

Buckinghamshire

Challenging Ageism Toolkit

2025

Recognising signs and effects of
Ageism and how we can make a
difference



Introduction to this toolkit:

Ageism involves stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on age, affecting how we think, feel, and act towards ageing. The Challenging Ageism Toolkit introduces the [Age Without Limits](#) campaign from the Centre for Ageing Better and aims to equip everyone with resources to understand and tackle ageism, change narratives, and promote an inclusive society for all ages.

Inside the toolkit there is information on:

- An introduction to Ageism
- The importance of changing perceptions and actions towards aging
- Population ageing and age-friendly initiatives
- Types and impact of Ageism
- Combating Ageism through communication
- Promoting age-friendly practices and engagement
- Resources and further support

Why the toolkit was developed:

- The Challenging Ageism toolkit has been put together to support individuals and organisations in recognising, addressing, and ultimately reducing ageism within communities and services. It has been developed in response to the growing need for practical resources that empower people to challenge stereotypes, promote inclusion, and ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age.
- You might find this toolkit valuable if you are seeking guidance on how to identify ageist attitudes or practices, whether in your personal life, workplace, or community. It offers structured advice on how to initiate conversations, influence positive change, and create environments where older people's voices are heard and valued.
- Inside, you will find a comprehensive overview of what ageism is, why it matters, and the impact it can have on wellbeing and social participation. The toolkit contains practical tools, real-world scenarios, and a selection of top tips for challenging ageist language, confronting biases, and advocating for age-friendly practices. These tips are designed to be easy to apply and adaptable to different settings, from community groups to professional organisations.
- By using this toolkit, you will gain increased confidence and practical strategies to promote age equality. The result will be more inclusive spaces, improved relationships between generations, and a broader culture of respect and understanding—helping to create a society where people of all ages can thrive.

Who is the toolkit for?

- The Challenging Ageing Toolkit is intended to be used by a wide range of stakeholders who can support and influence healthy ageing

Training is also available which includes group activities and discussion questions to get you thinking collaboratively about noticing, challenging, and changing attitudes towards Ageism. Contact phadmin@buckinghamshire.gov.uk to find out more.

Challenging Ageism Toolkit

Aim

Introduce the [Age Without Limits](#) campaign from the [Centre for Ageing Better](#) to challenge ageism for the benefit of us all as we grow older.

Objectives

Address ageism by changing how we:

- Think
- Feel
- Act towards age and ageing

Help create a society for all ages through changing the narrative around age and ageing

The Toolkit is for everyone, and will:

- Equip you with the resources to tackle ageism
- Help understand the language of ageism and communication in everyday life.
- Help to spread the word

What is ageism?

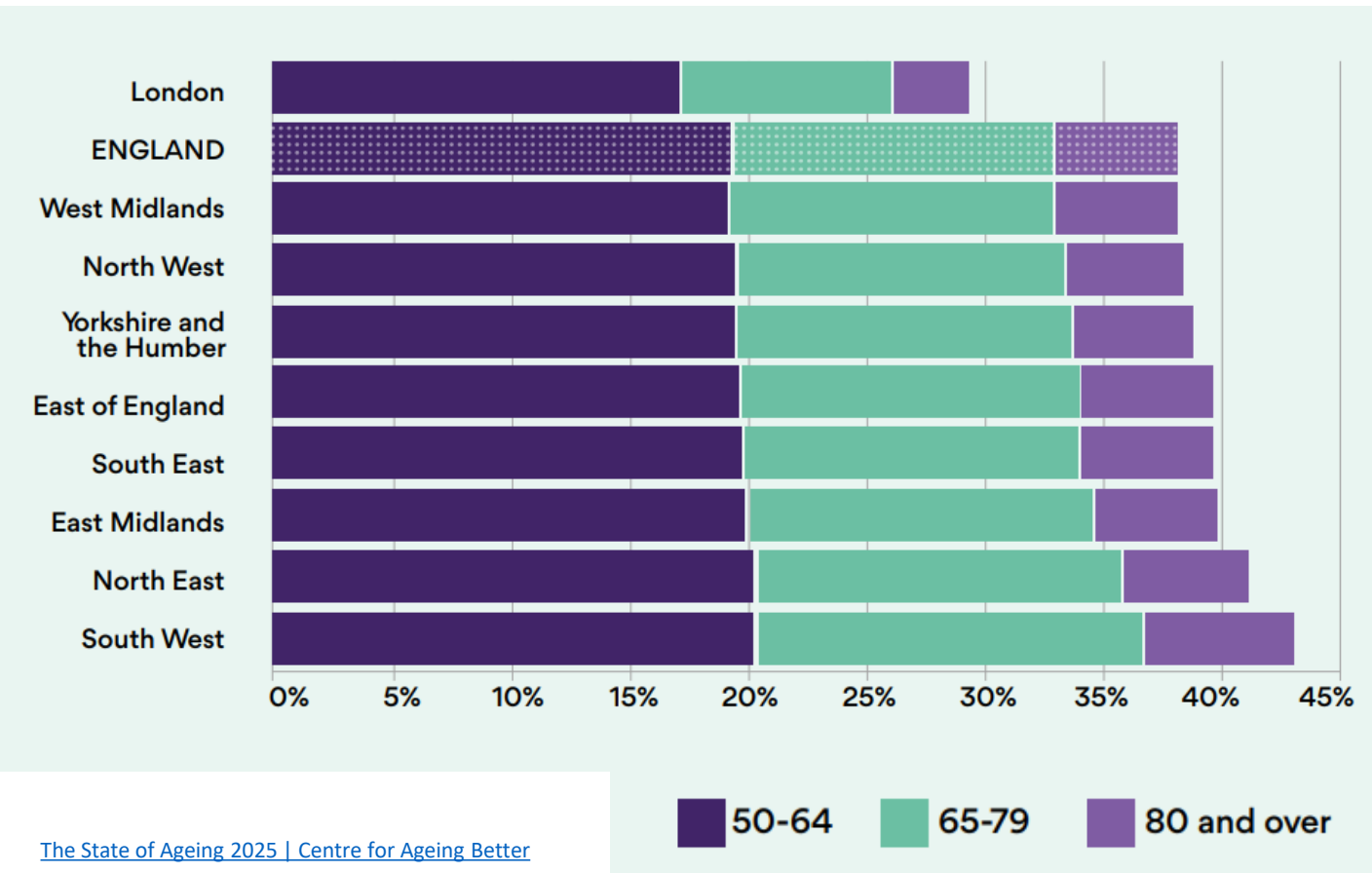


[Ageism video](#)

Our population is ageing

Nationally

Percentage of population aged 50 and over, by age group and region, England, mid-2023



[The State of Ageing 2025](#) | [Centre for Ageing Better](#)

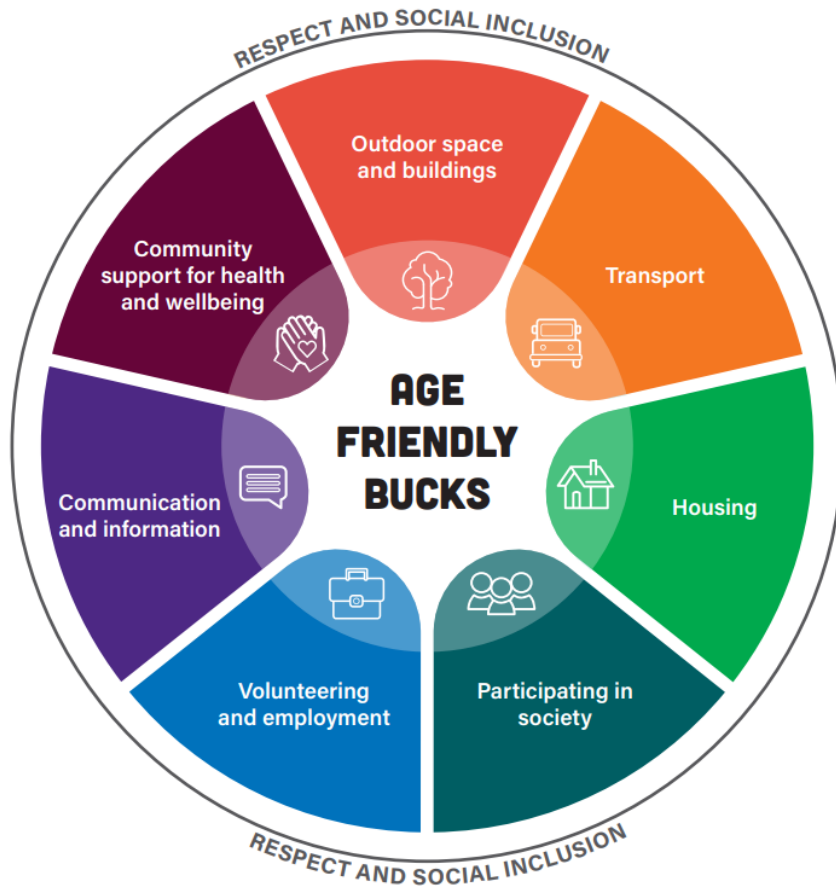
Locally

In Buckinghamshire over the next 20 years, those aged over 65 will increase from being 1 in 5 of our population (2022) to 1 in 4 of our population (2042).

Key message:

- Our oldest population is growing (in numbers and overall population).
- Over 85s are the fastest growing group.
- Rural areas tend to have a larger older population
- The older population is growing more diverse

What's happening to support people to age well?



Local level

[Buckinghamshire Healthy Ageing Strategy](#)

- Buckinghamshire is an age friendly community, supporting residents 40+ to Age Well, taking a preventative approach

National level

[Centre for Ageing Better](#)

- UK network of Age Friendly Communities, supported by research and evidence-based resources
- National campaigns, e.g., [Age Without Limits](#)

International level

[World Health Organisation Age Friendly Communities Framework and Network](#)

- Stimulates and enables cities and communities around the world to become increasingly age-friendly

World Health Organization's definition of ageism

Ageism refers to:

- Stereotypes (how we think)
 - Prejudice (how we feel)
 - Discrimination (how we act)
- towards people (or oneself) based on their age.

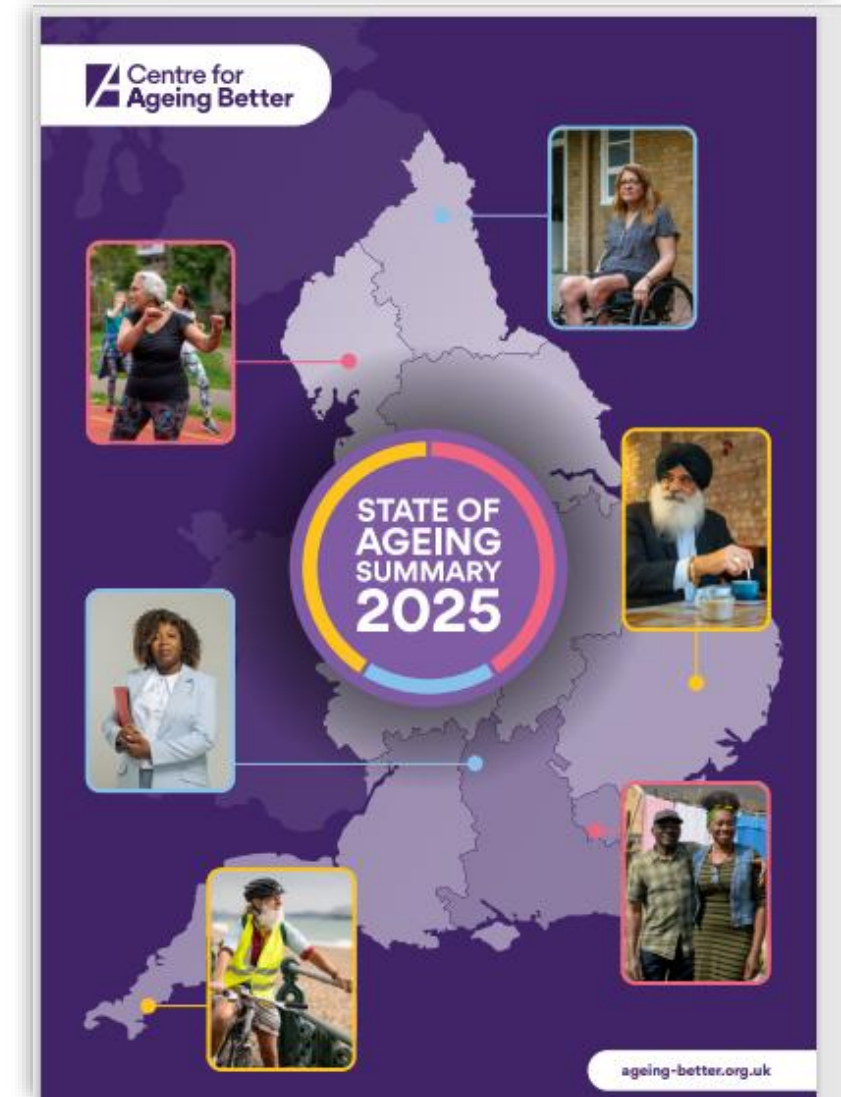
Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

However, ageing and older people are often negatively represented in our society.

Ageism – Who does it affect

Ageism is everywhere in our society; it affects us throughout life

- Centre for Ageing Better reported that in Britain, 1 in 3 of us have experienced Ageism in the UK
- Out of 20 English-speaking countries reviewed, the UK has the most ageist media
- Ageism **intersects and exacerbates other disadvantages**, including those linked to sex, race, and disability
- **Ageism is harmful and costly**, and has a profound effect as people get older. Ageism impacts on:
 - Physical health
 - Mental health
 - Social well-being
 - Economic activity on individuals and society



Main types of ageism

- **Institutional Ageism**
Embedded in laws, policies, or social norms
- **Interpersonal Ageism**
In our everyday conversations between ourselves
- **Self-Directed Ageism**
We limit the things we do due to internalizing ageism.
'I am too old to...? learn, participate in social/physical activities, dress



Too many older people given 'antidepressants instead of therapy'

Just 6.3% of people referred for NHS psychological help are older than 65, shows study



Too often GPs dismiss talking therapies as a way of tackling depression in older people, says paper. Photograph: Adrian Sherratt/Adrian Sherratt (commissioned)

GPs are giving too many older people antidepressants when they are struggling with depression, and should prescribe talking therapies far more often, according to new research.

Facts to challenge common stereotypes and misconceptions



1. Employment and Volunteering

Older workers are the backbone of Britain's public services. 3.4 million key workers are over 50, and 130,000 are over 70.

Office for National Statistics, 2020

Buckinghamshire Council has approximately 65% of workers aged 40 and above (HR).

Volunteering is common in older age groups. Volunteering peaks in the 65-74 age group.

Many over 50s provide unpaid care.

DCMS Community Life Survey, 2020



2. Participation in Society

Despite adverts featuring under 40s, over 50s account for over half of all consumer spending.

They are the top spenders in travel and tourism, food, clothing, household goods, and eating out.

ILC UK, 2019

Young adults (16-24) are three times more likely to experience loneliness than people aged over 65.

Office for National Statistics, 2018

[Challenging-ageism-guide-talking-ageing-older-age.pdf](#)

Facts to challenge common stereotypes and misconceptions



3. Housing

Most of our later lives are spent living independently. In fact, 90% of over 65s live in mainstream, ordinary housing, not care homes or retirement communities.

Based on care home data and estimates of the number of older people who live in specialist housing.



4. Communication and Information

Contrary to media representations of intergenerational conflict, 80% of people believe older adults have a wealth of experience and perspectives to offer society today.

Ageing Better, Reframing Ageing, 2021

Combating ageism

Age-friendly communications principles Dos and Don'ts



What can we do...

1. Move away from frailty, vulnerability, and dependency

Being older doesn't mean you are frail, vulnerable, or dependent.



Could it be...



Older people continue to be active and participate, and contribute to workplaces, communities, and society in various ways.

2. Communicate effectively



Use appropriate terminology

Use respectful, positive, and plain language:

- ✓ Older adult(s)
- ✓ Older person/ people
- ✓ People in later life
- ✓ Use a specific number, e.g., 65 and over
- ✓ Experienced, valued, we, us

Always refer to people by their names.

3. Positive representation – Use realistic imagery



- Show age-positive and diverse images of people from middle to later life. Consider context, e.g. picture of a building, a map, practical information
- Create a visual display to spark intergenerational conversations about age and identity.
- Give older people a voice. Personal stories and experiences can highlight the diversity of people in later life.
- Reflect people's lived experience so that communications connect with people.

4. Accessibility



- Check information is in the right format for the audience
- Keep it clear and easy to read and understand
- Making it easy to find
- Consider supporting words with images
- Consider the format and channels you will use
- Digital – what support can be offered to help access (in person/ clear instructions/videos)
- Not everyone wants or can use a device; what alternatives are in place? Phone number/name of contact
- **What can help:**
- Size of lettering to at least 12 (large print needs to be 16 or above)
- Clear font, sans serif – e.g., Arial or Calibri
- Clear instructions: where, when, and what next?
- Consider background colour

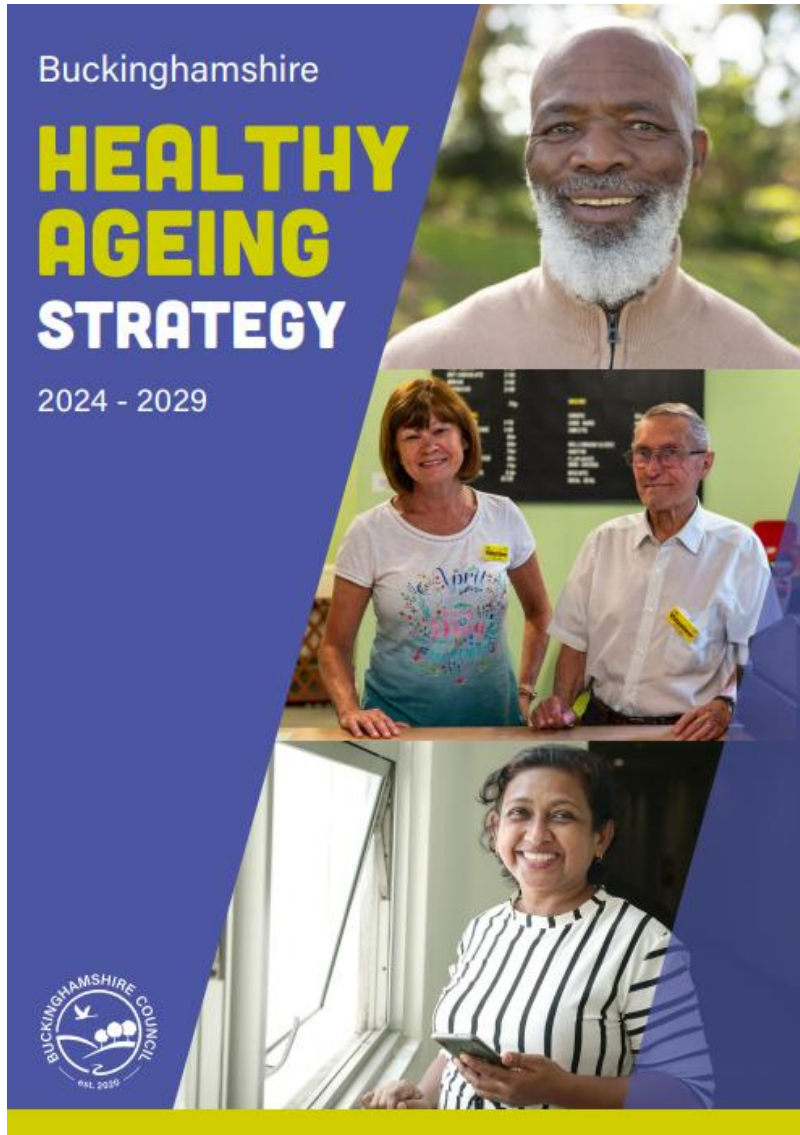
What we should avoid



- x Avoid focusing only on portrayals of later life as a time of frailty or assume a life stage means a person has particular likes or interests, e.g., knitting.
- x Avoid assumptions, stereotypes, jargon, and generalisations.
- x Be mindful of compassionate ageism, a well-intentioned but paternalistic mindset, where older people are portrayed as vulnerable and requiring protection.
- x Don't reinforce ideas of 'successful ageing' being down to an individual's actions. How we age is often more a product of our environments than personal choices
- x Avoid close-ups of wrinkly hands clasped together

Language – avoid terms:

- x Old Age Pensioner (OAP)
- x Pensioner
- x Elderly Patient
- x Frail
- x 'them and us'



Good examples
of age-friendly
communications

Spread the word

Good communication can tackle ageism. Engage through

- Everyday conversations
- Social media
- Online
- Local media

Challenge ageism through

- Effective communication
- Strategic planning
- Community engagement
- Implementing activities
- Research



Notice it



Challenge it



Change it

Resources

Centre for Ageing Better – Reports and Articles

- [Reframing ageing: Public perceptions of ageing, older age and demographic change | Centre for Ageing Better](#). (2021).
 - [Ageism: What's the harm? | Centre for Ageing Better](#). (2023).
 - [Challenging-ageism-guide-talking-ageing-older-age.pdf](#)
 - [The-State-of-Ageing-2025-interactive-summary.pdf](#). Centre for Ageing Better. (2025).
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- [Age Positive Image Library](#)
 - Contains photos of people aged 50+ in various settings, to highlight the diversity of later life.
 - [Age Without Limits](#) Campaign. Centre for Ageing Better. (2025).
 - [Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing - Combatting Ageism](#). World Health Organization. (2025).

Join the Age Friendly Network to hear more about the Age Friendly Bucks Programme, email phadmin@buckinghamshire.gov.uk for more information