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Towards a Comprehensive Active Ageing Approach in the EU and Beyond

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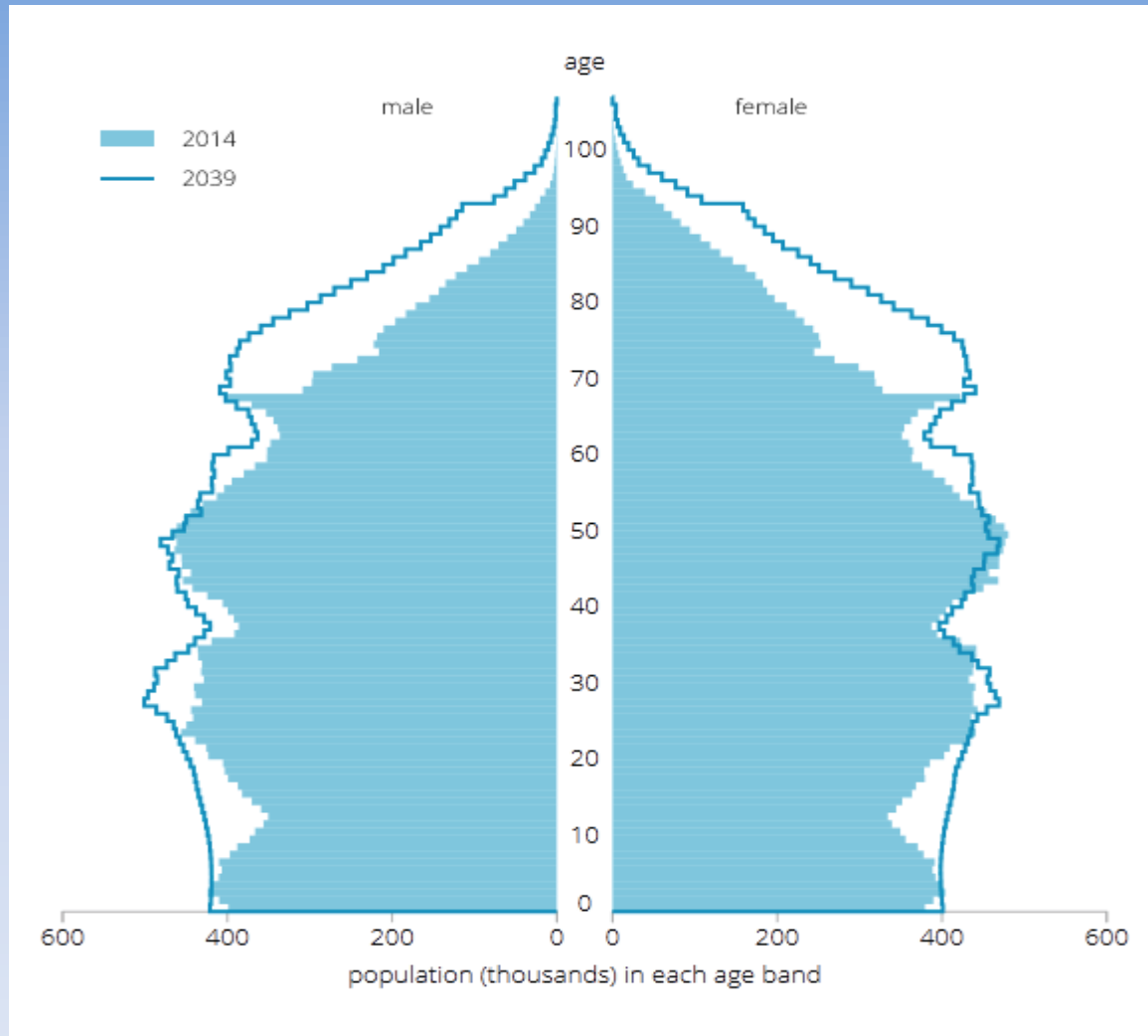
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Outline

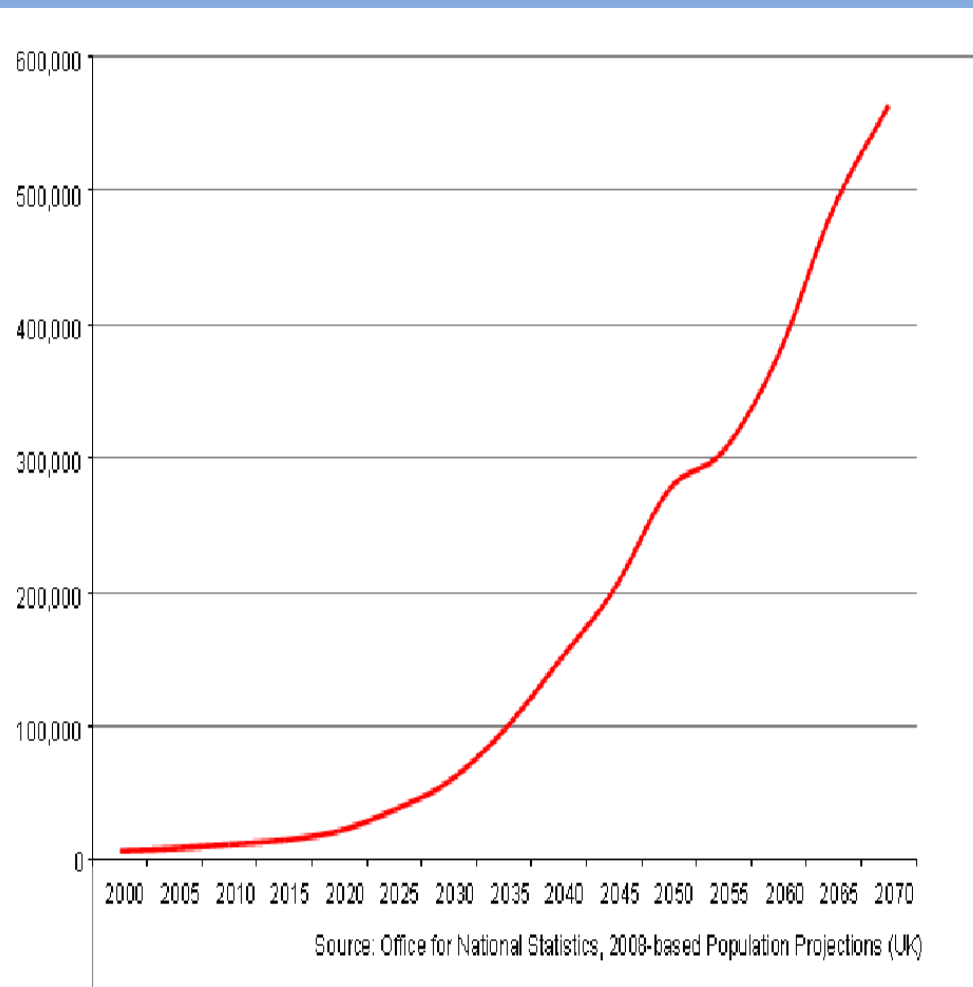
- Demographic changes in the UK and beyond.
- Attitudes towards ageing.
- Ageing and policy challenges.
- Reframing ageing.
- Active ageing, successful ageing and the life course.

UK Population Projections



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2016

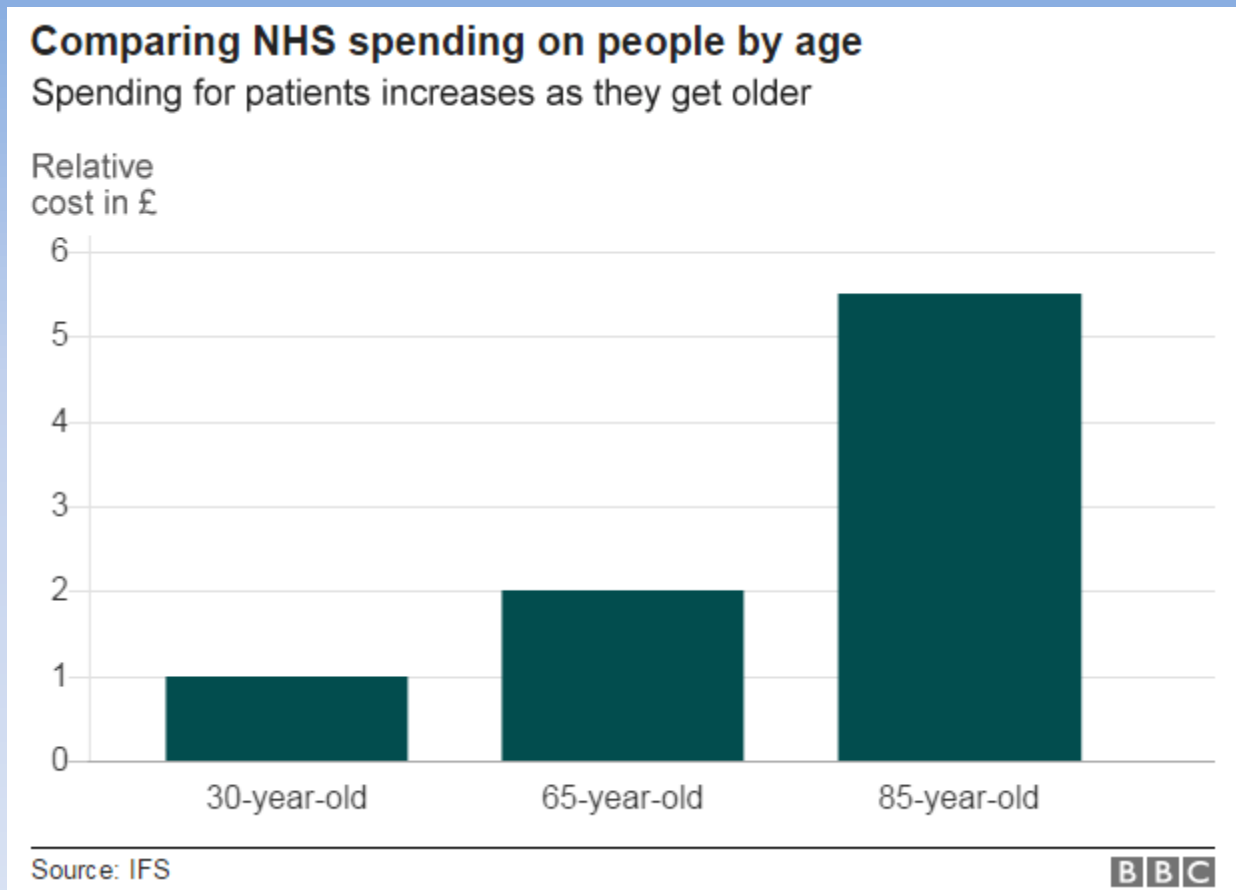
Numbers and Projections of Centenarians, UK - 2000-2065



Key Policy Challenges – Social Care

- Expenditure on community-based care is projected to rise more rapidly than expenditure on residential care (203% as against 116%) over the period 2015 to 2035 in the UK (Wittenburg and Hu, 2015).
- Demand for family and other unpaid care is similarly expected to increase. Between 2015 and 2035, the number of people aged 65 and over who require unpaid care will grow by more than one million in the UK (Wittenburg and Hu, 2015).

Key Policy Challenges – Health Care



Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2017

Key Policy Challenges - Pensions

- The increasing number of older people has led to concerns about the sustainability of pension schemes and a so-called 'pension crisis' (Foster and Heneghan, 2018; Grady, 2016).
- There are concerns people aren't saving enough - in the UK it has been estimated that approximately 11 million working age individuals will receive lower retirement incomes compared to the level they expect (DWP, 2013).
- These trends have led to a number of policy responses including increasing pension ages, numbers of years contributions required for the full-state pension, and the introduction of auto-enrolment.



Attitudes Towards Ageing

Positive

- Decreases in premature death
- Social progress
- Social contribution

Negative

- Demographic time bomb
- Dependency ratios
- Intergenerational conflict

Reframing Ageing

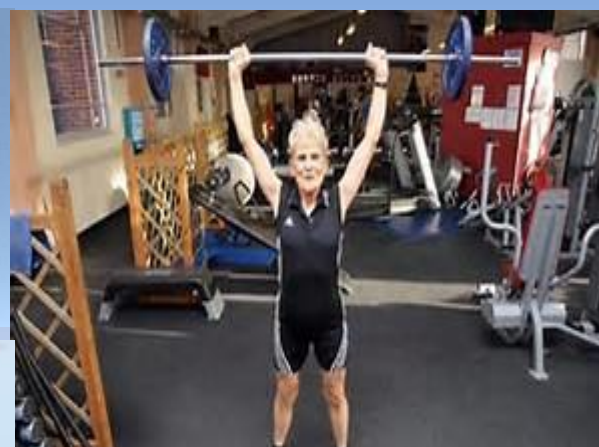
Since its inception, the primary focus of gerontological research has been in decline and loss associated with advanced age (Riley *et al.* 1994) but we need to:

- Replace burden thinking and the deficit approach with active ageing.
- The importance of a life course approach – not seeing each age in isolation.
- There is a need to link social sciences, epidemiology and other disciplines to explore ageing.
- There needs to be a social policy of ageing (not older age).

Ageing is Variable

- Ageing is influenced by intrinsic genetic factors (which are associated with loss of functioning) and also extrinsic environmental factors (including pollution, healthy eating opportunities, smoking education and behaviour and risky behaviours).

Variability in Ageing



Variability in Ageing



The Ageing Process

“At the biological level, ageing results from the impact of the accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage over time. This leads to a gradual decrease in physical and mental capacity, a growing risk of disease, and ultimately, death. But these changes are neither linear nor consistent, and they are only loosely associated with a person’s age in years” (WHO, 2018).



A Life Course Approach to Ageing: Physical Activity and Risk of Diseases

Disease	Effect of physical activity
Heart disease	Reduced risk
Stroke	Reduced risk
Type 2 diabetes	Reduced risk
Colon cancer	Reduced risk
Breast cancer	Reduced risk
Musculoskeletal health	Improvement

Ageing Well – Theories of Ageing

There is wide global variation in the terms used to encapsulate the notion of ‘ageing well’. These include, successful ageing, active ageing, healthy ageing, positive ageing and productive ageing. Each one of these concepts implies a (sometimes subtly) divergent approach to the gains and potential of ageing (Barrett & McGoldrick, 2013).

Theories of Ageing

The emergence of successful and active ageing can be traced back to the activity perspective in the US, during the early 1960s, as the antithesis of disengagement (Foster and Walker, 2015).

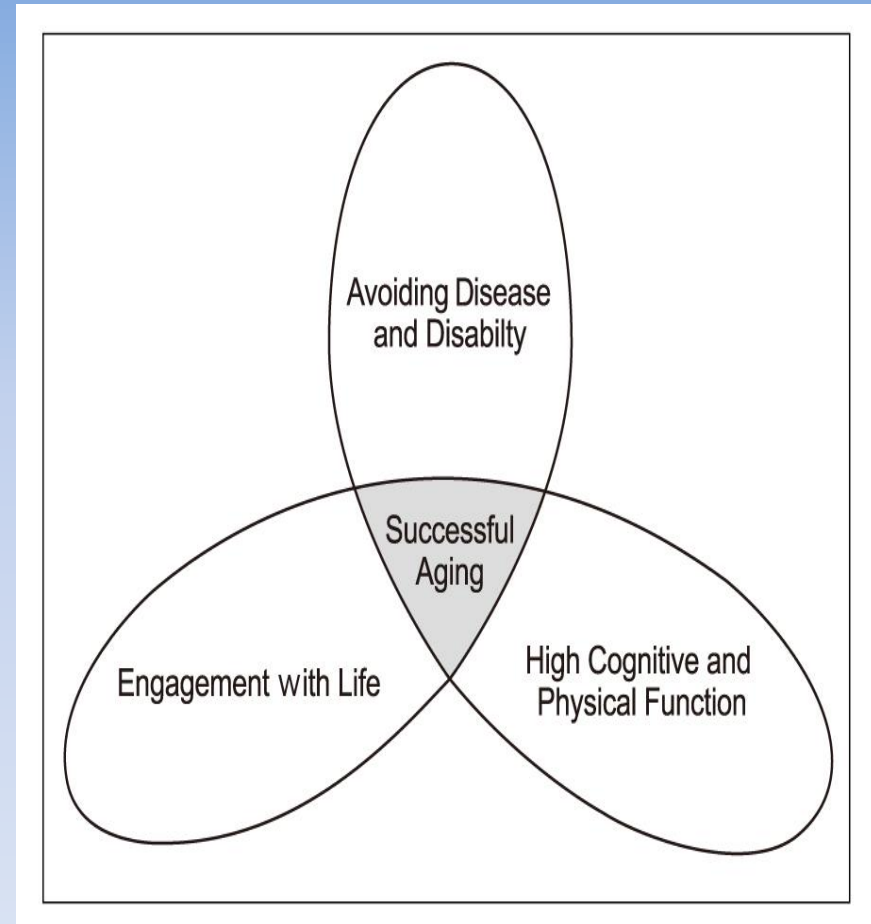
Disengagement theory – Developed by Cumming and Henry (1961), it claimed it is natural and acceptable for older adults to withdraw from society and personal relationships as they age.

Activity theory – Havinghurst (1961) developed this theory as a response to the recently published disengagement theory of aging. Activity theory assumes that, by keeping active old people will remain psychologically and socially fit.

Productive ageing – This focuses on the capacity of individuals to contribute to the production of goods and services, which includes both paid and unpaid work (Bass et al., 1993).

What is Successful Ageing?

- First coined 40 years ago by Butler (1974) successful ageing began to increase in popularity following an article by Rowe and Kahn (1987) where it was argued that ageing and illness are distinct processes.
- Successful ageing presents a view of ageing in which those individual's who age successfully meet the following criteria (1) low probability of disease and disease-related disability, (2) high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and (3) active engagement with life, including high social activity and social relationships.



What is Active Ageing?

“The process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.” Importantly “active” was defined as “continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force” (WHO, 2002, p. 12).



Active Ageing in Practice

- EU policy discourses on active ageing over the last two decades have comprised two contrasting models. The more dominant emphasis has been on a narrow productivist approach focusing on the extending working life. In contrast, there is also a comprehensive approach to active ageing supported by the WHO and UN, as well as some parts of the EC.

Active Ageing Index



Active Ageing Index

The Active Ageing Index (AAI) is a tool to measure the untapped potential of older people for active and healthy ageing across countries. It measures the level to which older people live independent lives, participate in paid employment and social activities as well as their capacity to actively age.

Domains



Employment



Participation in society



Independent, healthy and secure living



Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing

Indicators

1.1	Employment rate 55-59
1.2	Employment rate 60-64
1.3	Employment rate 65-69
1.4	Employment rate 70-74

2.1	Voluntary activities
2.2	Care to children and grandchildren
2.3	Care to older adults
2.4	Political participation

3.1	Physical exercise
3.2	Access to health services
3.3	Independent living
3.4-3.6	Financial security (three indicators)
3.7	Physical safety
3.8	Lifelong learning

4.1	Remaining life expectancy at age 55
4.2	Share of healthy life expectancy at age 55
4.3	Mental well-being
4.4	Use of ICT
4.5	Social connectedness
4.6	Educational attainment

Actual experience of active ageing

Capacity to actively age

A Comprehensive Approach to Active Ageing

Active Ageing should:

- Include all meaningful pursuits that contribute to individual well-being
- Be preventative (a life course approach)
- Encompass all groups
- Fairness between generations
- Provide opportunities
- Empowering
- Respect diversity
- Flexibility

Walker (2002, 2009) and Foster and Walker (2015)

A life Course Approach to Active Ageing

In a number of adult development models, earlier experiences in childhood and their long-term consequences in adjustment and functioning in later life have been emphasized (Block, 1993; Elder & Johnson, 2002; Settersten, 1999).

A life course approach to active ageing includes enabling policy environments and measures: architecture, transport, education, health and social care, working conditions (including anti-discrimination legislation), culture and sport, pensions, community facilities, technology (prosthetics: physical supports, IT) among other policies.

A Life Course Approach to Active Ageing – the Challenges

- Financing policy developments
- Changing behaviour (obesity, smoking and exercise)
- Ageing is unequal
- Intergenerational conflict and political rhetoric
- Neoliberalism

Conclusion

- Dependency is all too often the starting point when focussing on older people.
- There is a need for an inclusive approach to social policy and adult development which embraces comprehensive active ageing. A life course approach needs to be embedded within this.
- A comprehensive concept of active ageing can provide a framework for the development of global, national and local strategies relating to population ageing.

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