

Consultation response

World Health Organization Decade of Healthy Ageing consultation

About this consultation

The Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030) is proposed as a global collaboration led by WHO (World Health Organization) that will bring together governments, international organisations, professionals, academia, the media, the private sector and civil society to improve the lives of older people, their families and the communities they live in. This response lays out Age UK's position on the proposal.

Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement: "This document succeeds in providing a vision and action plan for fostering Healthy Ageing with a focus on older adults"

Agree

Action areas

The zero draft Decade proposal identifies three actions areas:

- develop **age-friendly cities and communities** that foster the abilities of older people;
- deliver **person-centred integrated care for older people** at the level of the community to ensure that older people get the care they need as close as possible to where they live;
- provide older people with access to **long-term care** at the community level so that every older person gets the care and support they need when they cannot take care of themselves.

Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement: "These action areas are the right ones to focus on to foster Healthy Ageing."

Agree

If you think action areas should be deleted or added please comment here

We agree with the three action areas but believe they could go further. We propose the following amendments:

- Age-friendly cities and communities: Develop the action by inserting 'and participation' after 'abilities'

- Person-centred integrated care for older people: Broaden description of person-centred care (p.10-11) to recognise the importance of giving older people choice and control over their health and treatment options
- Long-term care: Develop the action by adding 'high-quality' before 'long-term care'. Delete 'when they cannot take care of themselves' and replace with 'so they can fully enjoy the best possible quality of life, autonomy, independence and dignity'

Activities during the Decade on Healthy Ageing

Choices need to be made about the focus of the activities under each action area. The current focus includes the following:

- the **second half of life**, given the unique issues that arise in older age, and the limited attention this period has received compared with that given to other age cohorts;
- **activities** at local, national, regional and global levels, that are evidence based and **strive to improve the lives of older people, their families and their communities**;
- crafting activities in ways that **overcome**, rather than reinforce, **inequities** linked to individual factors (including gender, ethnicity, level of education, civil status or where a person lives); to avoid widening the gaps and leaving some older people behind;
- **tackling the current challenges** that older people face, **while anticipating the future** for those who will journey into older age.

Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement: "These focuses areas are the right ones to guide future efforts to foster Healthy Ageing and leave no older adult behind."

Agree

If you think focus areas should be deleted or added please comment here

We recommend that the second activity is expanded to highlight the importance of carers, many of whom are older people themselves. The number of older carers is growing rapidly, with one in five people in the UK aged 65 and over caring for somebody. Many older carers report that their caring responsibilities negatively impact on their health and that supporting someone else means they often neglect their own health needs. This group of older people are at particular risk of developing health conditions, both mental and physical, and should therefore be recognised as a key target of the Decade.

We are pleased to see recognition the importance of overcoming inequalities. However, we are concerned that there is no reference to the inequities which older people may face on account of their sexual orientation, disability, or religion. A concerted, joined-up effort is required to reach these older people and if they are not acknowledged within the proposal, we risk leaving them behind.

A Platform for partnering

Achieving change across the world will require a willingness to work together in novel and adaptive ways. The draft proposal presents an outline for a Platform that will be

established to strengthen and expand existing partnerships and alliances with a focus on **four enablers** across the three action areas of the Decade on Healthy Ageing.

These are:

- ensuring that the **voices of older people** are at the heart of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions;
- **nurturing leadership and building capacity** at all levels to take appropriate action that is integrated across sectors;
- **connecting diverse stakeholders** around the world to share and learn from the experience of others;
- catalysing **research and innovation** to identify successful interventions.

Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement: "The "enablers" in the proposal are the most likely to enable Governments and non-State actors to deliver results over the next Decade."

Agree

If you think enablers should be deleted or added please comment here

We agree there should be greater emphasis on how the voices of older people who are at risk of social exclusion can be heard. This includes empowering older people living with a disability, older people from minority groups, older people living in poverty, and older LGBT people. There should also be greater recognition that the experiences of ageing for men and women may differ.

The proposal is also right to identify the need for strong and effective leadership, but misses an opportunity to support older people themselves to become leaders. Older people have skills and experience which will be essential in driving forward the Decade.

Measuring success

Underpinning this work will be an **accountability framework** to measure progress towards the commitments made to the action areas and activities of the Decade of Healthy Ageing. Ten progress indicators, related to the Global Strategy, have already been approved: <https://www.who.int/ageing/commit-action/measuring-progress/en/>.

The following are five additional progress indicators. Please select which of these indicators the Decade should report on, answering 'Yes' if you think the indicator should be included:

Number of countries with capacity to deliver integrated care for older people (ICOPE)

Yes

Number of countries where long-term care is available for older people

Yes

Number of cities or communities that are members of the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

Yes

Number of countries that report data on intrinsic capacity and functional ability of older adults within existing health information systems

Yes

Number of countries that have a published research agenda addressing healthy ageing

Yes

If there are other progress indicators that should be considered, please include below

Alongside the above, we would like to see indicators developed to measure the following:

- Ageism and negative perceptions of older people. This is presented as integral to all action areas so will need to be monitored
- Older people's views and experiences of healthy ageing and the availability and accessibility of health and long-term care services
- Older people's inclusion within global and national level processes

What critical barriers and obstacles to Healthy Ageing, if any, are not sufficiently addressed in the proposal (Maximum 1000 characters)?

The Decade is an exciting opportunity to improve the lives of older people. However, we are concerned that unless resources are provided to back up this initiative it will be difficult to encourage stakeholders globally, regionally, nationally and locally to take forward actions. We also believe there should be milestones included in the document to help drive forward momentum and ensure that actions are carried through.

Furthermore, the document does not mention the key role of the private sector in creating the conditions for healthy ageing and supporting attitudinal change towards growing older.

What would be your main recommendations for improving this document (Maximum 1000 characters)?

The Decade proposal rightly recognises the importance of reducing inequalities in healthy ageing. However, it takes a narrow approach to the individual factors which may lead to older people having unequal access to health and care. There is no reference to inequalities which may occur as a result of an older person's sexual orientation or religion, and minimal information about older people with disabilities.

The proposal additionally focuses on physical health with no reference to older people's mental health. Older people are as likely to develop a mental health problem as any other age group and supporting older people's mental health is as important for well-being and quality of life as improving physical health. The Decade should be used as an opportunity

to break down stigma around mental health and encourage discussion about how to support older people with their mental health.

How can we make this document more relevant for older people, families and communities?

The proposal lays out the role of the *Platform* in allowing stakeholders to connect, providing training, and sharing information about the Decade. It is essential that older people have equal access to this resource and are not prevented from engaging if they do not have internet access. Content which is available on the internet should also be available offline and the Decade should facilitate older people meeting with stakeholders face-to-face where appropriate. Failure to do this risks excluding a large number of non-digital users and entrenching inequalities.

It would also be valuable to create a companion text to this strategy that has older people, families and communities as the main audience and allows the Decade to become more accessible to those who it will most affect.