

## CHARITY URGES RADICAL RETHINK OF HEALTH, WORK AND HOUSING TO AVOID LOOMING CRISIS FOR POOREST OLDER PEOPLE

- Landmark report on the reality of growing old shows that a significant proportion of people are at risk of spending later life in poverty, ill-health and hardship. Today's least well-off over-50s face far greater challenges than wealthier peers and are likely to die younger, become sicker earlier and fall out of work due to ill-health.
- Pensioner poverty is rising for first time since 2010 and is more prevalent for women and BAME groups. The least well-off are more likely to need help with daily activities like washing and dressing as they age. 1.3m over-55s live in homes hazardous to their health and one in four 50-64-year-olds have three or more chronic health conditions.
- Centre for Ageing Better calls on Government, businesses and charities to rethink their approach and avoid storing up problems for the future. The number of people aged 65 and over is set to increase by more than 40% in the next two decades; if no action is taken there will be increasing pressure on health and care services, local authorities, the voluntary sector and government finances.

A landmark report on the state of ageing in Britain shows that a significant proportion of the population is at risk of suffering poverty, ill-health and hardship in later life. The Centre for Ageing Better's report, '*The State of Ageing in 2019*', warns of substantial inequalities in health, work and housing for people in their 50s and 60s.

The charity is calling for a radical rethink from Government, businesses and charities to ensure the next generation of older people can experience a good quality of life as they age and make the most of the opportunities presented by longer lives.

The research brings together publicly available data sources to reveal vast differences in how people experience ageing depending on factors such as where they live, how much money they have or what sex or ethnicity they are. While people aged-65 can expect to live just half of the remainder of their life without disability, those in less affluent parts of the country will die earlier and be sicker for longer. Ill-health is a major cause of people falling out of work prematurely and can affect quality of life and access to services like healthcare.

Britain is undergoing a radical demographic shift, with the number of people aged 65 and over set to grow by more than 40% in just two decades, reaching over 17 million by 2036.

The report reveals that:

- Pensioner poverty is rising for the first time since 2010. About 1.9 million over-65s, more than Birmingham and Manchester's combined population, are in relative poverty. Women and BAME groups are the most likely to struggle financially in later life.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of people aged 50-64 manage three or more chronic health conditions; this proportion is rising.
- Compared to the wealthiest men aged 50+, the poorest are three times as likely to have chronic heart disease, twice as likely to have type 2 diabetes or arthritis and almost four times more likely to need help with basic activities like washing and dressing as they age.

**Embargo 00.01, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

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- Millions of UK homes are unsuitable for people with a disability or reduced mobility, with many being so hazardous and poorly-maintained that they pose a risk to the safety of their occupants. Just 7% of homes meet basic accessibility standards, and 1.3m over-55s live in homes that pose a serious threat to health and safety.
- Nearly a third (3.3m) of 50-64-year-olds, more than the population of Wales, are not in work. A million people between 50 and State Pension age are out of work prematurely, despite wanting a job, and poorer people are more likely to leave work due to ill-health.

As more people live longer, greater focus is needed on tackling the causes of preventable ill-health and disability including poor diet and low levels of physical activity. The Government must require all new homes to be built to be accessible and adaptable as standard and commit to improving the condition of existing housing. Employers must do more to support people to keep working in fulfilling jobs as long as they want, especially those managing health problems or caring responsibilities, enabling them to save more for their later life.

**Dr Anna Dixon, Chief Executive, Centre for Ageing Better, commented:**

“Living for longer can provide us with huge opportunities to enjoy ourselves and spend time doing the things we love. But this report is a wake-up call for us all – many people in their 50s and 60s now, particularly those who are less well-off, simply won’t get the quality of later life that they expect or deserve.

“We must act now to add life to our years; to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to make the most of a longer life. Without radical action today to help people age well, we are storing up problems for the future and leaving millions at risk of poverty and poor health in later life.”

**Ends**

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- 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 a part of the What Works network, we are grounded in evidence. Visit us at [ageing-better.org.uk](http://ageing-better.org.uk) or follow us on Twitter [@Ageing\\_Better](https://twitter.com/Ageing_Better).
- ‘**The State of Ageing in 2019**’ uses publicly available data to give a snapshot of what life is like for people aged 65 and older today, and investigates the prospects for people now in their 50s and 60s, looking across four areas – work and finances, housing, health, and communities. The Centre for Ageing Better will track progress and regularly report against this data to inform our work and the changes we seek to bring about over the next ten years. The report is available [here](#).