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Component 2 : Living with care - The older person
supporting paper
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Introduction

The population of older persons in the UK is increasing, with 18.6% of the total population aged 65 years or above. This is expected to rise to 24%, or 17.4 million people by the year 2043 (Future of an ageing population, 2022). Since the change in the age structure clearly indicates an increase for older people, there is an urgent need for adequate provision to be made in the areas of health and social care to meet their basic needs.

Main body

Individuals in the UK are living longer than ever before, and this has been attributed to the contributions of modern science and technology, including improved health and social care services. However, the improvement in longevity also portends substantial challenges to the UK's model of service provision to these elderly populations. For instance, increasing older population implies fewer workforce with simultaneously increasing pressure on public services. If the improvement in health and social care is not directly proportional to the ageing UK population, there will be an astronomical rise on disability and multi-morbidities,

chronic conditions, cognitive impairments, and ill-health within these elderly populations. Also this will lead to a drop in national productivity due to lost working hours by working class families, arising from increased pressure to balance care of older relations with other assignments. This will equally put an enormous strain on the financial and human resources of the UK NHS services because of the divergence in demand and supply of care (Lewis et al., 2022). This is because in reality, more people will need physical and financial support, despite that less number of people are available for funding of the public services and provision of health and social care. The implications of the increasing elderly population will manifest in: (i) Increased burden and financial loss to the NHS and UK in general. (ii) Reduced human resources. (iii) Increase in the demand for health, social care and support services. (iv) Need for resource distribution and evaluation. (v) Need for more infrastructure. (vi) Loneliness and social isolation (Buckner et al., 2013). The negative impacts of loneliness and social isolation in elderly populations especially on their physical and mental health, quality of life, and longevity cannot be overstressed. Interventions through assistive and adaptive technology that will increase their ability to socialize and network amongst peers and the general community will play a positive role in that regard.

The employment rate in the UK has recently fallen from 86% for 50-year-olds to 65% for 60-year-olds and 31% for 65-year-olds (ONS, 2022). If working lives are prolonged, the proportion of individuals between the ages of 50 and retirement age who are employed will increase from 26% in 2012 to 34% in 2050. This represents a rise of more than 5.5 million individuals (Aujla et al., 2023). Changes to the UK's model of health and social care systems, support for unpaid carers, and working culture are necessary because increasing the productivity of the country and fostering favorable economic development are closely linked to making these older people more productive. Among them are: (i) Making it possible for people to work past retirement age. People will be able to sustain their families for longer periods of time and will have the material and psychological means to live happy, fulfilling lives after retirement. (ii) The development of a supportive environment and access for employees to adjust to new technologies and other important work-life changes will have a major positive impact on the economic health of the United Kingdom. It will also be crucial to address health issues, derogatory attitudes toward older workers, and workplace design advancements. (iii) Providing the elderly population with the necessary support. This includes being aware of the variables that cause the population's employment rates at older ages to differ. (iv) Ongoing instruction and retraining. More training relevant to the job will be required to meet the demands of extended work hours. This means that the UK should take into account the possibility of a model in which individuals can access and use re-skilling and training opportunities at any point in their career (Bowering, 2019).

Is technology necessary for the UK elderly population?

According to recent research, social media use among senior citizens can have positive effects. Increased technology use is associated with reduced chronic disease, improved subjective well-being, reduced depressive symptoms, and improved self-rated health.

Technology can affect the elderly population in the UK in both positive and negative ways, depending on how it is used and accessed, which makes this an intriguing question. Among the advantages of technology for senior citizens are:

Access to food, medical care, entertainment, and information can all be obtained through it.

It can track well-being, identify falls, control illnesses, and encourage security.

It can promote wellbeing, lessen social isolation, and make independent living possible.

It can make them feel safe and protected whether they're indoors or out.

Furthermore, housing is an indelible factor of concern on the impact of increasing ageing in the UK. Unsuitable housing constitutes challenges that cost the NHS up to £2.5 billion per year, compared with that of physical inactivity (£1 billion), and substance abuse (£3.2 billion) (Howdon and Rice, 2018). It is expected that 1.42 million families will have people aged 85 years or above in the UK by the year 2037 (Oliver, Foot and Humphries 2014). This will shoot up the demand for a housing model that meets the needs of older people, such as housing that will serve as places of work and care through modern technologies. A housing structure that adapt to people's changing needs as they age will: (i) contribute immensely to reduce the pressures on health and social care services, and (ii) help people to adopt flexible pattern of work and also work for longer years.

Conclusion and recommendations

The population of individuals aged 65 years or above is increasing in the UK.

The implications of this increase on the health and social care system in the UK is not favorable from the economic and service delivery standpoint.

The increasing ageing population will put more pressure on the NHS such that longer admission waiting list, more frequent readmissions, loneliness and social isolation, and reduced human resources amongst others are the current trend.

Infrastructural deficit, increased demands on health and social care, more financial requirements and support are amongst the implications of the increased ageing population.

Therefore, government reforms in adult health and social care is imminent.

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