



What are the implications of a greying UK countryside?

The contribution of older rural residents is not always recognised nor are their changing needs always catered for by either the public or private sectors.

What are the research findings?

Median age is rising faster in rural areas:

- Over a quarter of over 65s in England live in rural areas.
- Two thirds of over 75 year olds are women and half of them live alone.
- There may be tension between in-migrants and established residents and stark differences in the economic situation of different groups.
- On average rural residents live longer and also work longer and more flexibly than urban dwellers.

Older people:

- Move to the countryside, sometimes for retirement, more often pre-retirement, have skills and capital and many start new businesses.
- Make an important contribution via volunteering/informal networking.
- May be isolated when they can no longer drive or their partner dies.
- May suffer loneliness/depression.
- Are more likely to suffer poverty, particularly if living in remote areas.
- May be excluded by the increasing use of the internet to deliver services due to rural broadband quality and limited uptake of technology.
- May be disadvantaged by services concentrated in urban locations.

What are the policy implications?

- The economic activity and spending of older people is important to rural areas and should not be overlooked.
- There are business opportunities in providing healthy leisure activities to older rural residents and visitors.
- Older consumers tend to do more shopping locally and retailers should be taking their needs into account.
- Older people may be helped to overcome isolation and maintain independence by minor adaptations to housing, access to public transport and low-level support services such as lunch clubs, help with odd jobs, gardening schemes etc.
- Older people often want to continue working flexibly and engage in other activities such as lifelong learning and should be enabled to do this.
- Rural housing provision, location and design should take more account of older people's needs.
- Additional costs of servicing older people in rural areas need to be recognised in government funding formulae.

Further information:

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CRE Policy Brief No 17

April 2014