next phase is to prototype a service, which will then go live as a GMCA-funded two-year pilot.

Ageing Better will support the evaluation of the pilot and has deployed a GM-based project manager who is working alongside GM colleagues and other partners. This enables sharing of some of the financial, political and operational risk. GMCA and Ageing Better are both committing significant resources, playing complementary roles in design, delivery and learning.

Ageing Better has also launched a network for GMCA and other Combined Authorities to share learning from the pilot programme.

In 2018, increasing economic participation amongst the over 50s became a key priority in the GMCA Age-friendly Strategy, and supporting healthy ageing and older workers was incorporated in the 2019 Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy.

“The Centre for Ageing Better has been able to provide evidence-led context and deep sector knowledge. They have the time to think about what the right way to do something might be.”

Localities Partner

CASE STUDY 2 – Age-friendly Communities: Helping good ideas spread

Nottingham City Council’s ‘Take a seat’ campaign aimed to tackle issues of social isolation and motivate older people to feel confident about leaving their homes and play an active part in their local communities. By encouraging local businesses and community premises to join the campaign and offer people a chance to ‘take a seat’, it also raised awareness of issues of access and inclusion for all ages with local businesses and shoppers.

Participating members received ‘We are age-friendly’ window stickers, a branded fold-up chair, and ‘Take a seat’ tote shopping bags to help them promote the scheme – all funded by the City Council. They were also encouraged to go a step further by making toilet facilities available and offering tea, coffee or a glass of water. When an older person saw the sticker displayed, they could be sure of a warm welcome and the offer of a seat. There were no strings attached and no pressure for them to make a purchase.

Local signatories in Nottingham included shops, department stores, building societies, cafés, pubs, restaurants, hairdressers, travel agents and more. This was a real-world example of what being an age-friendly community looks like in practice. It also showed the power of the network to spread good ideas.

Age-friendly Nottingham launched its Take a seat campaign in September 2015. The initial roll-out was supported by Age-friendly Manchester, who were the first to implement the campaign in the UK, having been inspired by a similar project in New York. Since then, other communities have taken up this campaign, from Leeds where it was known as ‘Come in and Rest’ to Middlesbrough’s ‘Please Have a Seat’, making small changes to suit each place and the people who live there.

CASE STUDY 3 – Evaluating the Leeds Neighbourhood Networks

In 2018, the Leeds Neighbourhood Networks (LNN), made up of 37 community-based charitable organisations, entered a five-year funding agreement with Leeds City Council (LCC) and then Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group to increase older people's participation in their communities. This would help to reduce pressures on statutory health and care services.

As part of our partnership with Leeds Older People Forum and LCC, we started working together to better understand the impact of the LNN and share it with other places wanting to develop and reflect on their own, similar community-based approaches.

To guide this work, Ageing Better, Leeds Older People's Forum and LCC, together with cross-sector partners such as representatives from the health and voluntary sector, set up a local steering group which has continued to follow up on issues raised and promote 'levelling up' across the networks.

We have undertaken several pieces of work. First commissioning a scoping of the networks in 2018, followed by research in 2019 to set out the local strategic policy context for care and health and how LNN can contribute to that agenda. Building on this, we later commissioned a research team at Sheffield Hallam University to assess how well the LNN's community-based interventions support later life and what social infrastructure is needed to help people in and approaching later life to participate in their community.

By highlighting LNN's community-based approaches, focusing on good practice and areas of development, the evaluation will contribute to the city's policy of supporting people to age well in their communities and demonstrate the work and value of LNN to current and prospective funders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation shifted to focus on 'Real Time Evaluation' to understand how the networks have responded, their impact and the effects of lockdown. The report was published in December 2020 and this and other findings will continue to be shared nationally with policymakers and with other localities looking to adapt the model, including Birmingham and Manchester. A second phase of the evaluation will focus on exploring the contribution of LNN to three stages of the 'healthy ageing' agenda (prevent, delay, reduce) and the setting up of a national mechanism for more places to learn from this work and to share their own.

The signs of change I want to see...

At an event to mark the start of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, 41 older representatives from across the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities were asked what their neighbourhoods and communities would look like and feel like if the decade were successful. These 'signs of success' are drawn from what was said and demonstrate our shared aspirations.

In my community and neighbourhood in 2030



You can see people of all ages joining in activities together, everywhere



I can share my knowledge and experiences with people younger than me



I feel included and can take part in what is going on



Nobody goes hungry or worries about heating their home



Public places are well designed, with age-friendly seating and toilets available where they are needed



There is plenty of green space where you can grow food and exercise



The council seeks and welcomes my views, and I can see things I have helped to change



Information is available in a range of ways and languages



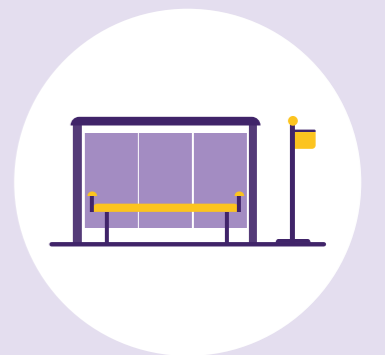
There are opportunities to reskill and I can keep working if I want to



Wi-fi is like water, and everyone can get the digital skills and support they need to use it



There are a range of houses for people to move into, that are eco-friendly and suitable for a whole lifetime



You can get a bus to where you need to go, even on a low income or in a rural area

Let's take action today for all our tomorrows.

Let's make ageing better.

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The Centre for Ageing Better received £50 million from The National Lottery Community Fund in January 2015 in the form of an endowment to enable it to identify what works in the ageing sector by bridging the gap between research, evidence and practice.

