

AGEING HUB DIGEST

FEBRUARY 2019

Welcome to Ageing Hub Digest

Cllr Brenda Warrington,
Greater Manchester portfolio lead
member for Age-Friendly Greater
Manchester and Equalities



Cllr Brenda Warrington

Within a generation our population is going to look very different. In Greater Manchester we’ve chosen a system-wide response to both the opportunities and challenges an ageing population brings.

Ageing is a core element of our local policy and strategy - that’s why the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub partnership exists.

Greater Manchester is doing ageing differently. This magazine offers an insight into key aspects of our work - not just health and social care but transport, culture, housing, employment and neighbourhoods, among others.

We are thankful to be able to draw on the expertise of academic partners at three of our region’s universities, and to have a strategic partnership with the Centre for Ageing Better, a Big Lottery funded organisation that helps us drive improvements by applying evidence on what works to ensure a good later life.

What we are doing in Greater Manchester is innovative and, we believe, world-leading. We want this publication to inspire a more holistic and positive attitude towards population ageing, stimulating thought and action at all levels. We are all growing older - there is no ‘us’ and ‘them’ - so let’s hear the voice of older people and do ageing not just differently, but better.

‘What we are doing in Greater Manchester is innovative and, we believe, world-leading’

About the Ageing Hub

How we’re actively responding to an ageing population here in Greater Manchester is gaining wider interest.

Ours is a collaborative approach, with the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub bringing together local universities, public and private services, and perhaps most importantly the people who live and work here, to improve the lives of all residents as they age.

Based at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the hub’s role is to coordinate a strategic response, working closely with those delivering services at a local level. We work across organisational boundaries as a wider team that particularly benefits from having an elected mayor and devolved powers, including combined management of our health and social care budget.

It’s an approach based around the World Health Organization’s age-friendly cities and communities programme, a holistic response that acknowledges both challenges and opportunities as we grow older.

Here we build on the legacy of Manchester and Salford, which both became early members of the global network of age-friendly cities and communities, as well as extensive activity and partnership working taking place across our city-region.

Central to this way of working is promoting a modern and positive narrative on ageing across public services, communities and businesses that emphasises the contribution older people can make, rather than seeing ageing as a disease or deficit.

This publication sets out our thinking across key areas of activity - economy and work, housing and planning, transport, culture, age-friendly places and healthy ageing. We hope that by sharing what we are doing in Greater Manchester we will encourage more policy makers, practitioners and citizens to embrace this important agenda.

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‘Central to this way of working is a modern and positive narrative on ageing that emphasises the contribution older people can make’

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Pioneers of a new approach to ageing

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

‘We want to be a global centre of excellence across the whole range of ageing issues’



Andy Burnham

We do things differently around here. We have always been pioneers in Greater Manchester, at the forefront of innovation, and this is certainly the case for ageing.

Creating an age-friendly Greater Manchester is one of the 10 priorities in our main strategy, ‘Our people, our place’. And in March 2018 the World Health Organization recognised us as the UK’s first age-friendly city-region - a fantastic accolade in response to the incredible work being done.

We’re focusing on the practical changes we need to make Greater Manchester a better place to grow older. We know that people over 70 spend 80% of their time at home and in the surrounding neighbourhood, and research shows that supportive places and communities play a big part in improving older people’s quality of life.

The Age-Friendly Challenge was launched in July 2018 to celebrate those neighbourhoods that showcase the very best practice and thinking from the voluntary sector, public services and older people’s groups.

‘We’re focusing on the practical changes we need to make Greater Manchester a better place to grow older’

We want Greater Manchester to be a global centre of excellence for ageing, pioneering new research, technology and solutions across the whole range of ageing issues. We have a joint agreement with central government on our local industrial strategy’s ‘Grand Challenge on Ageing’ (launched in October 2018), with priorities relating to older workers, social care transformation, a strategy to support ‘ageing-in-place’ (so people stay living where they want for as long as possible) and developing a Greater Manchester platform to promote innovation within the business, public and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors.

We’re also pioneering a new positive vision of ageing, changing the narrative and celebrating the fact that more people are living longer, demonstrating the valuable contribution older people make to the city-region and helping everyone live a fuller later life. In July 2018, over 12,000 people took part in more than 350 events during the Greater Manchester Festival of Ageing - most were designed and led by older residents.

We’re leading delivery of the new ‘Greater Manchester model’ of public services that puts the needs of people and places at its heart. Ageing is a common theme across all public service, health and care organisations in each of the 10 localities and the whole of Greater Manchester. We’re breaking down barriers between public services, and promoting collaboration around ageing with older people’s groups, universities, and the community and voluntary sector.

Together, we’re making Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow older. Devolution is helping us to do things differently and improve people’s lives.

Maximising the ‘longevity dividend’

Jason Bergen, consultant

By the early 2030s half the UK adult population will be over 50, and by 2037 there'll be 6m over-80s. During the same period in Greater Manchester, the population will grow by 13% fuelled by a 40% increase in over-65s (making up 625,000 out of 3.1m).

We shouldn't minimise the health and social care challenges posed by this growing population, especially in areas like Greater Manchester where there are stark inequalities. But the economic power and social capital of those 'baby boomers' born in the more affluent 20-year period after the Second World War as they live longer, healthier, independent lives, also offers significant opportunities. One is to achieve a 'longevity dividend'.

Older people are a growing consumer market for retail, culture and leisure in Greater Manchester. There'll be more older workers locally as increasing numbers stay in the labour market for longer, due to financial and other reasons.

Greater Manchester has already demonstrated its political commitment to this growing older population. We've identified opportunities around extending working lives, and health and social care reform, and now we're looking at innovation and commercial economic opportunities for - and with - older people.

We want to explore how ageing-related knowledge, products and services can be better brought to market, both from and for older residents and across all areas. Greater Manchester could become a leader in realising a 'longevity dividend', and develop into a better place for everyone to live longer and better lives.

We need to recognise our growing older population as an 'asset' and resource as we develop the city-region together, across generations and in really productive ways. This could be our biggest innovation yet, but will require effort and commitment to fully realise. A Greater Manchester Older People's Network member put it this way: 'I want to be proud of the young people in my neighbourhood and for them to be proud of older people like me.'

‘We’re looking at innovation and commercial economic opportunities for - and with - older people’

Greater Manchester has a history of innovation that continues today. As part of the local industrial strategy we're bringing together businesses, citizens, academia and policy makers to explore fresh opportunities. And we're working with the country's specialist think tank on how longevity affects society, International Longevity Centre - UK, to produce a report (due out in April) on how Greater Manchester can best respond to these exciting opportunities.



Jason Bergen

The value of ageing

- The 'silver economy' is estimated as worth \$7 trillion a year, the equivalent of the third largest economy in the world.
- By 2020 the private spending power of the older generation will reach \$15 trillion globally.
- In the EU, older people's public spending accounts for 25% of gross domestic product (GDP), or about 50% of general government expenditure. It is projected to grow by more than 4% of GDP until 2060.
- The older population makes up 40% of consumer demand in the UK, yet attracts just 10% of marketing spend (New Economy, 2015)
- Greater Manchester's population is set to grow by 8% to reach 3m by 2039, driven by the growth of older people.
- Our working population is set to grow by 2% by 2039. Over the same period, the number of Greater Manchester residents aged 65+ will increase by 40% to reach 625,000.

Greater Manchester - a global leader in ageing research

Experts in ageing from three Greater Manchester universities offer their views on the future of research in this area



Professor Alison Chambers, pro-vice chancellor of the Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care, Manchester Metropolitan University

What does research need to tell policy makers?

Policy makers must frame ageing positively and shift funding to support healthy ageing interventions. They should take a cross-disciplinary approach and consider ageing from a life-course perspective, as researchers do. We should all make it a priority to identify healthy ageing physiological markers, alongside personalised public health interventions targeted at the adult population, to optimise healthy ageing and prevent ill health in older age in the context of place and community, and employing an asset-based approach.

For instance, already researchers have looked at end of life care, sexual health, confidence, income and loneliness among older people. One finding of interest to policy makers is that many older people don't leave their homes because of environmental issues - such as unsafe pavements or a lack of public toilets and seating - as much as physical or emotional health concerns.

Doing ageing research differently will mean we must work effectively across disciplinary boundaries and integrate research findings into everyday practice at scale, and at the same time recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach doesn't work.

We need to draw on the very best international evidence to help shape a regional response addressing our specific challenges. Exploring culture, gender and the social aspects of health and wellbeing in later life will help us make Greater Manchester the best place to grow older.

There's a continual call to look at multi-generational work, because older adults say they don't want to engage in social activities just with people like them.



Professor Debora Price, director of the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) at the University of Manchester

What are the big challenges in ageing research?

Ageing research covers a large domain of social and health sciences, humanities, medicine, science and engineering, and biological sciences. We also need to understand and reduce inequalities across the life course. Early health, financial and social difficulties substantially affect later life, while people who have advantages when younger are significantly advantaged in later life.

Unequal resources mean people have very different experiences of ageing and later life. So reducing financial inequalities and making sure everyone has enough money at all ages should be high on research and policy agendas, as should ensuring appropriate social, health and housing infrastructure. We also need to reform our welfare systems, care systems, and labour markets so that they support people and do not victimise, stigmatise, or punish them. These things all require sustained political will.

‘Unequal resources mean people have very different experiences of ageing and later life’



Professor Margaret Rowe, executive dean of the School of Health and Society, University of Salford

How can we take a fresh approach to ageing research?

The University of Salford's ageing and dementia hub aims to engage with stakeholders to better understand the needs of older individuals and their communities through shared learning and innovation.

The hub's four work streams are aligned to emerging policy agendas as well as core research activities, and cover living independently in the community, living in a care environment, dementia, and ageing technology and innovation.

The hub wants to engage with older people alongside partner organisations and industry collaborators, and work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to implement and apply research evidence to a range of practice-based initiatives, such as the 'teaching care homes' programme to share learning and improvement.

Making this a great place to grow older

John Hannen, Ambition for Ageing, Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation

Where we live makes a big difference to how fulfilled we feel. Here in Greater Manchester the Ambition for Ageing programme brings together the best approaches to helping local people make their area age-friendly, enabling them to change and adapt as they grow older.



John Hannen

Here are just a few examples.

Taking theatre into the community

Hayfield author Jayne Marshall’s play *Sharing the story - Make do and mend* is based on her mother’s experiences and those of residents at Ashton House supported accommodation in Hyde. The story depicts the tough post-war life of three local women in 1951. This new piece of professional community theatre has been performed twice for older people and carers in Tameside and has gone down really well.

A warm welcome at the Blue Bell

When a lunch club in Moston closed down, local older men felt isolated. They wanted somewhere informal they could choose to go to socialise. So we worked with the landlord of the nearby Blue Bell pub to launch the fortnightly ‘winter warmer lunch club’. As well as meeting and making friends in a convivial setting, members get a nutritious, value-for-money meal. There’s been a good turnout at every event so far, with 78 men enjoying the 2017 Christmas lunch. Members say they feel they belong to a community. The Joseph Holt Brewery has agreed to continue supporting the project and do something similar at other pubs.

Thinking **BIG** about ageing

£10.2
MILLION

Ambition for Ageing is a £10.2 million initiative paid for through the Big Lottery Fund’s Ageing Better programme. It aims to reduce social isolation among older people.

1,263
PROJECTS

Already it has helped develop 25 age-friendly neighbourhoods, directly funded 46 partner organisations that in turn support hundreds of small community groups, and delivered 1,263 projects.

13,000
OLDER PEOPLE

Ambition for Ageing has mobilised over 13,000 older people to design and deliver activities that have improved thousands of lives.

‘The women who took part felt better physically and psychologically’

A boost for personal care and self-esteem

Older customers at Shenaz Rahman’s Bolton hair and beauty salon asked how they could look after themselves better. So she devised a six-week course to suit their different cultures and backgrounds, with an interactive mix of face-to-face teaching and group demonstrations, in three languages. She gave out free products so everyone could practise techniques at home.

The women who took part developed self-care skills, became noticeably more confident about their appearance and felt better physically and psychologically, increasing their self-esteem. The lessons also encouraged multi-cultural social interaction. After the course, one woman made healthy changes to her diet to help her arthritis. Another said: ‘I feel like I can be bothered with myself again.’

‘The event was so successful there was a bigger one in 2017’

Spreading movie magic

Leigh Classic Cinema Club encourages older people to get together to watch their favourite old movies in a safe, friendly environment. But screenings were poorly attended. Ambition for Ageing helped the club buy a portable projector to show films in the wider community. Support to develop marketing materials has increased interest in club activities and grown the membership to 70 regulars. A new safeguarding policy makes it possible to operate in more locations, and there’s now a second cinema club in nearby Tyldesley. One member said: ‘It gives you a sense of belonging while having a fun time and making friends.’

Community support for LGBT group

The Out and About group in Oldham faced resistance to an event planned to celebrate older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people on Older People’s Day 2016. Local residents saw it as exclusive and discriminatory. But after Age UK Oldham encouraged frank discussions about LGBT discrimination and how to address it, the event got plenty of community support, and was so successful there was a bigger one in 2017 to mark the 50-year anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Links between Out and About and the community have got stronger, making older people who could be marginalised more visible and welcomed. Out and About has raised its profile, diversified its membership and now works closely with other LGBT groups.

‘It gives you a sense of belonging while having fun’

Championing culture for everyone

Esme Ward, director and Emma Horridge, age-friendly culture champions manager, Manchester Museum



Esme Ward



Emma Horridge

Culture has a big role to play in enabling Greater Manchester to become a positive place for people to grow older, now and in the future. An age-friendly culture should build on a citizen-based approach that works with and for older people, and champions their active participation and work they lead themselves.

Alongside this, as a city-region we're keen to use culture as a way to improve wellbeing in older people. Research has shown that fostering connections between older, isolated individuals and the region's cultural and historic assets gives people a stronger connection and sense of belonging to Greater Manchester, reducing isolation and improving wellbeing.

Our age-friendly cultural 'offer' has been born out of the city-region's varied and wonderful cultural landscape and diverse heritage, enabling world-class arts and culture to reach older people. Part of this offer is the 'age-friendly culture champions' scheme that began in Manchester in 2011;

'Fostering connections between older, isolated individuals and cultural and historic assets gives people a stronger sense of belonging'

It stemmed from research and consultation that found there were older people within local communities who were keen to bridge the gap between their peers and the city's culture.

The scheme recruits people over 50 to promote arts and culture as culture champions. They're given a wide range of information about local events, receive offers such as discounted tickets, and are invited to contribute to projects at cultural venues. They've co-programmed themed 'after hours' events at galleries for older audiences, participated in specially designed culture tours, and tested experimental theatre projects.

One culture champion said they felt inspired and privileged to introduce people to the arts, and found it thrilling to see others 'being thrilled'.

Now we want to spread the scheme right across Greater Manchester, reaching a broader audience and advocating all types of culture. We'll support each locality to develop its own culture champions, with guidance from the scheme already established in Manchester.

We also want to ensure Greater Manchester continues to pioneer age-friendly culture. The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, Manchester Museum and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (through the lottery-funded Great Place Scheme that pilots approaches to putting heritage at the heart of communities) are working together to create an international centre for age-friendly culture. This will profile and share expertise and practice, building on local and international partnerships, and seek to influence sector thinking and policy around the value of culture to active ageing and generational cohesion.

Overall, our approach will help the city-region shape culture in an inclusive way, and give rise to a vibrant cultural environment that fully represents the people of Greater Manchester, whatever their age.

Together we will...

“”

Become a world leader in research and innovation for an ageing society.



“”

Establish age-friendly communities across Greater Manchester, promoting volunteering and bringing generations together.



“”

Increase housing choice to promote social connections and wellbeing in later life.

“”

Build a health and social care system that works for older people.



“”

Create a transport network that supports older people to stay connected and active.



“”

Support more people to be physically active as they age.



“”

Develop an age-friendly plan for each local council.



“”

Make sure access to entitlements and benefits is easier and simpler.

“”

Engage and involve older people in arts and cultural activities across Greater Manchester and establish a centre for age-friendly culture.

“”

Campaign for positive change in the way older people are viewed.

for an age-friendly Greater Manchester

Time to act against ageism

Alana Officer, senior health adviser, Ageing and Life Course, World Health Organization - Geneva

‘Older people are talked down to as though they have lost it mentally and physically. You feel you’re just a statistic that’s slotted into an age bracket’

Steve, Bolton

Ageism is commonplace - and unlike other forms of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, it largely goes unchallenged.

There’s too much focus on ageing’s negative aspects. Older people are often portrayed as facing an inevitable mental and physical decline, and depending on others.

As a result, people may be ashamed of getting older and limit what they think they can do and their role in the community. There’s evidence that negative thinking about ageing can reduce life expectancy and recovery from health problems.

Ageism also stops us finding the right solutions and policies to tackle challenges older people face. Age is viewed as sufficient justification for treating people unequally and limiting their opportunities.

We need collective, concerted and coordinated global action to tackle ageism - and we need it now. This global campaign must tackle not just individual and social attitudes but laws, policies and institutions that perpetuate ageism.

‘I went to interviews, but they couldn’t hire me because I was too experienced, too qualified and they thought I couldn’t take instruction from younger people’

Jamil, Manchester

The World Health Organization (WHO) plans to draw on what has worked for other public health campaigns. But first we need to build an evidence base on the previously neglected area of ageism.

There’s no global analysis on the magnitude of ageism, its determinants, consequences and what strategies and messages could work to tackle it. So for our campaign to succeed, we need answers to some fundamental questions.

We’ve agreed with university researchers how best to conduct a global set of systematic reviews on ageism. The evidence these generate will help identify the most effective strategies, the populations to target, research gaps, tools to measure ageism globally, and specific contexts and ways of communicating.

WHO has already tested the campaign’s vision, goals and principles to ensure they’re globally relevant. Now we want to establish a broader public and private sector coalition to build the critical mass needed to change how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing.

Then together we can take concerted, evidence-based action to create a world inclusive of all ages that supports health and wellbeing across the life course.



Alana Officer

‘We have experience behind us from our whole lives and we can still do things young people can do’

Colin, Salford



Listen to older people, says network chair Elaine Unegbu.

For instance, I was shopping and the sales assistant just ignored me and spoke to my son instead. So I said, ‘I’m the one buying - and he’s my toy boy!’ That stopped them in their tracks. I was so angry; why wasn’t I valued? That’s why the Greater Manchester Older People’s Network is so important, giving a voice to older people in our city-region and making sure that it’s heard by the right people.

It’s time to reject the negative assumptions made about older people and to challenge age barriers. Older people enrich our communities in so many ways. Their contribution as volunteers and carers is vital to keep society running.

As a network we’re connected to over 50 organisations across Greater Manchester, including pensioners’ associations, housing trusts and community transport providers. Our 200-plus members provide policy makers with fantastic insight, both as experts by experience and through their wealth of skills and understanding.

Core to the network’s role is identifying what concerns older people most. We hold events for older people to voice their opinions and make recommendations to our partners on how to do things differently. Current priorities include the creation of age-friendly neighbourhoods and tackling social isolation in later life.

‘I thought the gym had been advertised for people of all ages. He asked me a few questions and then pushed me towards swimming for older people’

Jamil, Manchester

Want to join us?

Our network - funded by Ambition for Ageing and supported by Macc, Manchester’s voluntary and community sector support organisation - is growing fast. Membership is open to all older people living in Greater Manchester. If you’d like to learn more, email GMOPN@macc.org.uk

New ways into work for over-50s

Mat Ainsworth, assistant director employment, GMCA

Being out of work in your 50s can have a damaging effect on later life, associated with poor health, financial insecurity and social isolation.

Already one in three people aged 50-64 in Greater Manchester isn't working. And we know from national and local evidence that existing employment support programmes aren't as effective for the over-50s.

With a predicted 20% growth in the 50-64 age group in our city-region over the next decade, we need to find more effective approaches to employment support for these people to stop the number who are out of work growing significantly too.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) employment and skills team and the Ageing Hub are working alongside the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department for Education (DfE) and the Centre for Ageing Better (CfAB) to explore ways to engage with workless people over 50 and provide suitable employability support for them.

This project is taking a 'test and learn' approach that will quickly measure the likely impact. The first step is to create a robust evidence base that will enable the co-design and development of a new model for supporting over-50s back into work. We want to try to understand specifically what works at both a local and regional level to support future policy and investment decision making. We intend to also create transferable lessons with a reach beyond Greater Manchester, and aim to develop a model that has the potential to be replicated nationally in future.



'Any solutions will need to be personalised and tailored to older jobseekers, as well as responsive to local contexts'

The partnership between GMCA, DWP, DfE and CfAB is a great opportunity to collaboratively deliver a true 'test and learn' pilot and create something sustainable that will work for the over-50s cohort. It will involve ongoing evaluation input, and evaluation being an embedded part of the design and delivery of the service. This will enable the development of a robust model, ensuring continuous improvement that will hopefully create the foundation for longer-term change.

The findings of the initial evidence review are due to be evaluated in early 2019. These will inform the scope and focus of the pilot programme's design, recognising that any solutions will need to be personalised and tailored to older jobseekers, as well as 'place-based' to ensure they are responsive to local contexts.

The development of the new pilot will form part of our ambition to create a fully integrated approach to health, skills and employment across Greater Manchester through our Working Well programme.



Staying mobile in later life

James Baldwin, policy officer,
Transport for Greater Manchester

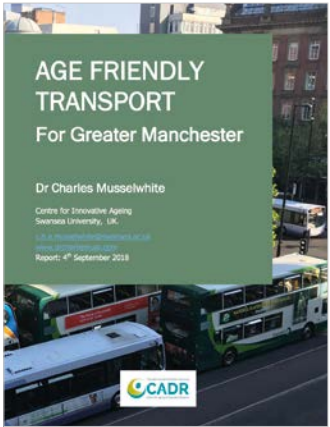


James Baldwin

Transport is more important to older people than ever before. They're especially likely to suffer 'mobility deprivation' and can't physically get where they want to. And being mobile is linked to quality of later life. Older people would often like to visit family and friends more, but are stopped by transport barriers. Those aged over 80 find it increasingly hard to reach key services like banks and supermarkets, while living longer makes their ability to access healthcare, such as hospitals, an even bigger priority.

More people use cars throughout their lives, leading to a rise in older drivers on the road, while walking, cycling and non-urban bus use have declined. Those without a vehicle can become socially excluded, with significant consequences for older people who have to give up driving and use alternative transport for the first time in years.

As our population ages, older people's mobility is a growing priority for Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). We already support older people in various ways. Concessionary travel has been extended to cover Metrolink tram and local rail services. The TfGM Disability Design Reference Group has helped make stops, stations and interchanges more accessible. We fund the Ring & Ride minibus service and train TfGM staff to be dementia friendly.



TfGM and the Ageing Hub, with the support of the Centre for Ageing Better, have commissioned research to further understand what an age-friendly transport network looks like, the mobility challenges older people face and what they see as transport priorities. This involved a review of current policy and literature on transportation and ageing in Greater Manchester. Older people (including those living with dementia) and their advocates contributed through local area workshops and events organised by Ambition for Ageing and the Greater Manchester Older People's Network.

'As our population ages, older people's mobility is a growing priority for Transport for Greater Manchester'

How we can get moving

The transport and ageing review made five broad recommendations. We'll publish plans on responding to these.

1. More transport staff should be trained in older people's issues.
2. More older people should be involved in transport planning and design.
3. Other sectors should work with transport authorities to help manage issues and remove barriers older people face. A cooperative approach should include the idea of 'total transport' that makes better use of existing resources, including hospital and school transport.
4. The local community should do more to support older people to get out and about, such as business, retail and other premises welcoming older people who need to sit down or use the toilet.
5. 'Demonstrator communities' could trial novel solutions to specific issues, like giving older people more time at pedestrian crossings or providing audio-visual bus information.

A prevention approach to our older population’s health

Jon Rouse, chief executive, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership



Jon Rouse

Today people live well and for longer more than ever before, a great achievement for our society. Advances in medicine, better support systems for people in need of care and free healthcare for all mean we have a growing ageing population. But this also poses a major challenge, with a 4% increase in demand every year across health and social care.

To cope with this increase we need people to age well, maximising their ability to live a full life and look after themselves. We know that older people who will need services the most are those with multiple long-term health conditions or premature clinical frailty (loss of fitness and resilience).

There’s good news though - lots can be done to prevent these conditions developing. And devolution in Greater Manchester, which since 2016 has enabled us to pool health and social care resources and exercise broader powers across public services, is certainly helping.

‘We need people to age well, maximising their ability to live a full life and look after themselves’

The best way to stay well as you get older is by building good habits in earlier life - drinking in moderation, not smoking, healthy eating and regular physical activity are the best route to a long and happy old age. Through devolution we’re working in all these areas to help the people of Greater Manchester build new habits. We’re aiming to reduce smoking by a third by 2020, holding the Big Alcohol Conversation to discuss the impact alcohol has on our communities, and trying to get 75% of people active or fairly active by 2025.

We want people to have regular health checks and attend screening when invited. Catching illnesses early gives the best chance of recovery, which is why we’re developing innovative solutions, such as offering lung cancer checks in supermarket car parks, so it’s easier than ever to get checked out.

These good habits become even more important from the age of 50 onwards as the amount of resilience people have built up makes a big difference.



For example, developing muscle strength and flexibility through physical activity helps people stay mobile in older age. That’s why projects like Greater Manchester Active Ageing, led by our charitable partner GreaterSport, are so important; it aims to encourage older people to adopt and sustain a more active lifestyle.

It’s never too late to make changes and build new habits, whatever your age. This can make a huge difference not only to your health but to your enjoyment of life and ability to live well and independently for longer.



Finding ‘rightsize’ housing solutions

Dr Mark Hammond, Manchester School of Architecture

The perpetual ‘housing crisis’ in the UK continues unabated. The challenges facing younger people (‘Generation Rent’) get most attention, including expanding social housing registers and rising levels of homelessness. Meanwhile older people are often seen as ‘under-occupiers’, who contribute to a dysfunctional housing market.



Dr Mark Hammond



Yes, statistics show that many older people have accumulated housing security and wealth that may be out of younger people’s reach, but not everyone is in an equal position. There are also increasing numbers of older people in the same expensive and precarious private rental sector as the younger generation, struggling to get on the housing ladder in later life, or living in conditions that are unsuitable for their changing needs.

Even those who have secure housing are not immune to the effects of the housing crisis. Policies targeting younger people, like ‘help to buy’, mean there’s less focus on creating new housing that meets the needs of older people; in turn this stagnates the housing market for everyone.

The housing crisis has also led to a significant increase in adult offspring living with their parents - a rise of 1m people since 2010. This can be a positive thing, but for some older people it creates a burdensome dependency that limits their ability to plan for later life.

We mustn’t view older people’s housing in a vacuum. It should be part of wider discussions on how to ensure that everyone can live somewhere that is safe, decent and affordable. Our Ageing Hub is working with the Greater Manchester Housing Providers group, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and Centre for Ageing Better, as well as academic institutions, architects and colleagues from across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, to develop innovative strategy, policy and practice that addresses housing sector challenges and opportunities.

Already 85% of the housing that will exist in Greater Manchester by 2035 has been built, so we need to create supportive age-friendly neighbourhoods and make sure older people are able to live where they want for as long as possible.

We also need to explore diverse housing options for older people, moving beyond building small homes so they can ‘downsize’. Instead we must develop options that are good quality, affordable and appropriate for people to ‘rightsize’. This isn’t just to ensure that the current cohort of older people are well served, but that we’re ready for changes to the local housing sector as ‘Generation Rent’ becomes our older population.

Our report on ‘rightsizing’ found that older people are motivated by the same desires as anyone else when choosing a home. So planners and developers need to give them a real choice.

The impact of lifelong inequalities on ‘precarious’ old age

Professor Chris Phillipson, MICRA,
The University of Manchester



Professor Chris Phillipson

Older people are increasingly represented as a group that’s healthier and more prosperous than ever. But this tends to overlook people’s contrasting lifestyles and experiences in later life. In fact, the evidence suggests that many carry disadvantages into old age, following a lifetime of low incomes and/or poor working conditions.

According to a 2018 study into why life expectancy has stopped increasing, the emphasis on positive models of ageing also tends to overlook warning signs that inequality may be starting to reverse the ‘achievements’ of longevity in many countries. The lives of a growing number of older people may become characterised more by what has been termed ‘precarity’ - how uncertain their later life is - rather than by health or success.

‘Policies must be connected to the prevention of disadvantage and the development of opportunities for all people to flourish’

Professor Guy Standing’s 2010 book on ‘the precariat’ looks at how changing employment conditions (like zero hours contracts and agency working), rising pension ages and age-related discrimination are creating new insecurities. Older people may, for example, get caught in a ‘precarity trap’, forced to remain in or re-enter the workforce with a lower status than before. In addition, older people - especially those with limited financial resources - may themselves need to rely on ‘precarious workers’ as carers, either in their own home or in residential care.

Philosopher Judith Butler’s approach to the idea of ‘precarity’ is that vulnerability is a constant through all life’s stages. Of course, late old age may bring specific cognitive, physical and social challenges. But these are best understood in terms of lives that, from childhood onwards, may face threats to resilience and independence. The framework provided by ‘precarity’ views later life in terms of ‘continuities’ rather than ‘discontinuities’.

What happens to people in the early and middle stages of their life course often exerts the most influence on the way they ultimately experience old age.

So the concept of ‘precarity’ provides a helpful first step in shifting attention from individual-level explanations of the challenges of ageing to the broader social context. In particular, this concept illustrates a growing concern over the neglect of particular sub-populations of older people, and larger ethical challenges relating to public and social support for older people faced with major periods of transition.

If we build on the insights provided by the concept of ‘precarity’, policies targeted at older people must be connected to a social and cultural ethos of support and care, the prevention of disadvantage, interventions at a neighbourhood level and beyond, and the development of opportunities for all people to flourish throughout the life course and into later life.

Why we must all do ageing differently

Dr Anna Dixon, chief executive, Centre for Ageing Better

Across the UK, we’re seeing a seismic demographic change. We’re living longer on average than our parents’ and grandparents’ generations. But when people talk about the ageing population, they often speak of it as a burden, focusing on rising pension, health and social care costs.



Dr Anna Dixon

We need to alter this so longer lives are seen as an opportunity, both for individuals and for society. In 2013 the House of Lords select committee on public service and demographic change highlighted the gap between the ‘reality and the response’ in its report ‘Ready for ageing?’. Currently too many people miss out on a good later life. That’s why the experience of ageing needs changes both nationally and locally.

The Centre for Ageing Better is part of the national What Works network of seven centres, set up to improve the way government and other organisations create, share and use the best available evidence in making public service decisions. We became fully operational in 2015, receiving £50m from the Big Lottery Fund.

We draw on practical solutions, research about what works well and people’s own insight to bring about change for people in later life, today and in future.

‘We draw on practical solutions, research about what works well and people’s own insight to bring about change for people in later life, today and in future’

We have specific goals in diverse areas, including for older people to be in fulfilling work, contribute to communities, get the most out of digital and live in a suitable home and neighbourhood. As architect Mark Hammond suggests on page 30, every new home should be built to be age-proof, accessible and adaptable.

We pursue strategic partnerships with organisations that can provide knowledge and evidence on ageing or have the ability to apply evidence for change across several domains, and places that want to become more age friendly, helping them find what makes the most difference in their local context. Greater Manchester has shown outstanding leadership on meeting residents’ needs and aspirations as they live for longer, culminating in its recognition as the UK’s first age-friendly city-region.

We entered a five-year partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority in March 2016 (the first of only two we’ve agreed so far). As part of this we commissioned a report on worklessness and job insecurity among people over 50 in Greater Manchester. Mat Ainsworth’s article on page 24 explains how together we are exploring possible solutions to these issues.

More broadly we want to work with the Ageing Hub to stimulate and coordinate a strategic response across sectors and agencies. This is a fantastic opportunity for Greater Manchester to become a global centre of excellence for ageing, pioneering research, and new ideas and technologies.

Ageing Hub partners include:

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- All 10 Greater Manchester councils
- Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership
- Age UK network across Greater Manchester
- Public Health England
- Health Innovation Manchester
- Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) at the University of Manchester
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- University of Salford
- Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO)
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
- Centre for Ageing Better
- Greater Manchester cultural organisations
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- Greater Manchester Housing Providers group
- Greater Manchester Police
- LGBT Foundation

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