

Technical Report: Healthy Ageing

Here is the webpage:

<https://torbayhealthpartnerships.co.uk/>



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The motto of Torbay Council (*Salus et Felicitas*) is 'Health and Happiness'. There is no mention of long life. In fact, the word "ageing" is often followed by a list of challenges for society, especially for health and social care services. The general view is that ageing is a problem. How, then, does long life relate to health and happiness when the typical Torbay resident today can expect to live into their 80s?

Living longer

In the mid-1800s, over half of all deaths were due to infections, with infants and children at greatest risk. During this time, around a quarter of all children died before age 5 and survival to age 80 would have been very rare. Today, deaths in childhood are thankfully rare and survival through adulthood into older age is typical.

This improvement in 'life expectancy (the average length of time one can expect to live)' was due to better nutrition, access to clean drinking water, modern medicines and effective public health measures like vaccinations. Better understanding of the causes of early deaths in adulthood, such as heart disease and cancers, alongside improvements in ways to prevent, diagnose and treat these conditions, have also improved survival.

Throughout the last century we have seen strong links between health and life expectancy. Longer life expectancy can, in some ways, be considered a marker of a healthy and happy population overall. However, longer life expectancy does not guarantee that the



extra years of life are lived in good health, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ageing

So, what is 'ageing'? Ageing is more than just a number and means different things to different people. Like other periods of change in life, there is a wide range of normal. Understanding the experience of normal healthy ageing is important in deciding when symptoms in an older person are due to the natural ageing process or a disease that may be potentially preventable.

Wrongly assuming that ill health is an inevitable part of ageing can lead us to miss opportunities to prevent disease and disability, maintain independence and improve quality of life of older people. This may also help to explain why ageing is often seen as a problem rather than a positive marker of a healthy and happy population. Negative attitudes to ageing and to older people can affect our ability to recognise and value their rights and their important ongoing contributions to society.

We have been slow to adapt to our ageing population. With about half of Torbay's population aged over 50 today, we need to be ready for this generation to reach their expected lifespan of 85. Will we age healthily? Or will we experience ill health, disability, and early death?

Dr Lincoln Sargeant

(Director of Public Health)



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the many community organisations, individuals and colleagues who have helped to shape this report and the recommendations within. Some of these key groups are highlighted here.

We are grateful to have such a **strong network of groups and people championing healthy ageing** and supporting our ambition to make Torbay the best possible place to live and grow older for all.

This report builds upon the great work of the Ageing Well Torbay programme (led by [Torbay Communities](#) between 2015-2022) and seeks to strengthen our approach to making Torbay an [Age Friendly Community](#).



LOOKING
AFTER
ALL OUR
TOMORROWS
TODAY

healthwatch
Torbay

**Engaging
Communities**
South West



NHS
Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

**Torbay
ageUK**

**Torbay
Active Lives**
Have fun and stay active!
South Devon and Torbay Healthy Ageing Programme

**TORBAY
COUNCIL**

Torbay Communities
Stronger together

Why is this important?

Everyone, regardless of where they live, should have the chance to enjoy a long and healthy life.

However, **our environments can either support or hinder our health.**

Environments impact our behaviours, our exposure to health risks, our access to quality health and social care services, and the opportunities that come with ageing.

An ageing society

The Chief Medical Officer's 2023 report on ['Health in an Ageing Society'](#) highlights the importance of this work. The report emphasises the need to **maximise independence and minimise the time spent in ill health** for older adults.

The report outlines two complementary approaches: **reducing disease and changing the environment to support independence**. It also stresses the importance of focusing efforts on areas with the fastest-growing older populations and addressing the needs of those living with multiple health conditions.

Enabling 'healthy ageing'

Enabling 'healthy ageing' and creating ['Age Friendly' communities](#) is crucial for the health and wellbeing of society. As populations age, ensuring that older adults can live healthy, active, and

independent lives becomes increasingly important. **These efforts are essential to build a healthier, more inclusive, and sustainable society.**

Here are some key reasons why a focus on healthy ageing is important:

Improved quality of life: Healthy ageing initiatives can improve the quality of life of older adults by **promoting physical, mental, and social wellbeing**. This includes preventing and managing chronic diseases, encouraging physical activity, and fostering social connections.

Social and economic contributions: Older adults make significant contributions to society, including volunteering, caregiving, and sharing their knowledge and experience. By supporting healthy ageing, we can ensure that older adults remain active and engaged members of their communities. This **benefits individuals as well as wider society and the economy**.

Reducing inequalities: Adapting communities and services to meet the needs of our ageing population will support healthy ageing. Age-friendly initiatives create **environments that are inclusive, accessible and safe** for people of all ages and abilities. This can reduce inequalities and **ensure that everyone can live independently for as long as possible**.

How long will I live?

Overall, the average length of time someone born in the UK today can expect to live ([life expectancy](#)) is around **81 years**. However, when we look at this in a little more detail we see big differences according to things like your sex, where you live and the level of disadvantage you face throughout life.

Differences in life expectancy

In the UK, life expectancy is around **79 years for males and 83 years for females** (4-year difference). There are also big regional differences in life expectancy, with a clear [north-south divide](#). The areas with the shortest life expectancy are mostly located in the North of England and Scotland.

[Deprivation](#) also impacts how long you are expected to live. In England, **males in the most deprived areas can expect to live around 9 years less** than those in the least deprived areas (74 vs 83 years). Similarly, females in the most deprived areas can expect to live around

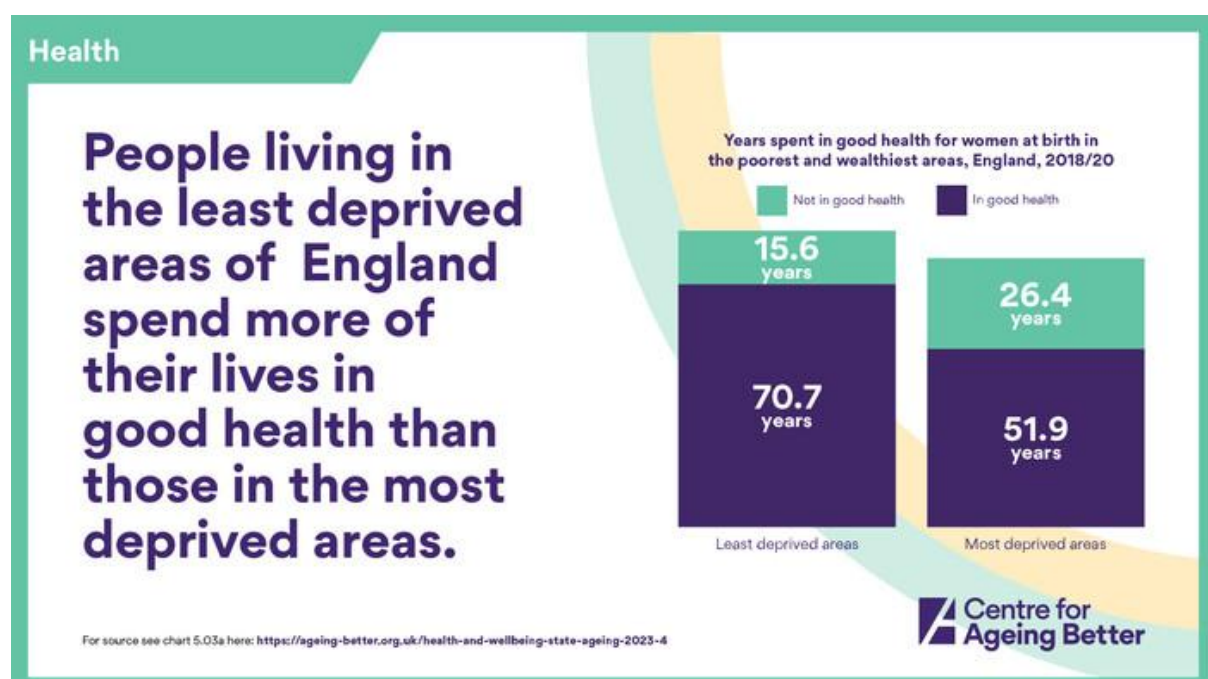
8 years less than those in the least deprived areas (78 vs 86 years).

Years in 'good health'

It is important to note that **living longer does not guarantee that these extra years are lived in good health**. This is why we also measure what is called '[healthy life expectancy](#)' - the average length of time one can expect to live in 'good' or 'very good' health.

Healthy life expectancy is **similar for males and females** in England – around **62 years**. However, there are big differences in healthy life expectancy according to deprivation. People in the **most deprived areas have a healthy life expectancy around 19 years less** than those in the least deprived areas (52 vs 71 years).

The [infographic](#) below shows how **healthy life expectancy differs according to how deprived you are**.



What is 'ageing'?

First, it is helpful to consider what 'ageing' is and what it means to people, before we try to understand what 'healthy ageing' is. Ageing is a complex process that affects various aspects of life.

Ageing is **not merely the passage of time but involves a range of biological, psychological, and social changes.**

Understanding this can help us create supportive environments that promote healthy ageing and enhance the quality of life for older adults.

Chronological vs biological

Chronological ageing is simply the **number of years** a person has lived, whereas biological ageing refers to the **changes that occur in the body over time.**

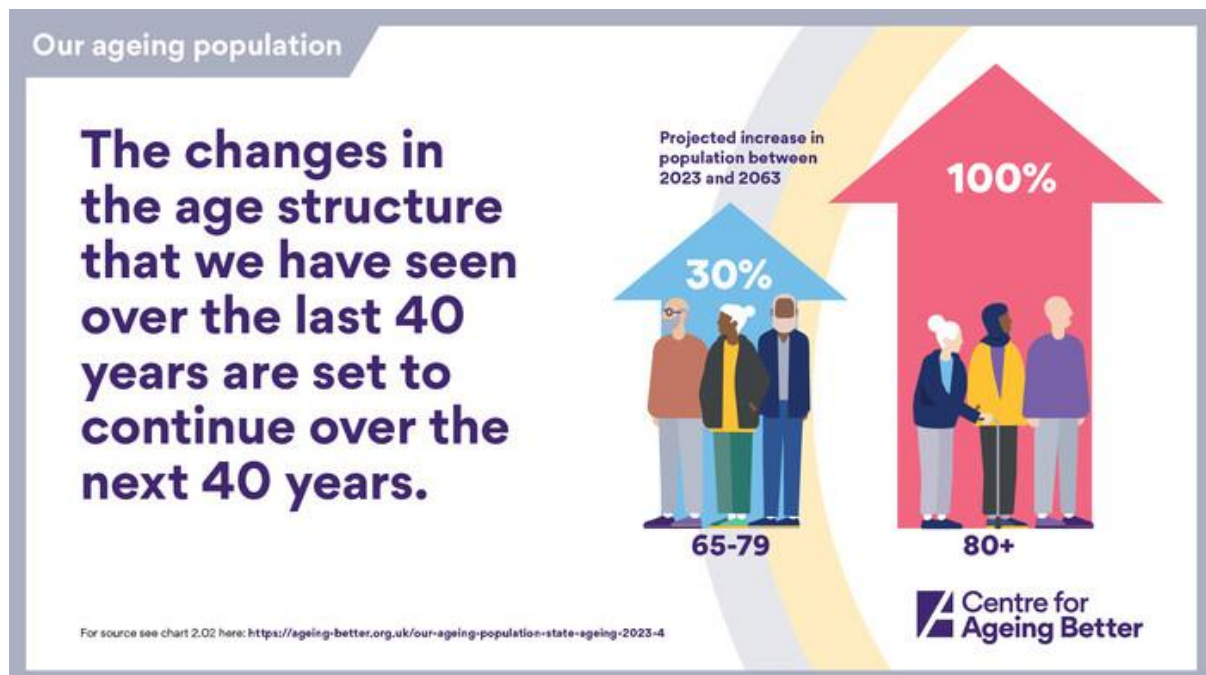
Biological ageing can vary significantly among individuals of the same

chronological age due to genetic factors, lifestyle choices, and environmental influences. For instance, **two people aged 70 may have vastly different levels of physical health and cognitive function,** depending on the factors above.

Societal perceptions

Societal attitudes towards ageing can influence how individuals experience the ageing process. In some cultures, ageing is revered and associated with wisdom and respect. In others, it may be viewed negatively, leading to ageism and discrimination.

These perceptions can affect the self-esteem and mental health of older adults, highlighting the **importance of fostering a positive and inclusive view of ageing.**



Ageing affects multiple domains of health, including physical, mental, cognitive and social aspects. The table below summarises some of these effects.

Table 1 Ageing and health and health domains

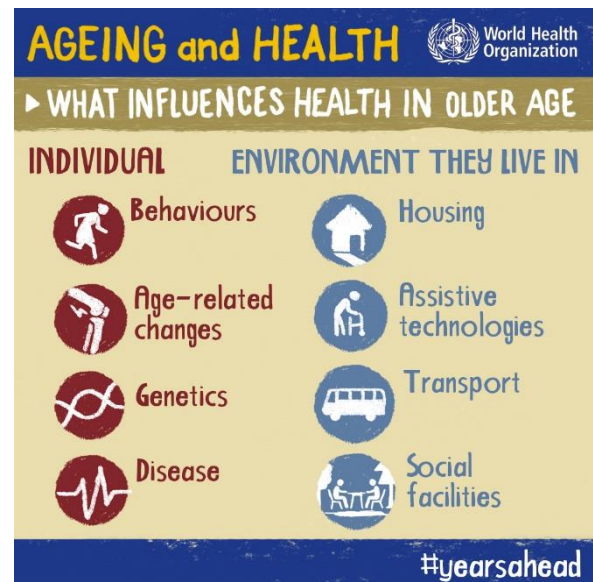
Physical health	Physically, ageing can be associated with a decline in muscle mass, bone density, and heart function. However, regular physical activity and a healthy diet can minimise these effects and maintain physical health.
Mental health	Mentally, ageing can bring about changes in emotional regulation and risks of mental health conditions. However, staying connected, getting adequate sleep, avoiding substance use and staying active can maintain mental health.
Cognitive health	Cognitive ageing involves changes in memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities, although by engaging in

	regular mental stimulation many older adults maintain high levels of cognitive function well into later life.
Social health	Socially, ageing can impact relationships and social networks, with retirement and the loss of loved ones potentially leading to social isolation. However, staying socially active and engaged can enhance wellbeing and longevity.

Environmental effects

Our environment plays a key role in ageing. Factors such as air quality, access to healthcare, safe housing and social support systems can either promote healthy ageing or contribute to health decline. For example, living in a polluted area can increase breathing problems, while having strong social connections can provide emotional support and reduce stress.

Infographics below taken from '[WHO Aging and Health Infographic](#)'.



What does 'healthy ageing' look like?

Healthy ageing is about **supporting good physical, mental, cognitive and social health as we grow older**. It involves [creating environments and opportunities that enable people to live fulfilling lives](#), regardless of age.

Being free from disease or disability is not a requirement for healthy ageing, as many older adults manage health conditions that, when well-controlled, do not significantly affect their wellbeing.

Living in an environment that supports healthy ageing is crucial. This includes having access to safe housing, transportation, healthcare services, and community resources. Age-friendly environments are designed to be accessible and supportive, helping older adults maintain their independence.

Domains of health

Here are some key aspects of what healthy ageing looks like:

Physical health: This includes staying active through regular exercise, eating a balanced diet, and managing chronic conditions effectively. Regular health check-ups and preventive care are also crucial. Physical health in older age

means maintaining mobility, strength, and overall fitness to perform daily activities independently.

Mental health: Healthy ageing involves maintaining mental wellbeing by managing stress, staying mentally active, and seeking help for mental health issues when needed. Managing emotions and maintaining a positive outlook on life are important aspects of healthy ageing and can also involve practices like mindfulness and meditation.

Cognitive health: Keeping the brain active through continuous learning and mental challenges is important. Cognitive health can be supported by engaging in activities that stimulate the mind, such as learning new skills, playing games, or engaging in hobbies. Activities like reading, puzzles, and social interactions can help keep the mind sharp.

Social health: Staying socially connected is vital for healthy ageing. This includes maintaining relationships with family and friends, participating in community activities, and engaging in social networks. Social interactions can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Ageing in Torbay

How do we compare?

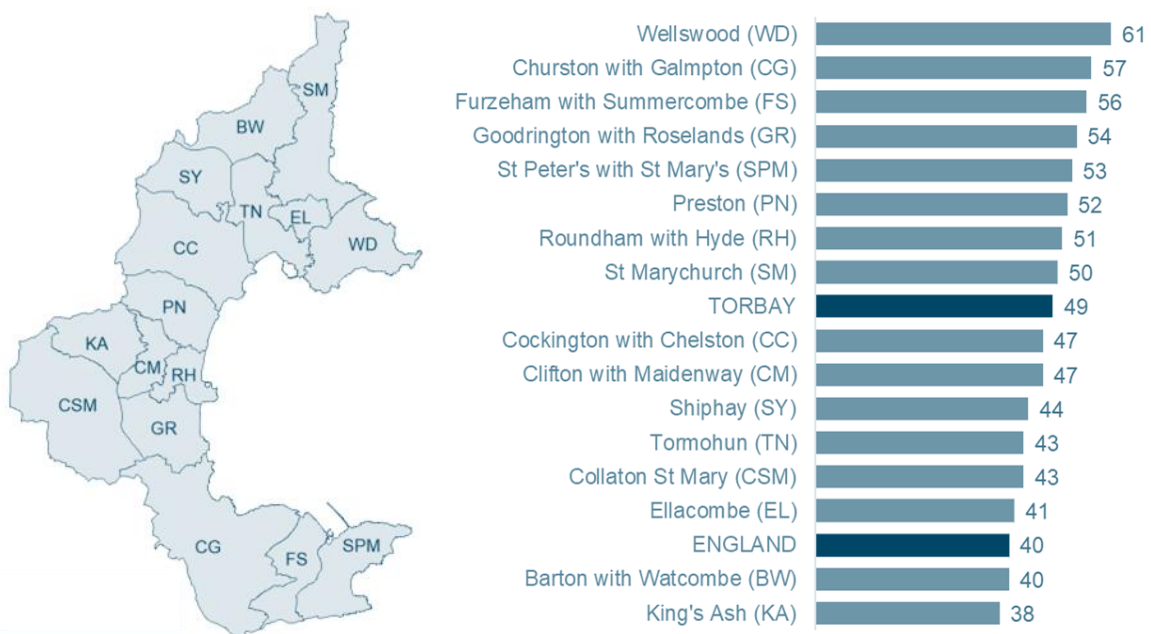
Torbay has a significantly older [age profile](#) than England, with an **average age of 49** years (compared to 40 years across England).

Within Torbay, there are **significant differences between areas**. Wellswood has an average age around 23 years higher than King's Ash (see below).

Around 1 in 4 Torbay residents are aged 65 and over and this is increasing. Current predictions estimate that **by the year 2033, around 1 in 3 Torbay residents will be aged 65 and over**.

The 65 and older population is also not evenly spread across Torbay. The proportion of those aged 65 and over is more than 2.5 times higher in Wellswood when compared to King's Ash (43% vs 17%, respectively).

Average (median) age of residents in Torbay Wards, 2023 (Torbay and England averages shown for comparison)



Health and wellbeing

Age is a risk factor for many chronic health problems and around 1 in 4 Torbay residents are estimated to have conditions or illnesses that reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Data from the 'Active Lives Survey' in 2022/23 provide a snapshot of the views of people living in Torbay on their own health and wellbeing. In this survey, **adults aged 65 to 84 scored better**

than all other age groups in the following areas: life satisfaction, happiness, finding things worthwhile, anxiety and loneliness.

Life expectancy

Torbay is ranked as the **most deprived upper-tier local authority in the South West** and there are [big differences in life expectancy](#) between those born in the most and least deprived areas of Torbay

(a **9 year difference for males** and a 6 year difference for females).

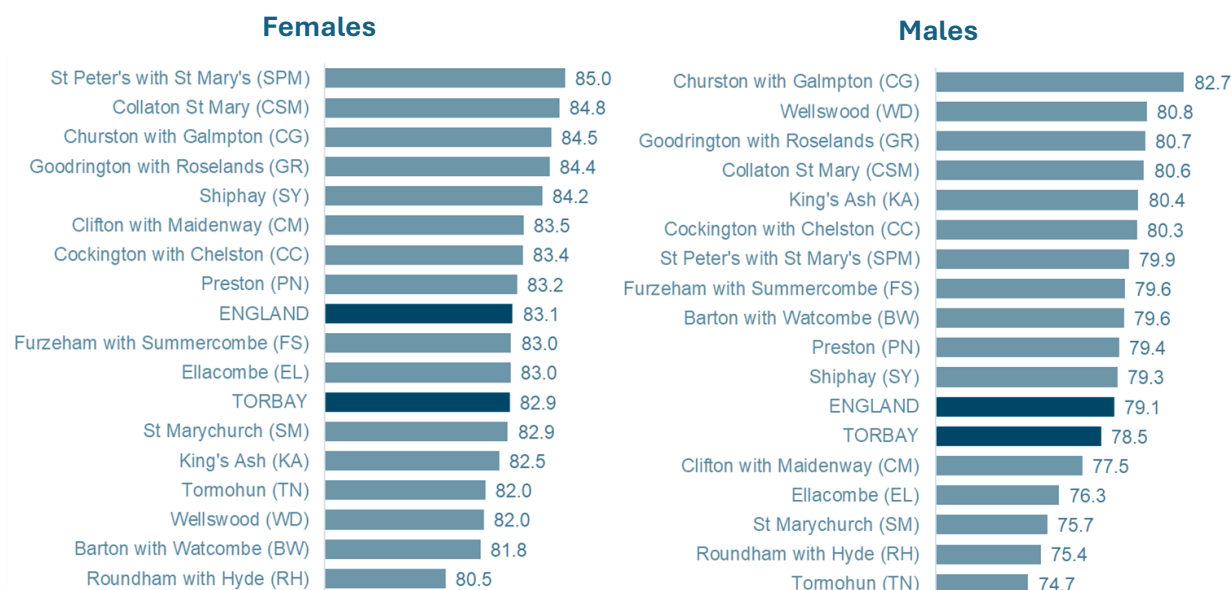
There are also **big differences in life expectancy according to which Ward you are from** (see below). Life expectancy is around 8 years lower for males from Tomohun when compared to Churston with Galmpton (75 vs 83 years) and around 5 years lower for females from Roundham with Hyde when compared to St Peter's with St Mary's (80 vs 85 years).

For more information about the health and wellbeing profile of Torbay, please visit our [Torbay Knowledge and Intelligence website](#) where you can find a range of reports and resources.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Together with colleagues from Healthwatch and Engaging Communities South West, we posed this question to members of the Torbay Assembly – the film is in the web version of this report.

Life expectancy at birth in Torbay Wards, 2019-23 (Torbay and England averages shown for comparison)



Making Torbay 'Age Friendly'

Ageing Well Torbay

Ageing Well Torbay was a 6 year-long programme (2015-21) led by [Torbay Communities](#) that aimed to reconnect communities and reduce social isolation experienced by people aged 50+ living across Torbay.

An independent analysis of Ageing Well Torbay participant survey data identified a wide range of **improvements in self-reported health and wellbeing measures**. The legacy and learning from this programme can be found [here](#).

Age Friendly Communities

'[Age Friendly Communities](#)' are **places that promote healthy ageing by being inclusive, accessible, and supportive for people of all ages**. These communities focus on improving physical and social environments to enhance the wellbeing and participation of older adults.

Key aspects include accessible outdoor spaces and buildings, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services ([Age-friendly Communities: a handbook of principles to guide local policy and action](#)).

It is also crucial that the Age Friendly agenda aligns closely with the [Child Friendly agenda](#) – there are many wins which will **make Torbay a better**

place to live and grow for both children and older adults.



The Torbay Age Friendly Charter

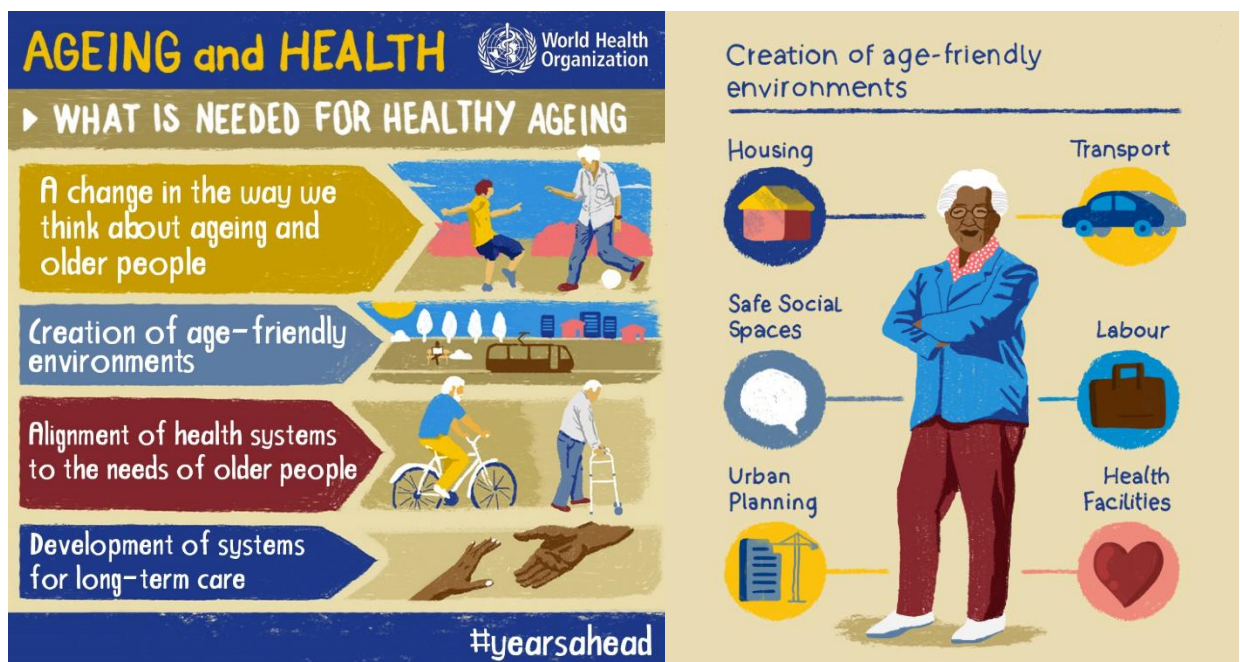
Before the pandemic, the [Torbay Assembly](#) worked with the council and the Foundation Trust to gain WHO *Age-friendly Community* status for Torbay.

We signed up to the **Torbay Age-friendly Charter** in 2021, committing to engage the Assembly in relevant policy development and implementation, to challenge ageism, and to listen actively to service users in our decision-making.

As part of this, Torbay Council are considering a range of issues that impact the health and wellbeing of older people across Torbay, including housing, outdoor spaces, transport systems, and access to community support and services.

The following sections of this report summarise areas in which, by working together, we can make Torbay more 'Age Friendly'.

Infographic below taken from '[WHO Aging and Health Infographic](#)'.



Challenging assumptions about ageing is crucial to foster respect, inclusion, and an accurate understanding of older people. Outdated stereotypes often generalise older people as frail, vulnerable, dependent, or resistant to change, which can lead to ageism—a form of discrimination that affects opportunities, healthcare, and social interactions.

Promoting realistic and diverse perspectives of ageing can help us to **recognise the valuable contributions older people make to society**. Encouraging intergenerational connections helps break down misconceptions and fosters mutual learning between younger and older generations.

Ultimately, redefining ageing means embracing it as a **natural, dynamic, and varied experience**, where people continue to grow, learn, and contribute throughout their lives.

What is ‘ageism’?

Ageism refers to the “the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) directed towards people on the basis of their age” ([WHO, 2021](#)).

Valuing older people

Most older adults are independent and make important contributions to their families, communities and wider society in a range of ways - through employment, caring roles, childcare, mentorship and volunteering roles.

Of the estimated 4.7 million [unpaid carers in England](#), older people make up the highest percentage. Older people also make up the **highest percentage of unpaid carers** providing 50 hours or more per week.

Older adults are the **backbone of the UK’s volunteer workforce**. In 2023/24, participation in formal or informal volunteering at least once a month was [higher among adults aged 65 to 74 \(40%\)](#) than adults from all other age groups. Adults aged 65 and above are also more likely than all other age groups to [give money to charity](#).

Through these roles and others, [older adults contribute billions to the UK economy](#), which has been estimated to [far exceed the costs of social care](#).

Age-friendly communications

How we talk and write about ageing has an important impact on societal perceptions of older people. The Centre for Ageing Better [Age-Friendly communication principles](#) are essential to **challenge stereotypes and foster respect and inclusion**. They ensure **language, imagery, and messaging accurately reflect the diversity of older people**, rather than reinforcing outdated assumptions of frailty or decline.

By using clear, accessible, and empowering communication, organisations can **promote positive representations of ageing, highlight contributions of older people, and encourage intergenerational dialogue**. Inclusive messaging also helps combat ageism, ensuring that older people remain active participants in social, economic, and cultural life.



Reducing social isolation and loneliness

What's the difference?

Social isolation and loneliness are linked but slightly different [concepts](#):

- **Social isolation** refers to a **lack of social connections** - where someone has few or no interactions with others. It can result from factors like living alone, mobility issues, or loss of family and friends.
- **Loneliness**, on the other hand, is a **subjective feeling** - a sense of emotional distress when social connections and relationships **do not meet a person's needs**.

It is important to note that someone can be socially isolated but not feel lonely. Equally, someone can feel lonely even when they are surrounded by people.

The challenge

Social isolation and loneliness are significant challenges for older people in England. Both can have **serious health consequences**, including increased risks of [depression](#), [cognitive decline](#), and [physical health issues](#).

In England, [270,000 people aged 65+ go a week without speaking](#) to a friend or family member and in the UK overall, around [a million older people report feeling lonely often](#). **In Torbay, almost a third of over 65's live alone** (11,521 people).

[Efforts to tackle loneliness](#) include **community connection programs**, **befriending**, **peer support services** and **digital inclusion initiatives** to help older people stay connected and

engaged with their communities. Collectively, these types of initiatives can help to **improve the physical, mental, cognitive and social wellbeing of older people**.



Community building

[Torbay Communities' Community Builders](#) focus on connecting people and places to **strengthen communities and reduce social isolation**. They use an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which means they **identify local strengths** rather than just addressing problems.

What do they do?

- Help people **engage with their neighbourhoods** and communities.
- **Connect individuals** with like-minded people, groups, and organisations.
- Encourage **community-led initiatives**, from coffee mornings to IT support groups.
- **Empower residents to lead change** in their communities
- Help people to **discover their skills and aspirations**
- Support **intergenerational activities** and connections

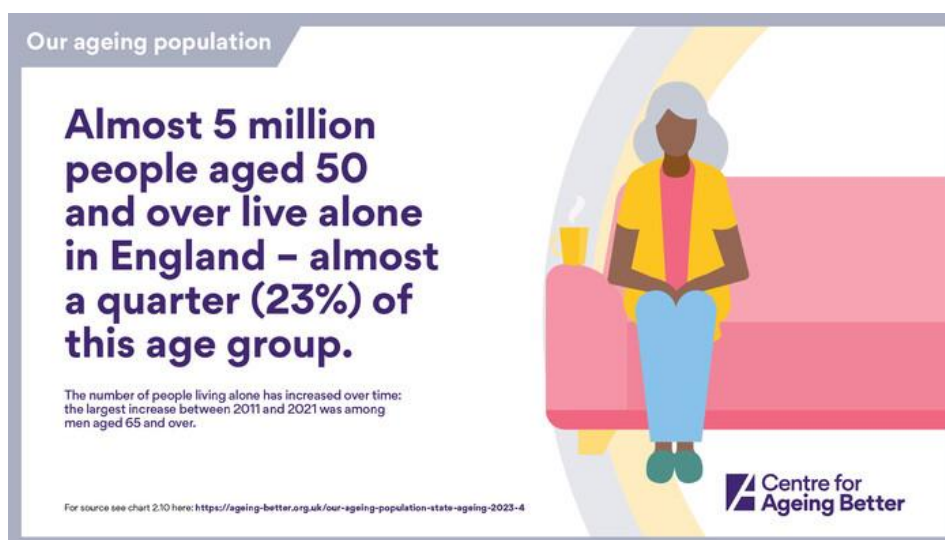
Wellbeing coordinators

[Age UK Torbay](#) works closely with the [Torbay Community Helpline](#) to provide a **wide range of support and advice for over 50s**. As part of this, Age UK Torbay coordinate a **volunteer-led befriending service** and provide regular [one-to-one support and companionship](#) in the home, tailored to the needs of residents.



The breadth of support provided by Age UK Torbay **helps to reduce social isolation and loneliness across the Bay**. Other common ways in which the team are providing support for older people include:

- Support to address housing issues
- Confidence and motivation building
- Support for mental health needs



Intergenerational connections

Intergenerational social connections and activities play a crucial role in [reducing ageism](#) and strengthening community support networks, and can help to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older people, leading to [improved health and wellbeing](#).

Local examples:

[Orchard Forest School](#) provide **opportunities for older adults to socialise and connect** via:

- Weekly **‘Wednesday Warriors’** sessions (adults only)
- Once a month **‘Intergenerational sessions’** (children, their carers’ and older adults)



Other intergenerational initiatives exist across the bay - **Erith House care home** host a **‘Mummies and Me’** group once a fortnight. Residents get to spend time, do activities and play with mothers and their babies.

Erith House care home manager Sam Vincent said the following about the initiative:

“Having the babies and the mums come into Erith House has brought much happiness and joy to those living in the community. They love to play, talk about the days when their children were young and get to know the mums.

It came about after a meeting we had around how we can get ourselves to be seen and help beyond the walls of Erith. We brainstormed and tried to think of all areas that we may not usually have anything to do with. We reached out to ‘Mummies and Me’ and it went from there. We weren’t sure how it was going to go, how it would work and what they would do. But after the first day of them visiting all those that attended wanted them to come back.

It is something that people living here really look forward to now. Some bring stuffed toys down from their bedrooms for the babies. The joy it brings is amazing.”

Community support and information

Access to timely community support and information is vital to reduce social isolation, maintain independence, and improve the health and quality of life of older people. As with any age group, the needs of older people are diverse and this requires a holistic and varied approach to support residents to remain healthy into later life.

Older people may seek advice and support from a range of people including friends, family, peers, colleagues and other professionals and organisations. Understanding that there is **no one size fits all approach to addressing people's information and support needs** is key. Some people may be highly digitally literate and prefer to access information online, whereas others may want to speak to someone directly.

Support across Torbay

There are range of organisations and resources available to help Torbay residents access information and support. For example, [Torbay Together](#) (managed by Torbay Communities) is an online portal where you can **find out what's on in your community, access volunteer opportunities and exchange skills in the 'timebank'**.

As highlighted earlier in this report, the Torbay Communities '[Community Builders](#)' also help to **connect residents with like-minded people, groups or organisations** across the Bay.



[Age UK Torbay](#) also provide a breadth of advice, companionship and support for people over 50 in Torbay.

[Healthwatch Torbay](#) are the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Torbay. Their website links to a breadth of [information on services](#) and they provide a **mechanism for residents to provide feedback to improve services**.

healthwatch
in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

Engaging Communities South West also coordinate the running of the [Paignton Community Hub](#), which offers a wide range of support, advice and signposting to other services.

Engaging
Communities
South West

Paignton
Community
Hub

The [Torbay Community Helpline](#) continues to be another key source of support and information for residents of Torbay. The Helpline was originally set up one week before the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 to support vulnerable people across the Bay. The Helpline was so successful that it continues to be funded and helps people access a wide range of support and services.



Finally, the [Torbay Council Adult Social Care webpages](#) provide a wide range of information on adult social care and support available for adults in Torbay.

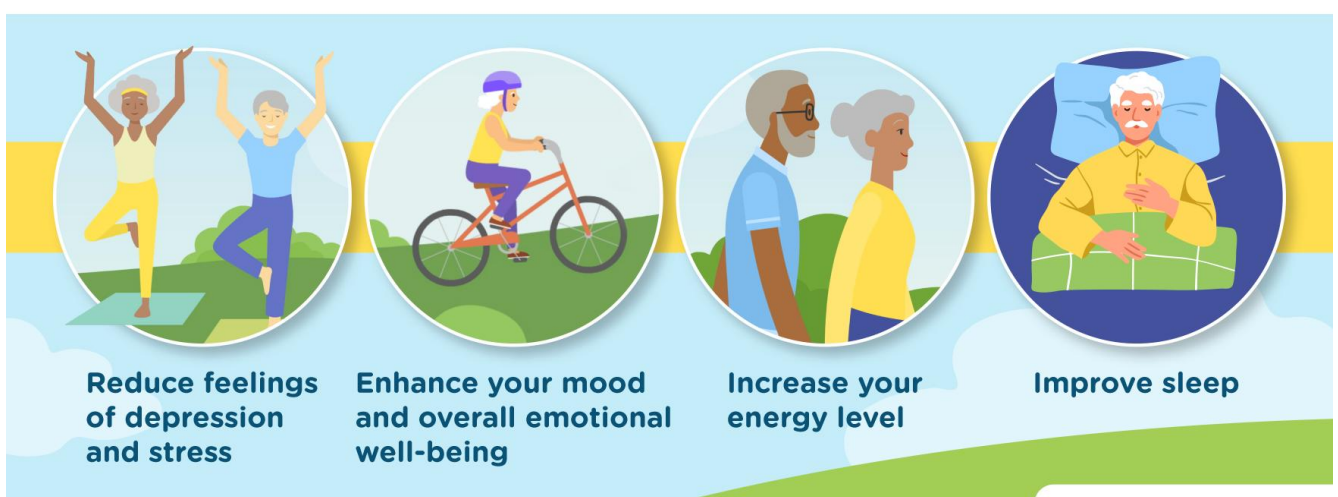
Preventing ill health

Ageing is not something that happens after you turn 50 (or any other arbitrary age threshold, for that matter). Ageing is a process that starts the moment we are born and continues throughout life. The decisions we make during our early years have **lasting impacts on our health and wellbeing in later life**. This is why it is so important that we do all we can to strengthen and maintain our health throughout life.

Staying physically and mentally active is crucial to maintain our health and wellbeing. Some of the ways in which physical activity can benefit our mental health are summarised below.

The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise and Physical Activity

Have you been feeling down lately? Try exercising to help improve your mood! Exercise can:



To learn more about the benefits of exercise visit www.nia.nih.gov/exercise.



The Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust website offers a wide range of [information and advice on healthy ageing](#). Their webpages contain useful links to other organisations whose role is to support residents to be healthy and active, including **Active Devon** and **Active Lives Torbay**.

[Active Devon](#) works with partners and physical activity providers to encourage people to move more, including via [Torbay on the Move](#).

Active Devon's '[Movement in Later Life](#)' web pages link to advice and guidance on how to help older people to increase the amount of physical activity in their daily lives.

The overarching goals of Active Devon's Movement in Later Life work are to "promote physical activity and movement and how it can **prevent, manage and reduce frailty, falls, dementia and other long term health conditions**, as well as tackle isolation and inequalities".



Live Longer Better

In Torbay and South Devon, the [Live Longer Better](#) (LLB) programme is funded by NHS Devon and Torbay Council and coordinated by Torbay Communities. The Torbay Assembly [Active Lives web pages](#) link to four LLB courses, three are aimed at older people themselves and one is aimed at those supporting older people.



The courses aim to help older people to **stay active, maintain their fitness, relax, eat well, sleep well, think well and live with purpose** – in a way that fits with their lifestyle and ambitions.

- **Online Peer Learning:** a 12-part course. Learning is self-directed but you will have opportunities to share learning with a small group of peers. You can choose when to begin each module and take as much time as you wish exploring each theme.
- **Online Coached Course:** a 10-part course guided by a wellbeing coach. You will share learning with a supportive group as you progress. You can choose when to begin each module and take as much time as you wish exploring each theme.
- **In-Person Group Learning:** an 8-part group-based course based in Brixham, Paignton or Torquay for those who can commit to attending half a day, once a week for 8-weeks.
- **Online Professional Development Training:** a 12-part course supported by in-person group sessions for anyone who works or volunteers with older people and wants to become more confident in helping them to look after their wellbeing and motivate them to lead active, purposeful lives.

Healthy Ageing Partnership

The *South Devon and Torbay Healthy Ageing Partnership* brings together NHS partners and community organisations to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for older people.

The Partnerships agenda focuses on **Policy** (Age Friendly), **Prevention** (Live Longer Better) and **Pathways** (health and care provision).

Falls prevention

Falls Management Exercises for Older Adults (FaME) programme

- Exercise programme to improve strength, stability and balance.
- Once-a-week, small group classes (max 24 weeks) usually held in community venues
- Delivered by specialist qualified instructors
- Runs across Torbay and South Devon, led by the NHS trust
- See [FaME - Patient Information Leaflet](#) for more information.

Other local sources of support



Your Health Torbay

- Our 'healthy behaviours' service for Torbay residents, commissioned by Torbay Council
- Provide support to lose weight, quit smoking, or simply improve your overall health
- Team of professionals' work with you to create a tailored plan that

suits your unique needs and lifestyle

- See [Your Health Torbay](#) for more information.



Good Boost - offer personalised, therapeutic, instructor-led exercise classes:

- **Torbay Leisure Centre** – coffee mornings (Tuesdays 11am) and pay-as-you-go swimming pool-based exercise classes (Tuesdays and Thursdays 12pm, £5 per session)
- **Riveria International Centre** - pay-as-you-go sports hall-based exercise classes (Tuesdays and Fridays 1pm, £5 per session) – also offer swimming pool-based exercise classes from September
- See [Good Boost](#) for more information.

A guide to healthy ageing

NHS England and Age UK have produced a '[Practical guide to healthy ageing](#)'. This contains advice covering a wide range of areas.

The advice in this booklet will help improve the health and general fitness of people of any age, but it is written to be particularly relevant for people who are around 70 years or older.



Improving digital access

The digital world remains a challenge for many people, particularly those who face other structural disadvantages, such as poverty or lower educational qualifications.

The shift to predominantly digital access to healthcare services risks exacerbating inequalities for older people - [one in three \(31%\) over 60s say life is harder than five years ago because more services are now online.](#)

The Centre for Ageing Better estimate that around half of people aged over 75 have the basic digital skills needed to operate online (see image).

To address some of these challenges, the UK government published a [Digital Inclusion Action Plan](#) earlier this year. Older people are a key target group highlighted within the action plan as being **more at risk of digital exclusion**.

The action plan focuses on four action areas:

- open up opportunities through skills
- tackle data and device poverty
- break down barriers to digital services
- build confidence

Digital Health Devon

Digital Health
Devon

In Devon and Torbay, Healthwatch and Engaging Communities South West developed the [Digital Health Devon](#) website, which hosts a range of online resources showing how to use the internet to access local health, social care and wellbeing services.

Digital Health Devon was created to support residents to navigate the increasing range of digital services provided by local health social care and wellbeing providers.

They offer advice and guidance on things like online appointment-booking systems, online prescription-ordering and online consultation services. The website contains beginner, intermediate and advanced step-by-step screenshot guides depending on your needs, and offers printable versions as well as 'how to' [YouTube videos](#) to make the guides easier to follow.

Strengthening volunteer networks

Older people are the **backbone of the UK's volunteer workforce** - many engage in formal and informal volunteer roles nationally. Older people often serve as mentors, trustees, and event coordinators, bringing **experience and wisdom** to voluntary roles.

Crucially, volunteering not only benefits wider society, it also has [significant health and wellbeing benefits for volunteers](#) themselves.

Organisations like Age UK **rely on older volunteers** to support initiatives that benefit vulnerable groups.

Age UK Torbay offers [local volunteering opportunities](#), including befriending and one-to-one support.

Charities, local businesses, health services and local authorities, can all support older people to volunteer by creating **accessible, inclusive, and rewarding opportunities**. Ways in which this can be done include:

1. Promoting awareness and accessibility

- **Simplify application processes** to remove barriers
- Provide **clear information** on available roles through community centres, libraries, and local media
- Offer **flexible volunteering options** that accommodate different levels of mobility and availability

2. Providing training and support

- Offer **skills training** to help older adults feel confident in their roles
- Develop **mentorship programmes** where experienced volunteers guide newcomers
- Provide **transport assistance** for those who may struggle to reach volunteering locations

The [‘Torbay Together’](#) community hub is a way for people to connect by finding out what's on in their community, accessing volunteer opportunities and exchanging skills in a timebank.



Supporting unpaid carers

Many older people provide vital unpaid care for family members, friends, or neighbours. This includes supporting spouses with health conditions, caring for grandchildren, or assisting relatives with disabilities. Their contributions **reduce pressure on formal care services** and help maintain family and community stability.

The 2021 Census showed just **over 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay**, this equates to 1 in 9 of the population aged over 5 years old. Of these, 5,185 provided 50 hours or more of unpaid care per week.

Rates of unpaid care are higher in Torbay than England across all age groups.

However, **the majority (9,636) of unpaid carers in Torbay are aged 50 and over** ([JSNA – p170](#)).

Crucially, providing unpaid care can have **negative impacts on carers health and wellbeing**, social contact and ability to do things they enjoy ([JSNA – p175](#)). Many unpaid carers in Torbay report experiencing **financial difficulties** because of their role and face **challenges in accessing information and advice**.

What support is available?

- The [Torbay Carers Service](#) webpages provide **information and advice for carers** and signpost to specific support including how to access universal services and how to obtain a [Carers Assessment](#) to identify additional needs.
- [Carers Aid Torbay](#) also provide a **range of practical and emotional support services** to ease the stresses of unpaid Carers across the Bay.
- Engagement with carers informed the development of a [Torbay Carers' Strategy 2024-2027](#) and associated priorities for action. It is crucial that this agenda is supported.



Supporting older people into employment

Employment is important for older people as it provides **financial stability, social engagement, and a sense of purpose**, helping to maintain mental and physical wellbeing. Staying in work also allows older people to **share their experience, contribute to the economy, and remain active members of society**.

However, several [barriers to employment](#) may exist for older people, including [age discrimination](#), a lack of flexible work options, and [difficulties in re-entering the workforce](#).

In addition, **health concerns and caregiving responsibilities** can make full-time work difficult, yet part-time or flexible roles are not always available.

Why this is a problem

- **Economic impact:** Many older people struggle financially due to [early retirement or redundancy](#), contributing to [pension insecurity](#).

- **Loss of experience:** the workforce misses out on **valuable skills and expertise** that older employees bring.
- **Social isolation:** unemployment can lead to **reduced social engagement**, affecting mental health and wellbeing.

What can be done?

- **Age-Friendly workplaces:** employers can adopt [flexible working policies](#) and provide [training opportunities](#) to support older workers.
- **Combat ageism:** raising awareness and challenging ageism to support more inclusive workplaces.
- **Support career transitions:** programs like [Midlife MOT's](#) help older workers plan for career changes and financial stability.

The Department for Work and Pensions provides a [range of advice and support for older workers](#). The Centre for Ageing Better also links to a range of [resources](#), including [guidance for employers](#).

Local support

I Can Do That Torquay:

- A non-profit organisation that provides advice and 1:1 support for mental health and wellbeing, confidence-building, career advice, employability skills and managing debt

Adult Training - Eat That Frog

- Multiply Torbay - Free adult maths tuition
- Focus Forward - 1:1 mentoring for those aged 25 - 64 and not in work within
- National Careers Service - Free, impartial careers advice for adults



Spotlight on housing

Torbay, along with many other parts of the UK, faces significant [challenges relating to housing](#). [Older people face additional housing challenges](#) which can impact their **health, independence, and quality of life**.

Some key issues include:

- **Lack of accessible housing:** if homes are not adapted for mobility needs, it can be difficult for older people to live independently
- **Poor-quality housing:** cold, damp, or poorly maintained homes can worsen health conditions and increase pressure on the NHS
- **Limited housing options:** a shortage of suitable retirement

housing can leave many older adults in homes that no longer meet their needs

- **Financial strain:** rising housing and energy costs make it harder for older people to afford safe and comfortable living conditions
- **Challenges in private renting:** older renters may face insecurity, high costs, and poor housing conditions, with fewer protections compared to homeowners

To tackle some of these issues, the Torbay [Housing Strategy 2023-2030](#) has three overarching priorities to **improve housing supply, quality and support**.



Torbay strategy for housing in later life

In 2020, in-depth research with our community helped begin to inform development of a **Torbay Strategy for**

Housing in Later Life. A key message from this work was that many people seek to remain in their own homes as they age, but that there is also an **appetite to move to more suitable accommodation** providing that it is

located near to amenities and transport and is of high quality. Whilst some people wish to live in housing specifically for older people, others do not.

The research highlighted that the housing offer for later life in Torbay was skewed towards traditional social housing sheltered schemes and private sector leasehold schemes. There was a lack of age-suitable housing and innovative housing with care options adapted/adaptable for later life.

Intergenerational living

Social and economic factors, the differential access to housing between generations and the need for younger people to move for work and study has [increased intergenerational segregation](#).

Attractive retirement areas such as Torbay, where employment and study opportunities for younger people are more limited, may be particularly affected.

Torbay Council seeks to encourage developers/designers/scheme managers to **actively promote opportunities for intergenerational engagement**. This could be by co-locating Early Years facilities and older people's housing in proximity, ensuring communal spaces and gardens cater to intergenerational activity and developing links with relevant agencies/projects in their management of schemes.

[Intergenerational housing](#) is purposely designed and managed to provide a safe living space for people of different ages to interact, connect and develop

meaningful relationships. Common features include:

- Enables people of different ages to live side-by-side, **share resources, develop relationships and support each other**
- Fosters programs, policies, and practices that **promote interaction, cooperation, and knowledge exchange** between residents of different generations
- Provides adequately for the safety, health, education and necessities of life for people of all ages
- Has **private spaces and communal areas intended for collective use**

There are various models, including combining older people and students, older people with young parents, and cohousing.

[Evidence suggests](#) there are clear benefits in housing where elements of support are required by residents of one or both generations, as complementary skills/experience can be drawn upon.

Adapting, moving and downsizing

Many older adults live in homes that may **no longer suit their mobility needs**, making adaptations such as stairlifts, grab rails, and accessible bathrooms (see below) essential for maintaining their quality of life.

For others, downsizing to a smaller, more manageable home can **reduce financial strain, ease maintenance burdens, and provide better access to community resources**. Moving to age-friendly housing can also help **combat social isolation** by placing older adults in environments where they can engage with others and receive necessary support.



Ensuring that older people have access to **guidance, financial assistance, and practical help** in making these transitions allows them to live comfortably and securely as they age. Information and advice material should highlight that moving to more suitable accommodation **does not constitute a reduction in independence or ‘giving in’ to ageing**.

Community spaces

Age-friendly community spaces are essential to **promote accessibility, inclusion, and wellbeing** among older adults. Thoughtfully designed environments **encourage social interaction, physical activity, and a sense of belonging**.

For example, **careful positioning of [Age Friendly community benches](#)** plays a key role by offering resting points that make outdoor spaces more accessible, encouraging active travel and enabling more older people to move freely and comfortably. Linked to this, are considerations like **suitable path surfaces, pavements, ramps, dropped kerbs, crossings, handrails, shelters, accessible public toilets and clearer signage**.

Similarly, installing **level access to parks, gardens and green spaces** increases accessibility and opportunities for relaxation, exercise, and social gatherings, helping older people to remain engaged in their communities. Moreover, connecting to

Age UK Torbay wellbeing coordinators also provide support for older people across the Bay who are facing challenges around housing and who are at risk of eviction. Nationally, Age UK provide information to help older people make decision on [adapting versus downsizing](#) their homes.

nature and accessing green spaces provides [mental and physical health benefits](#) for older people.

When built with accessibility in mind, community spaces **support mobility and encourage independence, creating healthier, more vibrant communities** for all.

Age Friendly Watcombe

Age Friendly Watcombe involved a series of 15 in-person community engagement events and a public survey during 2022 to understand residents’ perspectives on ways to make the community more Age Friendly and to prioritise actions.

The **prioritisation exercise identified a range of actions** across the following areas:

- Pavements, crossing and routes
- Getting to public transport
- Traffic and parking
- Seating and resting spots
- Accessing local services and activities

Transport systems are essential for the health and wellbeing of older people. Reliable and accessible transport enables older people to maintain an active lifestyle and engage with their communities, **promoting independence and reducing social isolation.** Transport also enables access to healthcare, employment and essential services, which is particularly important for those with mobility challenges or living in rural areas.

However, older people may face difficulties such as limited public transport options, high costs, and physical barriers like inaccessible bus stops and train stations and a lack of safe active travel routes. [According to Age UK](#), many older adults struggle with transport to health services, particularly those in poor health or with lower incomes, making it harder to attend medical appointments and maintain wellbeing.

The UK Government also highlights that [transport plays a crucial role in social inclusion](#), with limited access leading to increased isolation and poorer health outcomes. Strategies to address these challenges at a local and regional level include **improving public transport accessibility and affordability**, improving **pedestrian and cycling/wheeling infrastructure**, and **promoting community transport schemes** tailored to older people's needs.

Encouraging active travel, such as walking, wheeling and cycling, can also provide health benefits while reducing reliance on cars. Local decision-making and investment in **age-friendly transport policies can significantly enhance mobility and wellbeing for older adults**, fostering [more inclusive communities](#).



Safe, accessible and affordable

Older people may need to use public transport more frequently to visit family and friends and access services and amenities. **Safe, accessible and affordable transport options are often essential to maintain**

independence at home. Strengthening public transport infrastructure and connections between and within communities is therefore crucial.

Safety

Road safety is a priority in terms of making Torbay Age Friendly. **Reducing speed limits and enhancing pedestrian and cycling/wheeling infrastructure** will reduce air and noise pollution, severity of collisions, and make the road environment more inclusive.

Inclusive design

Modernisation and maintenance of public transport infrastructure should consider ‘[inclusive mobility](#)’ requirements. Good inclusive design of public transport, as well as the places we live and work, will benefit all.

For instance, **enabling wheelers to independently access public transport** also makes it accessible for more older people and young children and those using pushchairs. Interventions like these can therefore align to both ‘[Child Friendly](#)’ and Age Friendly agendas.

Affordability

Transport needs to be affordable as well as accessible. There are various strategies that can help to address

transport poverty and enable older adults to stay connected and travel for healthcare, work and daily activities.

Travel to healthcare services

In England, around [1.5 million of those 65 and over find it difficult to travel to hospital](#), whilst 630,000 find it difficult or very difficult to travel to their GP. Concerningly, less than half of people over 80 find it easy to travel to a hospital.

Collaboration between healthcare services and transport and planning departments ensures transport issues are an integral part of service provision and service redesign. It is important that the needs and voices of older adults inform the design of transport plans. Ultimately, this will [increase access to healthcare services](#).

Additionally there is support available locally via centrally funded patient transport programmes. For example, [NHS Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services \(NEPTS\)](#), including those provided by [Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust](#), provide free transport to secondary care services in certain circumstances (e.g., specific medical needs). Torbay also offers a paid-for [Hospital Car Service](#) which is supported by volunteer drivers.

Another source of support is via the [Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme \(HTCS\)](#). HTCS enables residents to claim a refund of reasonable travel costs for specialist NHS care. People who are eligible for the HTCS include those who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and those who qualify for the NHS Low-Income Scheme or under

other specified criteria. See this localised [Torbay Patient Information Sheet](#) for more information.

Community transport

Unlike conventional public transport, which operates on fixed routes and schedules, community transport is designed to be **flexible, accessible, and tailored** to the needs of specific groups, such as older adults, people with disabilities, or those in [rural areas](#).

Community transport schemes are often **not-for-profit** and run by charities or volunteer organisations, ensuring affordability and inclusivity. They typically provide **door-to-door and minibus services**, helping individuals reach essential destinations like medical appointments, social activities, and shopping trips, which standard public transport may not always accommodate.

Crucially, community transport schemes help to ensure [affordability and inclusivity](#) while fostering a sense of connection and support for those who might otherwise feel cut off from society.

the [Torbay Council Disability Information Service Transport Services webpage](#) signposts to community transport services where these are available.