



**Priorities for government:**  
Transforming later lives



**We are calling on the government to act with urgency, to put ageing at the heart of its policies and to take a truly cross-government approach. We must act now to secure a better future for everyone.**

More of us are living longer than ever before – on average we are living ten years longer than our parents' generation and nearly two decades longer than our grandparents' generation. This social revolution has implications for every part of

our society. Ageing is inevitable, but how we age is not. In every constituency across England there are deep seated inequalities in how we are ageing and how we experience later life. Millions of us risk missing out on a good later life.

### **About the Centre for Ageing Better**

The Centre for Ageing Better is a charity, funded by an endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund, working to create a society where everyone enjoys a good later life.

We want more people to be in fulfilling work, in good health, living in safe, accessible homes and connected communities.

By focusing on those approaching later life and at risk of missing out, we will create lasting change in society. We are bold and innovative in our approach to improving later lives. We work in partnership with a diverse range of organisations. As part of the What Works Network, we are grounded in evidence.

# Priority areas

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Five priority areas where the government has the power to make positive change now:



## 1 Better housing

Ensure everyone approaching later life can live in safe, accessible homes that support them to be independent for as long as possible



## 2 Healthier later life

Enable more people to reach later life in good health and free of preventable disability



## 3 Flexible workplaces

Create workplaces that support people to remain in fulfilling work into later life and improve employment support for people seeking to return to work



## 4 Empowering communities

Empower local areas to create places where those approaching later life can build social connections and people of all ages feel part of a community



## 5 A cross-government approach

Take a cross-government approach to the challenges and opportunities of our ageing society





# 1. Better housing

**Ensure everyone approaching later life can live in safe, accessible homes that support them to be independent for as long as possible.**

Safe, good quality homes that are designed to adapt to our changing abilities help to maintain or improve our physical and mental health, wellbeing and social connections. Affordable housing is also essential to our financial security in later life.

And yet our housing stock is among the oldest in Europe with some of the highest associated health and care costs. While most of us want to keep living in our homes as we age, much of our current housing stock is not suitable for us as we get older.

We need more diverse housing options across all tenures – home ownership, social housing and the private rented sector. The government must address this both by improving our existing mainstream housing and by future-proofing new homes.

## Better housing

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# The next government should:

- Invest in support to improve existing homes, ensuring homes are safe and in a good state of repair.**

Make it easier for people to repair and adapt their home: by reforming how the Disabled Facilities Grant is used.

- Reform building regulations so developers must build new homes that are accessible to everyone.**

Set a mandatory minimum requirement for all homes to meet Part M(4) Category 2 where step-free access can reasonably be achieved.

- Provide information and advice so that people approaching or in later life can make the right decisions about their housing options.**

Deliver an expanded national advice service and create awareness of local advice services.



Susan

David Leppin  
CLUBS



## 2. Healthier later life

**Enable more people to reach later life in good health and free of preventable disability.**

Being in good health as we age is fundamental to our quality of life, allowing us to remain independent, to work or be involved in our local community and to maintain our social connections.

The proportion of years we spend in good health and free from disability has failed to keep pace with our longer life expectancy. For too many of us, later life is spent in poor health and disability without the care and support we need. Government must prioritise prevention and promote physical activity, tackle the causes of ill health and disability in later life, and address the crisis in social care.



## Healthier later life

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# The next government should:

### Put prevention first.

Renew the commitment to the goal of five more years free of preventable disability, and to reduce the gap between the richest and poorest people in disability-free life expectancy by 2035. Tackle four of the leading causes of poor health and disability in later life – smoking, alcohol consumption, poor diet and physical inactivity – by increasing tobacco taxes, legislating for an alcohol minimum unit price, setting mandatory food and drink reformulation targets to reduce salt, fat and sugar and investing in active travel.

### Promote the benefits of physical activity to people in mid and later life and support more people to maintain physical activity into later life.

Fund and promote good public transport links and plan places to be walkable to keep people active and connected in later life. Invest in evidence-based community physical activity programmes for older people and encourage more people aged 50 and over to follow the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines.



**> Put healthy ageing at the heart of public health priorities for Public Health England, NHS England and local government.**

Ensure people who experience a decline in their health and functional ability have access to personalised support and adaptations that will help them remain independent. Newly integrated care systems and partnerships should include healthy ageing indicators as part of their framework for measuring outcomes.

**> Address the crisis in care funding with sustainable investment in social care.**

Design a reformed care system that is fairly funded and provides for those who need community and preventative support. Put in place more resources for unpaid carers to access breaks and more financial support.





# 3. Flexible workplaces

**Create workplaces that support people to remain in fulfilling work into later life and improve employment support for people seeking to return to work.**

Staying in good quality work for as long we want is critical for our financial security now and into the future. Although more people are working for longer, employment rates fall off rapidly from the age of 55 onwards. By the year before people reach state pension age, over half have already stopped working, many involuntarily, and often because of health conditions or caring responsibilities.

Estimates suggest around a million people in the UK aged 50-64 would like to work but are not.

As well as the benefits of working to the individual, the Treasury estimates that just a 1% increase in the number of people in work aged 50-64 could increase GDP by around £5.7 billion per year and have a positive impact on income tax and National Insurance Contributions of around £800 million per year.

The government must act to make employers more age-friendly and find new ways to support people over 50 who want to get back into work. Only 16% of over 50s referred to the government's Work Programme were successfully supported into a job – the worst results of any group, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or disability.

## Flexible workplaces

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# The next government should:



### Develop a health at work programme.

Develop a comprehensive health at work support programme jointly with the NHS and employers, to support people to manage health conditions at work.



### Overhaul support for over 50s returning to work.

Support the trial of new employment support programmes aimed at over 50s and work with employers to stamp out recruitment bias.



### Extend flexible working.

Introduce the right to request flexible working from day one and legislate for paid carers' leave to support those juggling family responsibilities with work.



### Ensure open access and promotion of skills and progression opportunities to people of all ages.

The National Retraining Scheme and Lifelong Learning Partnerships should incorporate the learning and training needs of older workers.





## 4. Empowering communities

Empower local areas to create places where those approaching later life can build social connections and people of all ages feel part of a community.

One of the most important areas for protecting our wellbeing as we age is holding on to our existing friendships and relationships as well as making new connections with people. We need the places, spaces, transport, technology, activities and services where we live to be more age-friendly and inclusive. The government needs to support local communities to create places where social connections and activity can thrive.

## Empowering communities

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# The next government should:

-  **Promote the adoption of the WHO's Age-friendly framework to make our communities great places to grow old.**

Be a world leader in championing the WHO Decade on Healthy Ageing and promoting age-friendly communities and environments.

-  **Provide local authorities with the funding they need to invest in community organisations and infrastructure.**

For example, funding to support the Voluntary and Community Sector through small grant schemes for services to support people to stay connected and maximise wellbeing in later life.

-  **Improve transport systems.**  
Invest in transport including a range of affordable and reliable public and community options, and support for voluntary and civil society efforts to develop local schemes such as car sharing and community-led bus routes.

-  **Support organisations working with volunteers to adopt models of age-friendly and inclusive volunteering.**

This means providing a range of flexible options for contributing and removing emotional, financial and practical barriers to participation.







# 5. A cross-government approach

## Take a cross-government approach to the challenges and opportunities of our ageing society.

A good later life is something we should expect for everyone. It should not be conditional on where we live or how much money we have, nor should our gender, race, disability or sexuality determine the quality of our later life. And yet, for too many of us, the experience of later life is difficult and challenging. The often negative way we talk about growing old and ageing can contribute to ageism and lead to discrimination in the workplace, poor access to public services, and a lack of products for people in later life.

The UK could become a global leader in developing innovative and inclusive products and services that meet the needs and aspirations of consumers over 50, who account for nearly half of all consumer spending.

Too often the ageing population is seen as a challenge by government and the focus is on pensions and health and social care. Addressing the challenge and seizing the opportunity requires action across all government departments.

Government should use more positive language on ageing, continue to encourage business to seize this economic opportunity and take a cross-departmental approach to the challenges and opportunities of longer lives.

A cross-government approach



## The next government should:



### Promote an age-friendly culture.

Be a leader in eradicating discriminatory language, promote awareness of age as a protected characteristic and speak more positively about ageing.



### Encourage business to develop products and expand services to meet the needs of those approaching or in later life.

Continue to fund and support work with industry to develop innovative products and services. Promote the inclusion of ageing in local industrial strategies.



### Develop and publish an Ageing Strategy.

Develop and publish an Ageing Strategy that recognises the contributions of different parts of national government with a more explicit focus on tackling inequalities in later life.

This document is available at [www.ageing-better.org.uk](http://www.ageing-better.org.uk) | For more info email [info@ageing-better.org.uk](mailto:info@ageing-better.org.uk)

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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.