

Later life in rural England

Age UK's campaign



Why is rural ageing important?



Approximately 50 per cent of the rural population is aged over 45 and the rural population is predominantly aged between 45 and 64.



IN 2010, THE POPULATION OF RURAL ENGLAND WAS **9.8 MILLION** WHICH IS AROUND **19%** OF THE TOTAL POPULATION.

THE POPULATION OF RURAL ENGLAND ROSE FASTER THAN URBAN ENGLAND BETWEEN 2001 AND 2008.

FASTEST GROWTH WAS IN **LESS SPARSE VILLAGES, HAMLETS & ISOLATED DWELLINGS** WHICH GREW BY

6.1%



THE **OVER 85** AGE GROUP IS SET TO **INCREASE BY 186%**

BY 2028 IN RURAL AREAS, COMPARED TO JUST **149%** IN THE UK AS A WHOLE.



In this report we use the Government's Rural/Urban definition, which states that rural areas are any areas forming settlements with populations of less than 10,000 people.



Aims

- To raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities faced by older people living in rural communities in England
- To get all levels of government to take steps to make the whole country a place where older people can thrive



Age UK's calls for action

Community action can provide helpful solutions to the challenges of rural living, **BUT** it cannot be relied upon alone to ensure the best outcomes for older people

There should be **a balance between government & community action.**

All levels of government must:

- **'Rural proof'** policy and services that may have an impact on rural areas and make older people a priority in this process
- Take the **'rural premium'** and **social value** of services into account
- Support **community participation**
- Target **social isolation** in rural areas



Pros and cons of rural life



Beautiful landscape

Peace and quiet

Fewer instances of cancer,
stroke and coronary heart
disease

Strong community spirit

Pros and cons of rural life



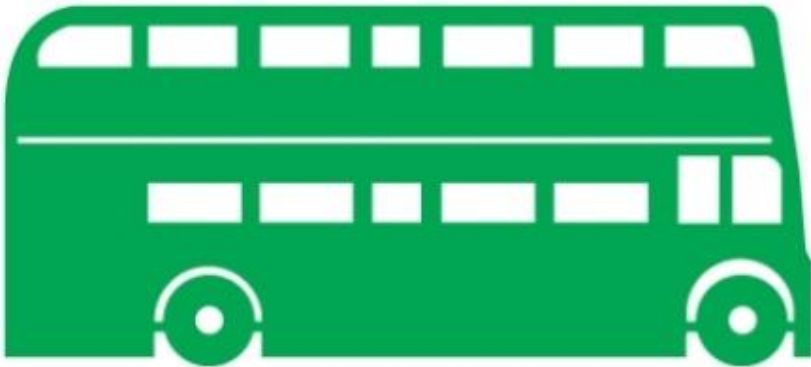
Higher living costs

Housing that is harder to heat and maintain

Poor transport links

More limited social networks?

Transport - challenges



- A lack of regular and convenient bus services
- Reduced funding
- Different levels of access
- Impact of the cuts

What does Age UK want?

1. Government to understand the transport needs of rural communities and recognise that buses can prevent social isolation
2. The national bus pass to remain free and universal
3. Local authorities to provide flexible transport alternatives where necessary



Transport case study

Case study



Margaret, 67, lives with her husband John, who is 67 and has Parkinson's, half way between Cambridge and Huntingdon. A taxi to Cambridge costs £30 each way. Margaret says:

'We live in a rural area, where the nearest small town is about five miles away. We have a village shop and post office, but that's about it. I don't drive and John gets Disability Living Allowance, so we used some of that money to pay for a mobility car. If John's too ill to drive and we want to go out, I push his wheelchair up to get the guided bus, which is at least a mile away. In bad weather, it's very difficult. Often when we do go out, it's to attend local Parkinson's meetings, but the guided bus doesn't go anywhere near them. There used to be a bus service which stopped at the end of our road but it was cancelled. Needless to say, I can't go out much now and often feel quite isolated. I'd love to be more active but my circumstances don't allow it.'

Health and social care - challenges



- Variability of service provision, quality and cost of social care
- Difficulties accessing services
- Older people's changing and complex needs

What does Age UK want?

1. Government to find a fair and sustainable funding solution to social care, urgently
2. Government to integrate health and social care services in rural areas and reinvest savings in preventive health and care services, appropriate housing, adaptations and low level personal services

Health and social care case study

Case study



George is 85 and lives with his wife Lindsey, aged 84, in a village in Hampshire. George has cared for Lindsey since she was diagnosed with dementia two and a half years ago, after being treated for depression. She is physically well and can understand speech, but she can't speak. Lindsey isn't eligible for care from the local authority, so George cares for her. He pays for a carer to come in every morning to wash and dress Lindsey and for her to go to a day centre twice a week. George says:

'Our social life changed completely when we moved to the country. People are very pleasant here but we don't have many friends and our relatives don't live close by, so we feel very isolated. Lindsey's carers have to travel for miles to get to us and their time keeping can be really bad. Of course I'm happy to care for Lindsey because I love her very dearly, but sometimes I ask myself, how long can I do this for? I think the Government should be doing more to help people with dementia by paying for their care.'

Fuel poverty - challenges



- Solid wall properties
- Lack of insulation
- Off-mains gas
- Cost of other fuels, i.e. oil, LPG, solid fuel, or portable heaters

What does Age UK want?

1. Government to use money it gets from carbon taxes to make UK homes super-energy efficient
2. Rural local authorities to take action and make excess winter deaths a health priority



Broadband access



Benefits

- Economic growth
- Better access to and choice of services
- Transport and cost savings
- Staying connected

Challenges

- Significant infrastructure problems
- Costs

What does Age UK want?

1. Government to meet its obligation to provide public services irrespective of whether or not someone is online
2. Government to meet its broadband delivery targets
3. Older people in rural areas to be supported to get online



Poverty and financial exclusion - challenges



- Cost of living in rural areas
- Living on a low income
- Money worries
- Access to the Post Office
- Lack of counters and cash machines

What does Age UK want?

1. Government to commit to the progressive eradication of pensioner poverty
2. State and private pension systems to be reformed to ensure current and future pensioners avoid poverty in later life
3. The payments industry to deliver a sustainable cash delivery network

Loneliness and social isolation - challenges



- Loneliness and isolation not the same thing, but closely related
- Identifying the risk
- A lack of research
- Finding solutions

What does Age UK want?

1. Government's Rural Communities Policy Unit to focus on social isolation
2. Loneliness and social isolation to be a priority for service providers and communities themselves
3. Older people to have the opportunity to participate in their communities

Impact

The Daily Telegraph



- The week before the launch, Defra published new national guidelines to help Government departments consider the needs of rural communities
- Age UKs are holding listening events attended by their local MPs to hear from older people in rural areas about their concerns

- 12 local BBC radio station interviews
- Local Age UKs contacted by their local TV and radio stations



Owen Paterson MP responded

8 Oct: APPG on Rural Services at the House of Commons



Questions?

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Thank you.



