

Everyone has the right to a good later life

Centre for Ageing Better
strategy 2022-25





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Ageing in context

The UK's population is undergoing a massive age shift. In less than 30 years, one in four people will be over 65. The fact that many of us are living longer is to be celebrated. But unless radical action is taken by government, business and others in society, millions of us will have an old age of ill-health, financial insecurity and poor living conditions.

Despite the frequent stereotyping of older adults using housing and pension wealth to live a life of luxury, we're already in a period of stark misery and dramatically unequal living conditions for millions of people in their 50s, 60s and beyond.

People in the wealthiest parts of the country live up to 18 years longer in good health than those in the poorest. There are almost 4 million homes in England that endanger the health of the people who live there; more than half of these are lived in by someone aged 55 or over. We need financial security when we age, but in a period when the state pension age has risen to 66, employment rates among people approaching retirement age have fallen to their lowest since 2016. Tens of thousands are struggling to get back into the labour market after the COVID-19 furlough scheme ended in 2021.

Finances, social connections and the quality of jobs have all worsened for the current set of over 50s compared to previous generations, with older people from Black, Asian and



Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds particularly disadvantaged: levels of income and home ownership in BAME groups are much lower than for their White counterparts and the health of some Minority Ethnic groups is equivalent to that of White people at least 20 years older.

We must urgently see change, or we will not just have millions of older people now and in the near future living in poverty, ill-health and poor housing; but prospects will worsen further for future generations as they age.

Since Ageing Better's inception in 2015, we have built a strong reputation and great working partnerships with local areas. We have run a series of programmes across: Health (including better communicating the need for people to do more strength and balance activity); Work (including promoting tailored back to work support for over 50s); Housing (strengthening the evidence for funding aids and adaptations, and campaigning for high levels of accessibility in new housing); Communities (including promoting the benefits of volunteering for all older people).

But the context in which we are influencing people with the power to make big decisions

about our lives, deliver services, and create jobs, has changed significantly in that time. The UK's withdrawal from the European Union, with its impact on the labour market; the COVID-19 pandemic's impact not just on health but on how we think about the economy and our work-life balance, are two major changes. But other trends and issues – the climate crisis, the need to have a functioning and funded social care system, the devolution of power to nations and regions, and the continuing growth of digital communication – all impact on us as we grow older.

Our new strategy recognises those external changes, with the opportunities and barriers they bring. We are determined to build on the work we have already done and focus even further on where and how we can make a real difference for older people, particularly those who are worse off.

The Centre for Ageing Better is a charitable foundation, funded by an endowment from The National Lottery Community Fund, and part of the government's What Works Network using evidence to improve the design and delivery of public services.

Our vision and mission

Our vision

A society in which everyone can live a good later life.

Everyone has the right to a good life as they get older and our whole society benefits when they do. But far too many people face huge barriers that prevent them from doing so. As a result many older people are living in bad housing, dealing with poverty and poor health.

Ageism, the stark inequalities in people's health and circumstances exposed during the pandemic, chronic underinvestment in support, a lack of political will – these are all contributing to this growing and critical problem.

At the Centre for Ageing Better we are pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone. We aim to inspire and inform those in power to tackle the inequalities faced by older people, call out and challenge ageism in all its forms and encourage the widespread take-up of brilliant ideas and approaches that help people to age better.

Get it right and more of us can experience good health, financial security and be treated fairly and with respect as we grow older.

Our mission

We will tackle ageism and take action to reduce the inequalities people experience as they grow older.

Our ultimate beneficiaries are people in later life – those aged 65 and over.

By taking a preventative approach, we can focus on the actions, changes in society and shifts in attitudes that need to be made as people approach and prepare for later life – so that by the time people reach 65 they are better equipped, enabled and supported to enjoy older age.

Outcomes

The outcomes we want to see are:

- **Good health** – more people are on course to experience good health in later life
- **Equity and respect** – more people treated fairly and with respect as they grow older
- **Financial security** – more people on course to experience financial security in later life

We will also have a greater focus on the inequalities that exist across these outcomes.

Inequalities

There are stark inequalities in how different people experience later life. As we get older, the steady accumulation of a lifetime of advantages or disadvantages, together with differences such as our ethnicity, where we live, and our income, result in vastly unequal levels of health, wealth, happiness and security.

We want to see more equity in how people experience later life. Achieving a fair, or equal, outcome for people may mean allocating resources in a way that is proportionate to their

needs, so some will need more support or resource than others.

The causes of inequality are often complex and interrelated. But a failure to understand and address them risks storing up problems for the future, with implications for individuals and society as increasing numbers live for longer in worse health and without adequate income.

Age is a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010. The impact of ageism in our society is also clear. Ageism results in discrimination, barriers to participate and a lack of voice or influence in decisions that affect people's lives as they get older.



“We've been using the photographs of older people that Centre for Ageing Better made available recently, and it's great to have such positive images that are free to use.”

D Julia Thrift, Director, Healthier Place-Making, TCPA

As well as this, there are too many people in later life living in poverty, with preventable ill-health and/or disability, loneliness and feeling undervalued. And the disproportionate impact of COVID on marginalised groups is an urgent reminder of how far there is to reduce inequalities.

What does a greater focus on inequalities mean for our work? Equity and respect are a central outcome in our strategy against which we will align all our work. We will strive to reduce the gap between the most and least advantaged people by improving outcomes for the least advantaged.

We will identify people by socio-economic status and deprivation, protected characteristics, vulnerable groups in society, or 'inclusion health' groups and by geography. We will collaborate with representative organisations to support a focus on these groups and their intersections with age in all programmes and projects and endeavour to amplify seldom-heard voices.

Taking action

Over the last seven years we've learned a great deal – about the experience of people in and approaching later life; about the range of sectors and fields we have worked in; and about the most effective role we can play to achieve change.

We're now better equipped than ever to prioritise our work, making choices about where we will and won't invest our resources. We've identified three action areas where we believe we can make the greatest contribution and impact towards achieving our vision and outcomes.

The three areas of action are:

Age-friendly movement and tackling ageism

We will build an age-friendly movement across the country including a bold campaign to stamp out ageism.

Age-friendly homes

We will work to ensure everyone can live in age-friendly, accessible, healthy homes in intergenerational communities.

Age-friendly employment

We will influence policy and practice so that everyone has access to good jobs, that are right for them, through their 50s and 60s.



Age-friendly movement and tackling ageism

We will build a movement that encourages, inspires and enables everyone and anyone to make change happen for better later lives.

Movements are built on people seeing the opportunities for change and coming together with a shared purpose or vision. Our vision is to change society – this is ambitious and can only be achieved through the collective efforts and involvement of people across the country.

An age-friendly movement will directly tackle the barriers that exist for older people, like poor housing and discrimination in healthcare. It will encourage and support communities to become age-friendly, and will amplify the voice of people in and approaching later life to be more influential in shaping society.

A key part of this is challenging ageism.

Ageism is a bias from one age group towards another. It includes the use of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against people based on their age. In the UK, one in three people report experiencing age-based prejudice or discrimination. Evidence shows ageism is widespread in society and can be found everywhere from our workplaces and health systems to the stereotypes we see on TV, advertising and in the media.

“The ‘Challenging ageism’ guide gets 10/10 for its clear and practical messaging. Everyone involved in ageing should embrace the guide’s key messages and apply them in their own communications work.”

Professor Tom Scharf, Professor of Social Gerontology

The action we will take

Campaign against ageism

We will build on the work we have already done in tackling ageist language and imagery in the media and advertising and confront the widespread ageism that exists across society through a public-facing campaign. Ageism affects people of all ages, but it can limit people's lives profoundly as they get older, whether through discrimination in the workplace or being denied access to potentially life-saving healthcare. Ageism means we don't value older people or invest in ways to help people age well.

Supporting Age-friendly Communities and localities

We will heighten our focus on the growth and development of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities and our place-based partnerships as exemplars of 'age-friendly' places. We will grow the Network to cover more places across the UK, and harness its existing strengths to learn, spread and encourage the uptake of best practice. We will also lobby for changes in national policy or frameworks to incentivise and support local action, and actively encourage wider investment in age-friendly approaches.

Amplifying voice

While we've always included the perspective of individuals in our work, our new strategy will amplify people's voices further, working with marginalised groups and the organisations representing them. This will mirror our approach to equity and justice, for groups marginalised by socio-economic status and deprivation, protected characteristics, vulnerable groups of society, and by geography. We will create a network of spokespeople and organisations, and involve them in the development of our programmes, and in the delivery of activities. We will offer training and support for people who want to campaign and speak out on the issues that affect their lives, promoting the voice of those in and approaching later life in shaping local action.



Age-friendly homes

We will work to ensure everyone can live in age-friendly, accessible, healthy homes in intergenerational communities. Everyone, no matter their age, background or ability, needs a good home that is safe, healthy and secure.

For too many people, home only meets the need for shelter – this leaves safety, decency and access to local amenities and services an unaffordable, unmet aspiration. Around 10 million people in England currently live in a home that presents a serious threat to their health and safety. The older you are, the more likely you are to live in one of these homes and for those in marginalised groups such as Disabled people, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, those on lower incomes and people who have experienced homelessness, the situation is even worse.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the widening gap of housing inequality.

Through our Good Home Inquiry and the HoME (Housing Made for Everyone) coalition Ageing Better has persistently challenged government and housing developers to do better, based on our understanding of the experience of people in greatest need and the systems that perpetuate these inequalities. We've used our evidence to develop models to address these underlying problems (such as having a Good Home Agency in every local area) and in the next phase of our work, we will implement these. Taken together, the four areas of focus we've identified create the conditions for a better offer for those who are currently in poor quality homes.

The action we will take

Good Home Agencies

A key finding from the Good Home Inquiry is that people need trusted information, advice and support to improve their homes. Our evidence has shown this must be available at a local level so that people can access support tailored to specific needs. We'll pilot a new/expanded service – a “Good Home Agency” – with our partners in Lincolnshire which will be designed to reach those in greatest housing need. Alongside this pilot, we'll work with partners elsewhere building on opportunities such as prioritising housing improvement within Integrated Care Systems. We aim to expand the number of Good Home Agencies across the country through an action network and push for statutory reform at a national level to strengthen this.

Finance

We know finance is the biggest barrier to people improving their homes. There needs to be a more comprehensive mix of finance options available that support homeowners of different levels of ability to pay for improvements. Tackling our poor-quality housing stock will require a mix of grants, loans and third-party funding. We'll be working with investors, lenders, consumer groups and government to produce financial products that will help low-income homeowners.

Consumer guidance

People themselves, particularly owner occupiers, have a big role to play in improving their own homes, and in choosing homes that are warm, safe and accessible when they move house. We'll produce a consumer guide detailing the essential features that make a home good to grow older in – particularly focused on helping those most in need. This will include a guide on how to secure funding and support to achieve this. We intend to work closely with key stakeholders locally and nationally to ensure that this guidance has maximum reach and impact.

Creating age-friendly places

As well as the home itself, the place someone lives in is a key determinant in whether people live healthy and happy later lives. Over 4 million older people in England are actively seeking to move home. For many people on low incomes, opportunities to move to somewhere with better outcomes for them are severely limited. Ageing Better will work with planners and councillors to ensure new developments respond to the needs of local people in that area, and that local plans are designed to create age-friendly places.



Age-friendly employment

We will work to ensure equitable access to work for people in their 50s and 60s.

Ageism is endemic in the labour market. From age-bias in recruitment, to poor-quality and unsuitable employment support, our society is riven with structural barriers that prevent too many people in their 50s and 60s from accessing good work. These barriers are particularly high for certain groups: women, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, those with long-term health conditions or people without high levels of formal qualification.

These issues are long lived but have been significantly exacerbated through the pandemic. Decades of progress on closing the older worker employment gap has gone into reverse in the last two years. The government has started to listen and act, but there is much

further to go to ensure the scale of their response meets the needs of the unprecedented proportion of older workers who have left the workforce since 2020. Meanwhile, our market research shows that age-inclusivity is simply not a priority for most employers.

Ageing Better is now a leading, influential voice in these debates. We work with willing and active partners around the country, and we'll continue to push for change in this crucial area that supports financial security in later life.

“We were delighted to partner with Ageing Better and REC and support employers with practical guidance to bring about change in this important area.”

Claire McCartney, Senior Policy Adviser, CIPD

The action we will take

Influencing to help shape the labour market

We will continue to be the leading national voice on the place of older workers in the labour market, drawing attention to the issues and making the case for change including through regular media commentary, swift reactive analysis, and speaking on major national platforms.

Improve the quality of back-to-work support

We will work with the 50+ taskforce of industry professionals, local leaders and experts to secure further government funding and action for people in this age group; we will scale and improve our 50+ training module for work coaches, developed with the Institute of Employability Professionals. We'll also continue our work with partners in West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities to develop models of effective support for those at risk of redundancy and those who have fallen into economic inactivity.

Tackle age-bias in recruitment

We will work with CIPD (the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and REC (the Recruitment and Employment Confederation) to spread our new guidance for employers on removing ageism from recruitment, and we will work with employers to test practical changes and then support widespread uptake of guidance to de-bias the process.

Promote our employer guidance

To support greater retention of 50+ workers still in work we will work directly with employers to test and develop guidance and with partners such as CIPD to spread awareness of our existing guidance on age-friendly employment practice to a wide base of HR professionals, and track employer attitudes and behaviour via a large-scale employer survey.

How we create change

We create change in behaviours, attitudes, policy and practice by:

- Campaigning and influencing
- Developing new ideas for policy and practice, and testing them out
- Identifying effective practice and innovation and supporting widespread uptake

We use our endowment to make change. We do not deliver services directly, or make large, open-ended grants to researchers or delivery organisations. Instead, we identify the changes in society, policy and practice that we judge

will create the greatest impact towards the outcomes we want, and we invest our resources in making that change happen.

We do not have a fixed approach to identifying and creating that change: we make choices based on the specific aims we are pursuing and the most effective and available levers for change.

We work independently and with partners and coalitions – including our locality partners and age-friendly communities. We are evidence-informed, using a range of sources from published research and large-scale data to expert opinion and the voice of our beneficiaries. And we amplify the voices of the people with lived experience of the issues we are addressing.



“Lincolnshire County Council and our partners are pleased to be working with the Centre for Ageing Better on several aspects of this important strategy, in particular the aim of giving people more housing options in preparation for later life.”

**Executive Councillor Wendy Bowkett,
Lincolnshire County Council**

While our core influencing and campaigning work will be around our key areas of focus, we will continue to speak out on wider issues, policies and practices that impact people's experiences of ageing. We will do this strategically, where we identify an important opportunity to influence, or where adding our name and voice to the campaigns of others will add weight and credibility on an issue likely to affect the people we are here to support. We will also continue to analyse and publicly respond to the wider external context, including the impact of population ageing on society, for example through our annual flagship 'The State of Ageing' report.

Our equality, diversity and inclusion commitment

We will create an organisation that reflects our society and the communities we serve. This means a workplace where everyone feels empowered and where diversity of background, experience and thought is celebrated. We know there is more work to be done and are committed to improving our practice around equality, diversity and inclusion. We will strive to be an age-friendly employer and commit to anti-racism as an organisation.

Our climate commitment

The climate crisis is the greatest threat to the future of humanity. In this country, the impacts of climate change will be felt mostly by people who are vulnerable in society. As an organisation we are committed to being environmentally responsible in the way we work and wherever possible we will deliver our strategy in a way that makes a positive contribution to tackling the climate crisis.

How we will measure progress

As a What Works Centre we are committed to using evidence to underpin our work, be clear on the change we want to make and measuring the impact we have. For all our activities we will ask ourselves, how will we know whether we have achieved our objectives?

All activities should be steps towards long-term sustained impact relating to:

- more people on course to experience good health in later life
- more people treated fairly and with respect as they grow older
- more people on course to experience financial security in later life

We will evidence the impact of our work and use this information to monitor, shape and improve our approach.

Our work will include the following framework for understanding impact. Where appropriate we will use:

- background evidence to inform our understanding of the issues people face and barriers to living a good later life
- audience data to understand those we aim to influence, the challenges they face and their needs and preferences
- engagement data to understand how people and organisations engage with our activities, how engagement differs for different groups we need to reach, and who may not be engaging in our work



“If the state of England’s homes were a new problem, we would be horrified. We would have urgent cabinet meetings, wall to wall media coverage, action plans, huge amounts of money thrown at it.”

David Orr, Chair, the Good Home Inquiry

- feedback data to understand if our activities are experienced in the way they were intended and create the motivation to act
- outcomes data to understand changes to:
 - awareness, knowledge and understanding
 - capabilities, opportunities and motivation
 - behaviour, systems and practice
- impact data and evaluations to understand whether sustained change been achieved

We will use a number of tools to achieve this ambition across our programmes including

evaluations, longitudinal studies, interviews and surveys, policy monitoring, web analytics, our own research and that of others working in this field.

We will monitor trends and set targets to ensure we are delivering our vision.

We will report progress on these elements to assess levels of investment in programmes, create a learning culture and ensure we are providing value for money in our activities as we spend our endowment.

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

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

