

# Findings from Ipsos MORI and Centre for Ageing Better deliberative workshops

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Topic: I live in a home and  
neighbourhood suited to me

## About the workshops

In January and February 2016, Ipsos MORI and the Centre for Ageing Better conducted two day-long deliberative workshops with people aged 45 and over, one in London and one in Birmingham.

The workshops were the final phase of a programme of work conducted by Ipsos MORI for the Centre for Ageing Better, looking at how different groups of people in England are currently experiencing and thinking about later life. The report and related materials from the earlier phases of this research can be found [here](#). Part of this work involved analysing data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing to develop six segments of the population aged 50 and over who are experiencing later life in markedly different ways, in terms of issues such as their health, financial security, social connections and overall wellbeing.

These segments were:

- Thriving boomers
- Downbeat boomers
- Can do and connected
- Squeezed middle aged
- Worried and disconnected
- Struggling and alone

More information on the segments is available [here](#). The workshops brought together people from all six of these segments to spend time discussing and reflecting on a set of topics that the Centre for Ageing Better has identified as priority areas in achieving a good later life.

The topics were:

- I live in a home and neighbourhood suited to me
- I am in work
- I feel confident to manage major life changes
- I am making a valued contribution to my community
- I keep physically and mentally healthy and active

Participants explored what each topic meant to them, and then developed and debated their own ideas for what actions or changes could help more people enjoy this aspect of a good later life.

The data generated from the discussions were analysed using a thematic approach, where the individual ideas and suggestions made within each of the topic areas discussed were categorised into similar themes.

This short briefing summarises the main findings from the workshops on the topic 'I live in a home and neighbourhood suited to me'. Further briefings will be published on each of the topics.

# What does the topic 'I live in a home and neighbourhood suited to me' mean to people, and why does it matter?

All participants, regardless of the segment they were in, agreed that a good home was one that was both **comfortable and manageable**, although this meant different things to different people. For some, it meant downsizing to a home that was more affordable and easier to maintain. For others, it meant a home large enough to accommodate visiting family.

Many people who had lived in their current homes for a long time were **reluctant to consider moving**, because their home was where they had built up both **memories and social connections**.

“**You live in a house for a long time – not only you but your kids and grandkids – and to turn your back on it is difficult.**”

Can do and Connected, Birmingham

Participants were not generally keen to make **adaptations** to their home. Although many recognised changes to their home (such as extra handrails or more accessible baths) might make life easier as they got older, most would not do this until absolutely necessary. Some didn't like the appearance of adaptations, speaking of not wanting their home to look like it 'belonged to an old person'.

Some participants discussed how later life might involve moving into a **care home**, and most saw this negatively, with some people adamant they would never move into a care

home themselves because they equated it with an unacceptable loss of independence and control. Participants from the squeezed middle aged segment particularly raised concerns about variable quality of care from care home staff, in some cases drawing on experiences of looking into accommodation options for their own parents. Some were concerned about the prospect of living only among other older people, saying it might even speed up the ageing process, and stressing how **contact with people from different age groups** was important to them.

“**The better homes often try to bring youngsters and pets in. If you only spend time with the people your own age, then that can be a downward spiral.**”

Thriving Boomer, Birmingham

When thinking about what a good neighbourhood meant in later life, most people stressed first the importance of **accessible amenities** such as shops, libraries and social clubs, and medical facilities, with good **public transport and walking routes**.

“**...comfortable and convenient – like facilities that are handy to you – bus services and having facilities on the road...**”

Can do and Connected, Birmingham

Participants across all segments felt that strong social connections and **friendly neighbours** were crucial. They explained that having neighbours they could trust meant not just enjoyable informal social interaction, but also people to trust with their spare key, or who could be relied on in an emergency.

Some lamented a loss of **community spirit** in recent years, however, blaming this on the

increasing pace of life and increasing numbers of people working far from where they lived.

“**There’s not a community anymore. Before people used to be more friendlier (sic), and that is something we want. You chat to your neighbours.**”

Struggling and Alone/Worried and Disconnected, Birmingham

## What could help more people live in a home and neighbourhood suited to them as they get older?

### Information and local support

Many of the ideas developed by the participants involved improving access to information and support. Indeed, there was a strong sense that there was a need for better **access to information about local services**, particularly about health and social care services, and particularly for those who might lack family or friends to consult for advice. Some of participants’ suggestions to help with this are given in the boxes to the right.

“Create a neighbourhood care scheme”, a voluntary network of neighbours who would look out for those living close by.

“Reliable source of tradesmen help”, with trusted suppliers who had been vetted and accredited.

“Better information on local events and services” to encourage people to participate locally.

“Locally based age issue consultants – preferably free” to provide people with a hub where they could access help and support from trusted advisors on a range of relevant issues.

Participants were asked to think about which of their ideas may have the most impact and should be prioritised. Participants across all of the segments that discussed this topic felt that a **care scheme** would be of real value, both in terms of providing help and support while also working to build community spirit. Some of the Thriving Boomers also saw this scheme as a volunteering opportunity for themselves in that they could share relevant local information with neighbours who needed it.



**A care scheme – I would know who to go to if my neighbour needed support, as she has no family around her. We want to see that happen. A charity would be responsible.”**

Thriving Boomer, London

The importance of having **access to trusted and approved local tradespeople** was also highlighted, so that people could feel confident and secure if they needed maintenance work or home improvements carried out, and know that they were getting a good deal and not being taken advantage of.

## Stronger communities

Fostering community spirit and neighbourliness was generally thought to be something that could not be ‘engineered’ by others; it had to be generated by the efforts of people in the community themselves. However participants did make suggestions as to how local services or charities could help facilitate stronger communities, as shown in the boxes below.

“Local community centres and better access to them” - places where people could go to meet and participate in activities.

“Organised meetings to bring people together”, such as meals, annual events, trips to new places.

“More community activities” giving structured opportunities for socialising.

When asked to prioritise, participants particularly highlighted the importance of **access to safe local community spaces and facilities** to provide opportunities for the community to come together; indeed, several highlighted that their own local centres had closed in recent years making it harder to find places to host community groups and activities.

Across the segments, participants gave very similar suggestions, though those who had strong social connections and recognised the value and benefits that they derived from these, such as the Thriving Boomers, suggested that tackling this would be particularly important for those who are socially or geographically isolated.

“**More community activities – get people out of the house. A little hut, bowls – getting people to use their minds still...some people feel isolated**”.

Thriving Boomer, London

### Better transport and infrastructure

People across both workshops stressed how important **public transport** was, not only in accessing local amenities but also to visit friends and family and participate in social activities. While public transport was a priority across segments, it was particularly important for those who found it more difficult to get around, such as some of the struggling and alone and worried and disconnected segments. Some of the suggestions that were prioritised by participants are given in the boxes to the right.

“Bus service or underground” that provides a free, frequent, extensive and reliable transport network.

“Good access around the streets-pavements, good signage” that ensure it is easy to get around.

“Public transport and good amenities, social clubs” - transport that takes people to where they want to go, to do what they want to do.

Depending on their location, some felt they had good transport links, with those in urban areas often satisfied with their access to buses, trains and dial-a-ride services. Affordability was also important, and participants in London were full of praise for the Freedom Pass for allowing them to travel round the capital free of charge. Improving safety was a predominant theme in people’s ideas about wider infrastructure improvements, with **good street lighting** deemed a priority to help people feel safe getting out in the evenings.

## Next steps

The Centre for Ageing Better is extremely grateful to the workshop participants for their time and energy taking part in the workshops. We are using the insights and ideas that people generated to feed into our work programmes. We will be reviewing the evidence on how adaptations to people’s homes can improve their later lives. As part of this, we will be considering how people feel about installing

adaptations, and how issues such as improving information about adaptations and improving the choice and design of adaptations could help. In our work on good neighbourhoods for later life, we will be looking at ways to share and apply the evidence for how neighbourhoods can encourage supportive communities with access to information, facilities and infrastructure.