

What does the **UN Decade of Healthy Ageing** midpoint report mean for the UK Government?

Why this matters now

World leaders gathered at the 81st UN General Assembly in September amid growing pressures on health systems, constrained development financing and renewed debate about the future of global health cooperation. At this time, the UN Secretary-General presented the mid-term progress report on the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), marking an important moment to take stock and strengthen the global commitment to healthy ageing through to 2030.

The UN Secretary-General's midpoint report explains that real progress has been made, but that it is unevenly shared across global contexts.¹ More governments are taking action to tackle ageism, provide integrated care, strengthen long-term care and create age-friendly environments. However, the report also exposes a persistent gap between policy and delivery. Financing remains the greatest barrier, data on older people is severely limited, and fewer countries than previously now have active forums through which older people and other stakeholders can shape decisions.

This should spur on governments worldwide to use the second half of the UN Decade (2021-2030) - to move from building evidence and securing commitments, to accelerating implementation and achieving measurable results. For the UK's global health strategy, this means supporting inclusive, country-led health systems strengthening. It means investing in underfunded issues, such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and ensuring that older people are visible in programmes, policy, data gathering and analysis, and that their voices are heard.

Where countries have made progress

57.7%

now have legislation against age-based discrimination

56.7%

have national long-term care policies

Where action from countries is limited

33.8%

have little or no dedicated resources for long-term care

Only 22.7%

can track older people's health over time

1. Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) <https://docs.un.org/en/A/81/366>

A UK cross-government plan for the second half of the UN Decade

Age International recommends that the UK Government develops a time-bound plan for delivering the remainder of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing to 2030. This plan should set out how FCDO², DHSC³, and other relevant departments will:

- 1. Embed healthy ageing and action on ageism across global health strategy.** Ensure prevention, preparedness and response strategies address older people's risks and maintain essential health and care services during health and humanitarian crises.
- 2. Invest in inclusive, country-led health systems.** Align UK support behind universal health coverage (UHC) that expands integrated, community-based care and sustainable long-term care and support. This must include primary healthcare, NCDs and mental health, rehabilitation, palliative care, assistive products and a skilled workforce that meets the needs of older people.
- 3. Strengthen data and accountability.** Require UK-funded programmes to use age, sex and disability disaggregated data, and report against age-inclusive indicators.
- 4. Promote older people's leadership.** Fund older people's organisations in low and middle income countries to shape priorities and decisions. Hold delivery partners accountable for demonstrating how older people have contributed to setting priorities and achieving outcomes.

Specific recommendations for FCDO and DHSC

FCDO and DHSC should work together to deliver this agenda as a cross-government priority, with clear responsibilities and shared accountability.

For the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

- ▶ **Mainstream ageing across development policy and programmes.** Apply an intersectional, life course approach to commitments on UHC, health systems, NCDs, mental health, humanitarian action and climate resilience.
- ▶ **Make inclusion measurable.** Require UK-funded programmes to collect, use and analyse age, sex and disability-disaggregated data, showing whether older people are reached in routine services and emergencies.
- ▶ **Fund locally led solutions.** Direct flexible, long-term funding to national and local organisations, including older people's organisations, and support them to shape, deliver and monitor age-inclusive health and care programmes.
- ▶ **Shape an inclusive G20 agenda.** Promote investment in healthy ageing that responds to the economic opportunities of population ageing across all countries.
- ▶ **Champion older people's rights internationally.** Back an ambitious UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, shaped by older people's diverse experiences.

2. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

3. Department for Health and Social Care

For the Department of Health & Social Care

- ▶ **Embed healthy ageing in UK global health policy.** Apply an intersectional, life course approach to universal health coverage, NCDs, mental health, and workforce policy.
- ▶ **Make health security inclusive of all ages.** Work with the UK Health Security Agency to strengthen age-disaggregated intelligence and ensure emergency plans protect older people and maintain essential health and social care services in crises.
- ▶ **Contribute UK expertise to the World Health Organisation.** Promote evidence, guidance and technical partnerships that help countries integrate community-based care for older people into universal health coverage.
- ▶ **Champion healthy ageing in international health forums.** Bring UK expertise on prevention, integrated care, adult immunisation and sustainable long-term care into global health architecture reform and the UK's 2027 G20 Presidency.

Invest now in healthy ageing

Healthy ageing should be recognised as an investment rather than an additional cost. A life course investment in prevention, inclusive health systems, long-term care and age-friendly environments can improve health outcomes. It can strengthen resilience and reduce financial pressures on families and services, and create economic opportunities. The UK should use the second half of the Decade of Healthy Ageing to support country-led plans through predictable financing and champion healthy longevity during its G20 Presidency.

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Age UK provides crucial support for older people and drives change locally, nationally and internationally. Age International is the international arm of the Age UK Group, and focuses on improving later life for people living in low and middle-income countries, including during humanitarian crises.

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