

Ageing Populations Script

0' 00" Introduction

Take a look round east Devon and you'll soon realise its a Mecca for the over 50's. But why are there so many old people here, and how does it affect the geography of the area. What services does an ageing population need, and how can we find the resources to fund them? This program is about the way East Devon's people, its government, and other organisations are working to meet the challenges of providing for an ageing population.

0' 48" Why So Many Old People?

It may be most peoples dream to retire to the seaside but these days you don't have to go there to find lots of older people. Like many more economically developed countries or MEDC's the UK has an ageing population. Today there are over 10 million over 65's that's nearly 16% of the total; it's twice as many as there were 50 years ago.

The result is that the UK's population pyramid is being turned upside down. The growing ageing population means the top half is getting wider. With fewer young people the base is narrowing, but what social and cultural changes lie behind the shifting age structure of our population? For one thing people are getting married later and generally having fewer children, so the birth rate has fallen to 10.8 per thousand population. At the other end of the age range, better health care, medical advances, education, and being better off means that we're all living longer. Life expectancy has been steadily rising for nearly 100 hundred years. Today it's 76 for men and 81 for women, but migration means the UK's ageing population isn't spread evenly around the country. Areas like East Devon are more popular with the over 50's than others.

Albert Venison

And we used to come down here obviously for holidays when we were married during the war and we'd been coming down this way for years and years and years. So it was a natural place to end up.

Patrick Ryan

It was a case of anywhere, Somerset, Devon, Dorset, in this corner. As I say with my wife travelling from Somerset she still has relations in this area, many cousins. And we didn't want to be that far away from them

Pat Walden

I was actually brought up down here really and then I did my nursing when I was 18 and then I came back to the west country. Because of my family, I come from a big family and just sort of settled. I met my husband down here

as well, though he was a Londoner his mother had moved down to Char and we just made a home down here, we like it.

Whatever peoples reasons for ending up in East Devon, you don't have to look far to find the pull factors that bring them here and make them stay. The area contains some of the UK's finest countryside and large parts have been protected as areas of outstanding natural beauty. With its spectacular scenery and extraordinary fossils the southern coastline has become one of the UK's few world heritage sites. Administratively East Devon is one of 10 districts in Devon County and covers 815 square kilometres. About half of the areas 12,500 people live along the coast, the remainder are scattered in small towns and villages. But despite it's beauty east Devon isn't popular with everyone.

Dr Ali Rand – East Devon PCT

East Devon is not a particularly attractive place for young people to live in necessarily. Houses are not affordable, not many jobs locally, certainly not many high paid jobs locally, there's quite a lot of low paid work locally and I would have to say the culture in some areas is really very much an older persons culture and young people don't get the facilities and sometimes don't feel welcome and that's something we've really got to change.

With young people leaving and the over 50's moving in east Devon now has the second highest concentration of old people of any area in the UK. And having so many over 50's creates numerous challenges.

5'00" Implications

For Albert Venison and the vast majority of older people, retirement means a significant reduction in earnings.

Albert Venison

Basically my income is two pensions as such, my private pension which I started on my own and have paid for all my life of course. And my state pension which I've paid for all my life, my actual income is around 850 pound a month. And I can guarantee out of that 850 I'm spending 875 pound a month not just on luxuries but on essentials, things like food, heating, and we have the highest water rates in the country down here.

But having an ageing population also effects economics at a national level there are more pensions to pay and less tax and national insurance for the government to collect, and that creates what's called a high dependency ratio.

A country's dependency ratio tells us about the number of people who are of working age and those who are dependant on them. To work it out you add the percentage of the population under 15 and over 64 and divide that by the percentage of people who are of working age. In the UK 19% of the population are under 15, and 16% over 65 making a dependency ratio of just

under 54%. In other words for every 100 people who are working there are 54 who are dependant on them.

It's Friday morning and Albert Venison is on his way to the doctors to collect his weekly prescriptions. Like nearly everybody, Albert's discovered that the older he gets the more frequent his visits are to doctors, hospitals and chemists. For the health authority in east Devon having a large elderly population presents a major challenge.

Dr Ali Rand – East Devon Primary Care Trust

It's not 'there are different health services', there are just more of other certain health services that other populations might not have. So if your taking about the common operation, like having a hip replaced, having a cataract done, having your heart by pass done, all those things are much more common the older you get. And so the main recipients of those kind of operations are older people, and likewise emergency operations when you become ill are much more common in older people as things start to fail a little bit.

Although Albert's wife Pauline is very ill they still live in their own home. But for many people as they get older, health problems or being widowed means they are no longer able to live independently. A large ageing population needs different kinds of housing from retirement flats to full residential care.

Having an ageing population also creates particular transport needs. Albert's lucky enough to have his own car but many older people either can't afford to run one or are unable to drive due to poor health. Meeting their transport needs is an important part of keeping them involved in society.

Sophie Littlewood, Age Concern, Devon

A lot of our older people that we come into contact, are very socially isolated either because of where they live geographically or because their friends and family don't live near by. So it's a vital service in terms of them joining with other people, interacting socially and accessing services.

In east Devon meeting the transport needs of the ageing population is made more of a challenge by the dispersed settlement pattern.

Neil Hurlock, Community Transport Co-ordinator

You have a large number of parishes scattered around with small numbers of built up areas. It's not economic for commercial enterprises to run bus services through there and quite often the only bus service you get is once a week. Gives you an hour in the town to do a week's shopping, sometimes even less than that.

But as well as having needs ageing populations contribute a vast amount to society, the spending power of the over 50's is known as the grey pound and in 2005 it was worth 215 billion pounds to the UK's economy. Older people

spend most of their money on financial, health and beauty, and travel services. And in east Devon as elsewhere having a large older population affects the kind of shops that appear in the high street.

Ray Daniel, Bath Travel

90% of our customers are over the 50 age bracket with a varied interest in what they want to do. It goes from cruising to coaching, lakes and mountains, also a lot them have friends over seas and the do a lot of independent travel as well.

They may have retired but many older people also contribute to society by doing large amounts of voluntary work.

Dorothy Chipperfield, Centre Co-ordinator

The centre couldn't run without volunteers, I work 4 days a week but the centre is open 6 days a week. And also like the computers over in the corner are all run by volunteers, the computer lessons are all given by volunteers, so the volunteers are so special, they really are.

And much of the work older people do is hidden from view. Since retiring Pat has swapped her job for unpaid work.

Pat Smith, Grandmother

I have Molly 3 days a week at the moment, so on a Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. She's really no trouble at all, I've got two other grand children so I go to look after them as well, they live in Taunton. But I tend to go to Taunton to look after them because it's easier, they've got all their bits and pieces and I haven't really got the sleeping accommodation for them here.

If the millions of older people who care for partners, relatives and grand children stopped working it would cost the country billions of pounds. Perhaps then, this is one of the many reasons, that government, voluntary bodies and individuals need to work together to meet the challenges and needs created by an ageing population.

11'42" Meeting Needs – Housing

Mrs Goldsworthy has recently moved to a retirement complex in Ackminster. Like many older people she found the commercial sector was able to provide a solution for changes in her housing needs.

Mrs Goldsworthy

I had a fence blow down and then I had some guttering go wrong and all these things you see, so I was constantly phoning my son and saying 'what do I do about it?' And the plumbing started making odd noises, 'what do I do about it', and I thought this isn't fair on him, although he said he didn't care, he

didn't mind. So I decided I would have to go somewhere where I wasn't dependant basically on somebody else coming to fix things for me.

Flats in this development can only be bought by people over 50 and they've been carefully designed with the needs of those people in mind.

Derek Field, McCarthy and Stone, Developers

This is the voice module that's linked to the bunker in New Milton, we call Care Line, cord here, you pull that cord and within 30 seconds someone at the bunker will respond. You can tell them if you have a problem, they'll alert emergency services or a relative or whatever. The taps are very easy to operate as you can see for anybody with arthritic fingers. The plugs I've mentioned, as you can see all the sockets are at hip height so there's no bending. We try and make life as comfortable as possible recognising that while people are elderly they don't want to be treated as if they were infirm.

But for Mrs Goldsworthy it's not just about the flat, it's about having other people around.

Mrs Goldsworthy

We have our coffee mornings that's formal and then we get together and play scrabble and things in the evening and people will phone and say what about coming down and playing cards or something. So you're not dependant on just sitting watching television, you can do other things too.

They key issues for many residents is security so all the flats have CCTV. By looking at the population statistics, building flats that meet the needs of older people, the developers think they've got the formula right. And with the UK's ageing population still growing more and more developments like this are being built.

Derek Field, McCarthy and Stone, Developers

With better healthcare, better attention to diet, and the greater world being full of older people, we will continue to see this phenomenon of people living longer, and with the lower birth rates of course the percentage of older people will increase dramatically. And by the year 2040 we will have a lot of old people living in this country, in percentage terms, compared with what we've got now. So there's no doubt this sort of market will continue to grow.

Meeting Needs – Health Services

As our ageing population grows so too does the bill for the National Health Service, one of the most cost effective ways of providing care is to let people stay in their own home when their health needs begin to change.

Albert Venison

Well my wife is very ill, she's dying actually from cancer and I mean she's got worse since Christmas, she'd obviously going down hill. A lady comes in and does the cleaning, we have a gardener that does the garden, and then the hospice nurse turns up once a week and has a chat and finds out what we want. We've now got to make different provisions for having to bath her and that sort of thing. We were managing to use the shower but we can't now use the shower as we can't get Pauline over the edge of the bath.

If we come in I'll show you what the problems were, because as you know the step is there and that's a high step you get to get her legs over the actual bath.

By fitting special aids such as stair and bath lifts support handles and chair raisers it's been possible for Pauline to stay at home. But with so many older people moving to east Devon finding sufficient numbers of care staff is proving to be increasingly difficult.

Margaret Rogers, Councillor

We have a crisis of careers along the coast, younger people can't afford to live in these places because of property prices and it's not really easy to get them to work out here, that is one of the big areas. The other is of course the medical services, the practices do their very best and they want to serve the community but they are finding there is increasing pressure because of course as people's health declines it puts more demands on the doctors and so on.

But even with the range of services available some people can't live independently. Mrs Ashton needs full time support after being disabled by a stroke.

Mrs Ashton

All the right side was I suppose paralysed I couldn't feel it at all. I still can't, I've no feeling on my face, my arm, or my leg, but I've got movement. And that really is because I've got the time here and they help.

Mrs Ashton is being treated at one of east Devon's intermediate care homes. These government funded care centres provide short-term accommodation and therapy to enable people to live independently again.

Peggy Lee – Intermediate Care Home Manager

A lot of people go into hospital for one reason or another and then they're unable to go straight home afterwards. So they need somewhere like this where they can regain their daily living skills like making a cup of tea or getting in and out of bed on their own before they can actually go home.

For the health service and government it's a happy coincidence that most people would prefer to live in their own home as this is a very cost effective

way of providing care for the UK's ageing population. But for Mrs Ashton personal circumstances mean living independently will have to wait.

Mrs Ashton

Sadly my husband has problems, I was his carer, he's gone into a home. So if I went home I'd be on my own, I think I would rather go somewhere quite pleasant, there are some nice homes about and perhaps try one of those and sadly it won't be the same as my husbands as our needs are different. Which is sad, but that's one of those things. I think I'm going to get better.

But whatever peoples housing needs it's clear the key is providing services to keep our ageing population fit and active as long as possible.

18'35" Meeting Needs - Facilities & Services

For most people getting old doesn't just mean changes in their health, retirement also effects the amount of time people have on their hands. Governments are very aware that keeping older people active not only means they can contribute to society, it also saves money on healthcare and housing. Despite his 72 years Pat's a hard man to keep up with, he gets up at 5:30 and walks two and a half miles just to get to the local swimming pool.

Pat Cowan

Swimming was something I always wanted to do and didn't have time or opportunity, or the facilities, and suddenly there they were all on the door step and within walking distance.

The swimming pool is one of many sports and recreational facilities and clubs organised by east Devon district council in order to help keep the community fit. To encourage pensioners and others on limited incomes to use these facilities entree fees are subsidised.

Pat Cowan

There is a senior citizens rate, I'm paying about 170 pounds a year and I'm using it five times a week so it doesn't cost me an awful lot to go down, 60 pence or so per swim, which isn't out of the way.

But maintaining well being isn't just about physical fitness, it's also about keeping people mentally active and engaged.

Sophie Littlewood, Age Concern, Devon

The idea behind this centre is to offer a range of services that helps people's physical fitness and mental well being. Coming to the centre is an important part of their life. It's a lifeline to access friends and to access services and I

think without the centre a lot of people would be at home and would be very very lonely.

From handy crafts to computer training, Tai Chi, counselling, and day trips. As well as providing a space to have a chat and cup of tea this Age Concern centre in Seaton offers a wide range of activities. But with little government support, non government organisations or NGO's like Age Concern play an important roll in meeting the needs of the over 50's.

Sophie Littlewood, Age Concern, Devon

Without us there is no doubt that the government could not afford to run such services. This one alone costs over 47,000 pounds per year to run, and as I say we do an awful lot of fund raising and income generation to support the services.

As well as providing much needed services to keep the over 50's mentally and physical active much of the centres 47,000 pound annual budget is spend on transport. Something that is vital in a rural district like east Devon.

21'36" Meeting Needs - Transport

Neil Hurlock – Community Transport Coordinator

A lot of people have had to give up driving for medical reasons or from cost, once they retire money is very very tight. Public transport just does not exist in these outlying area, that is a sad fact of life, they're there to make money. If there are not people in the area they will not put a bus service through there because it just does not pay to have a bus with two people on board. That's why community transport is there to pick up these people who would otherwise be totally isolated.

This is one of four ring and ride buses in the east Devon area, one of a number of transport initiatives helping meet the needs of the areas ageing population. What makes this bus different to commercial service is that it goes right to your door, but that's not the only reason it's a vital service for people like Daphne Bessford.

Daphne Bessford.

You're dropped outside the shop and they help you with your shopping, carries it round so I find it. But the bus stop, I couldn't do it, it would be too far to carry a weeks shopping.

Unlike some public buses this one is also equipped to take people in wheel chairs or who might have problems climbing up the steps. Passengers pay roughly the same fare as on public busses but these services are much more expensive to run and the extra funding is often difficult to secure.

Neil Hurlock – Community Transport Coordinator

It's funded partially from local government, local councils and parish councils, who are kind enough or are required to give grants to towards the cost. But this is never enough, it never meets the ongoing costs, therefore the groups have to apply to funding bodies either locally or nationally. Or stand on street corners rattling tins and holding fund raising events.

As with many other important services the ring and ride bus relies on the good will of ordinary people. And as east Devon's ageing population grows continuing to provide services like these will become more and more of a financial challenge.

23' 58" The Future – Who Will Pay?

Albert Venison, Pensioner

You shouldn't have to get up in the morning and weigh one thing against the other as to whether you're going to do this or do that. We haven't been on holiday now for six, seven years we frankly can't afford it. A lot of people with that sort of basis.

Like many pensioners Albert found that retirement wasn't affording him the quality of life he'd hope for so he decided to try and do something about it. From his spare bedroom he runs the Devon Pensioners Action Forum. The group campaigns for reduced council tax, increased pensions and other benefits for less well off pensioners.

Radio Host: Now here's a familiar face, an even more familiar voice, Albert Venison who's here today from the Devon Pensioners Action Forum. How are things going for you Albert.

Albert: Quite well actually we've got a bit of interest this morning.

By making use of local media the groups been able to create quite a stir, the over 50's are becoming an increasingly powerful force.

Dr Ali Rand – East Devon Primary Care Trust

Well the grey vote is very strong in east Devon. Whenever your doing things like public consultations or sending out surveys or where your trying to get views from the population it tends to be the elderly people who will respond. Partly because they've got more time, partly because perhaps they've got a bit more experience, partly because they realise how important it is a bit more than the younger people. So the views are always weighted towards the elderly.

But as east Devon's ageing population grows the pressure on health and social services becomes greater and greater making it harder to meet basic needs.

Dr Ali Rand – East Devon Primary Care Trust

Well we get an allocation from central government, the allocation is weighted by a number of factors one of which is age. So we do get an extra weighting because we have a more elderly population but there is of course always the argument 'is it enough?', and we would argue no, and other areas where they do not have the elderly they would argue it's too much.

Albert's campaigning activities have won him national recognition and as the UK's population gets older, funding state pensions is becoming a key political issue.

Albert Venison, Pensioner

Now the government says literal poverty level is 12,000 pound, the average pension is anything between 5 and 6 thousand pound, so you've got to double that straight away. The thing that really does make us cross is that Gordon Brown gets up and says we've got the 4th strongest economy in the world, we've got the lowest pension of any European country.

But if things are difficult for today's pensioners, they'll be even more so for tomorrows. The bulge in today's pyramid are known as the baby boomer generation, as these people begin to retire the age structure of the UK population will become even older. By 2040 they'll be 5 million more people over 65 than there were in 2000. How the country will fund its ageing population is a big dilemma. Should people pay more taxes, should we retire later, can the state continue to provide pensions, or should we have to fend for ourselves? And these issues don't just effect the UK, nearly every more economically developed country or MEDC is asking the question, who is going to pay for our ageing population?

