THE ELDERLY POPULATION ESSAY

LIVING WITH CARE: THE OLDER PERSON (BMHP6009)

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The following essay is designed to outline the increase of the older people in the UK population and all around the globe also what this means for society, as well for health and social care sector. So, what is old age? Old age can be defined as a disgrace in mental and physical capacity, this usually happens from cellular and molecular damage over the years. Old age is associated with retirement, biological changes and eventually death (WHO, 2022). NHS (2022) define older person as someone aged 65 or over. According to Office for National Statistics (2022) all the people number has significantly increase in the past decade with 18.6%. Census results from 2021 showed that '11 million people were aged 65 or older', Comparing with the census results from 2011 with the percentage of 16.4. Elderly population is higher than has ever been in England and Wales, with a number of 527,900 of people aged 90 years. even though it is a positive development ageing population also represent services, economy and society implications.

Life expectancy and longevity has changed in the past decade people living longer because of economic development, such as lifestyle improvement, advances in medicine and healthcare as well as genetics. Crucial factors for longer and healthy life include diet, exercise, hygiene, healthcare access, genetics, gender and life choices (Disabled World, 2022). According to WHO (2022) the life expectancy increase is happening worldwide and continues to grow. In 2020 the number of people aged 60 and over were bigger than children aged five years and younger. By 2050 the estimate percentage of older people worldwide is expected to 'double from 12% to 22%'. Living longer has its positives and negatives, such as people get to spend more time with their loved ones and enjoy life, but on the other hand additional years come with poor health. Old people have more health problems, because off cellular and molecular damage over the years. Health problems can include dementia, heart disease or any other metabolic or physical conditions. Also lack of funding within health and social care sectors it's a major issue nowadays which will be discussed further, as well as theories of ageing, legislation and policies.

What is health and social care? Healthcare stands for prevention and control of illnesses, disease, disability or injuries, the treatment needed to cure a person. Social care on the other hand is related to social needs, such as daily activities, social interactions, independence,

accessing supported accommodations or care home (Mind, 2022). Healthcare is free, hello it is provided by the NHS professionals, the patient has the right to choose their treatment, change their GP, doctor or hospital. social care is provided by the local authority, in order to get social care, support a person needs to complete a needs assessment. people eligible for social care services are those vulnerable, because of age, disability or illness. An advocate can help to understand the rights a person has, and to make a decision in regard to care and support needed. According to NHS (2022) an advocate is someone who can speak on behalf of a person, make decisions, explain the rights, the care and support process. As well as supporting the person during an assessment, safeguarding and reviews. Advocates work independent, but they can be accessed through local council, social services, hospitals or charities.

A specified the older population it is higher than has ever been and continues to increase, in the UK and all around the globe. Elderly face different issues, such as ageism, health problems, abuse, mental health conditions, loneliness and isolation. Age UK (2017) define ageism as a ‘discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's age’. Ageism Jen affect a person confidence, quality of life, financial situation and their job. For example, people may lose their job because of their age, being refused doctor referrals because they are ‘too old’, not being able to get a membership to a club or travel insurance, receive poor quality service in a restaurant or a shop as well as over the phone. Jaul and Barron (2017) shared numerous health issues elderly may face, such as sensory changes, including hearing and visual loss. Recent studies show that half of adults aged 85 and over experience hearing loss and only 14.6% uses hearing aid. Other health problems include loss of muscle and strength decline, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, osteoarthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, mobility disability, dementia, depression anxiety.

Dementia is one of the most common health conditions among elderly population, approximately 1/3 of people aged 85 and over experienced dementia. With age neurons in the brain are lost, ability to carry on day-to-day tasks become more difficult, as well as temporary memory loss. While in a person with dementia memory loss is severe and permanent, along with confusion, hallucinations, difficulty walking and talking (National Institute of Ageing 2021). WHO (2022) suggest that one in six people aged 60 or over ‘experience some form of abuse’. Any form of act which causes distress or harm to an older person is called elderly abuse. Types of elderly abuse include psychological, physical, sexual, emotional, financial, neglect, abandonment and serious loss of respect and dignity (Chisnell & Kelly, 2020). Recent studies show an increase in elderly abuse during the COVID-19 with the percentage of 84%. Abuse in older people can lead to serious consequences, such as mental health problems financial difficulties, injuries, cognitive decline, nursing homes placement and mortality.

According to Mental Health Foundation (2021) mental health problems are faced by most of older people and retirement is one of the causes. Mental health stands for psychological, emotional and social well-being (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Mental health condition represents thinking, mood and behaviour changes (Mayo Clinic, 2019). Other factors affecting mental health can be bereavement, disability or physical illness, loneliness and isolation. Retirement is a major change in anyone's life, work brings along purpose, friendship, self-esteem and financial stability. Retirement means loss of social interactions and loneliness. Bereavement stands for grief, loss of friends and family, which can be devastating. Loneliness in older age is very common, this usually happens when someone close die, retirement or health problems. Isolation has been a real problem for the last two years, do to COVID-19 pandemic. The elderly population were the most vulnerable and at high risk of getting seriously ill or die if infected with a virus.

According to Age UK (2020) '89% of deaths involving COVID-19 in England and Wales' where among older people. Everyone experienced fear, worries, loneliness and isolation. People were unable to attend medical appointments as they were cancelled or seek non COVID-19 medical assistance. Everything went digital, medical appointment where also online, the older people hard to embrace technology. Technology has improved significantly over the years, assistive technology can be very useful for elderly. They could be used as reminders, for example the medication so that people get voice alerts about their medication, or it could be that they are linked to house appliances where people are getting alerts when they have left the door open, or they have left the gas running. However, the negative part of it is that not everyone can afford the assistive technology, also It is hard for the elderly to learn how to use it.

Social care is funded by local authorities however not always all the services are free in the people might be charge for them. Such as care homes, carers, home adaptations, household items and equipment, as well as home security systems. Usually, local council will pay for those services, the person receiving the service or their families according to NHS (2021). However, it is good to remember that people might not always have the financial possibility to pay for those services. Not having the financial stability lead to worries, depression and anxiety, as well as mortality. Health and social care services also faces a large number of staff shortages. The Health Foundation (2019) suggests that NHS staff shortage number it's around 100,000 and social care around 122,000. Also, the number of staff shortages more likely to increase in health and social care sectors in the next few years, especially among nurses which is over 40,000 and it's expected to double by 2023-2024.

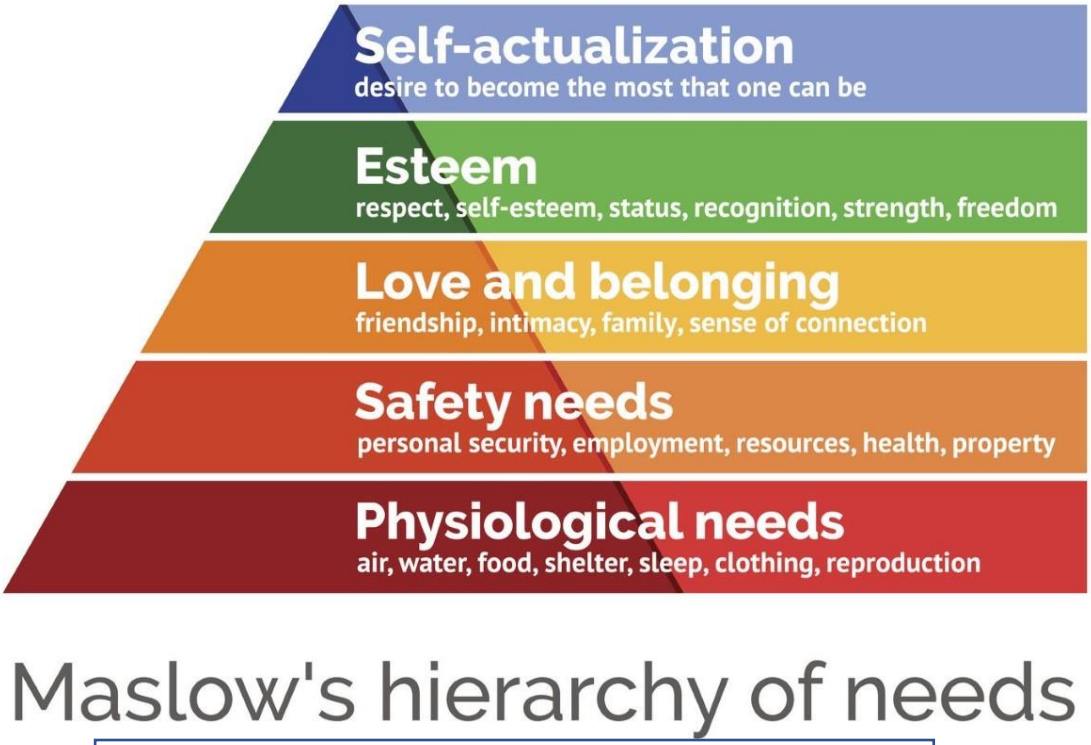
According to the King's Fund (2022) the '2019 Conservative Party was planning to deliver 50,000, nurses 6000 GP, and other primary care professionals. However, no plan has been

published just yet and the staff shortage remains still a major issue. The COVID-19 pandemic was another factor which made the workforce crisis worsen, staff were available due to sickness, getting infected with the COVID-19 virus, other leave work due to the impact on mental health, becoming worried and stressed. Staff shortage and high number of patients was the reason elderly population suffered during the COVID - 19 pandemic widening the gap between needs and availability. The King's Fund (2022) also shared what government and the NHS is planning to do in order to tackle the staff shortage issue. First, they need to protect staff well-being, training to be fully funded, investment in leadership and capacity within primary care staff, as well as increase of pay rate.

According to Committee Care (2022) the adult care sectors is suffering a staff crisis due to low income, care workers are paid less than '80% of wider workforce'. The government is planning to launch a 'domestic recruitment campaign', also employers were provided £15 million in order to be able to recruit people from overseas. Another £500 million were provided by the government to health and social care sectors to 'speed up the hospital discharge and to boost the workforce'. The BMJ (2022) suggest that the government announced on 17 November a pay rise witing health and social care industry, they are planning to fund the sector with '£3.3 billion in each of the next two years'. Also, from 2023 the minimum wage rates are likely to increase to £10.42 (GOV.UK, 2022). Even though there is an increase in pay rates it is still not much, taking in consideration the amount of work and responsibility health and social care workers have. Another negative aspect is the increase of national insurers contribution with 1.25%, which will be in place from April 2023. Taking in consideration the living costs are increasing also such as energy bills, gas and petrol, as well as oil, it is a desperately need for a higher pay rate in order for stability and growth.

As discussed, the elderly population is rapidly increasing and it is higher than has ever been, as people get older, they withdraw from society and vice versa. Retirement it's one of the principal factor people withdraw from society (Larkin, 2009). Disengagement theory suggests that people not only withdraw from society, such as work ways, they also lose interest in activities. Staff crisis is also directly connected with disengagement theory, as the elderly population is high once they reach the retirement age, they stop working leading to staff shortage in every sector. Activity theory on the other hand is the opposite to disengagement theory, if people keep active after the retirement age and get involved in different activities are more likely to age successfully (Mauk, 2010). Healthy ageing also means less care and supervision, a healthier ageing population can help the government of spending. Dementia care itself costs the government £34.7 billion a year (Alzheimer's Society, 2020). Being physically and mentally active can combat numerous issues, such as loneliness, isolation, mental and physical problems.

COVID - 19 pandemic did affect people's lives as they were asked to isolate, especially the elderly population as they were the most vulnerable. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs every human being has fundamental needs, including psychological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization (Hooper, 2020). Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggest that people are motivated by those basic needs, and each one of them needs to be accomplished in order to age successfully. Psychological needs referred to basic needs, such as food, clothes and shelter, if someone lacks food it is impossible to meet any other needs as they cannot focus on anything else if they're hungry or thirsty. Safety stands for living in a safe environment, not living with fear or anxiety. Love and belonging, everyone need to love and be loved as well as being included in society, lack of love and belonging lead to isolation, loneliness, impact the wellbeing and health. Esteem refers to feeling good about themselves, achievements and contribution to society. Self-actualization is the last need which stands for full potential, if other needs have been met successfully then the person reach self-actualization.

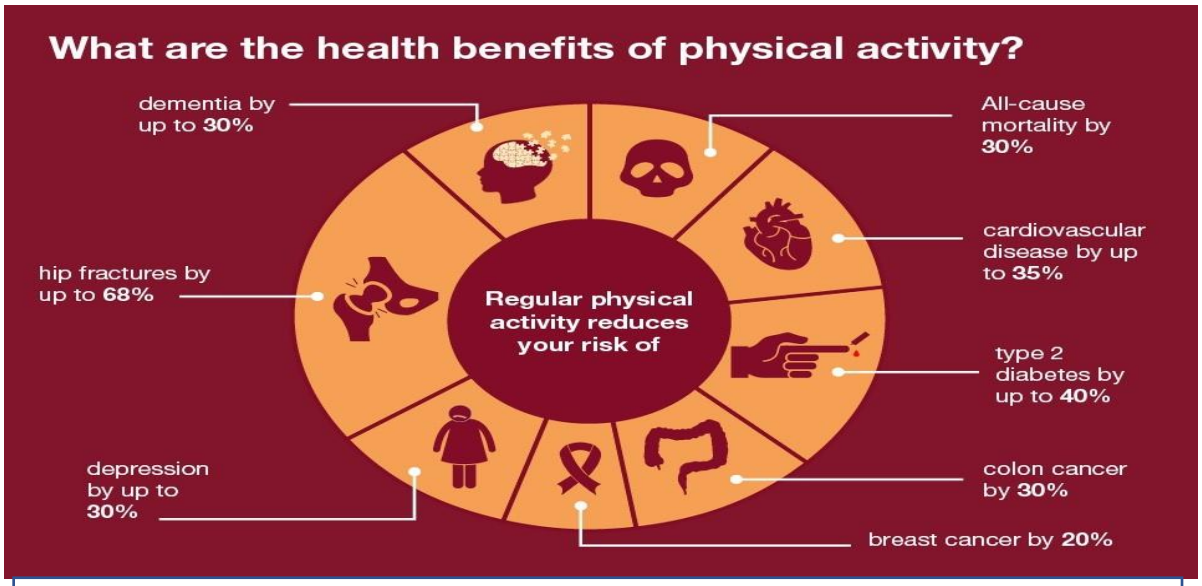


Img. 1. Hooper (2020) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained

Policies and legislation relating to ageing population include the Care Act 2014 which promote the well-being of the individuals, improve people well-being an independence, prevent the care and support needs and protect vulnerable 'adults at risk of abuse and neglect' (GOV.UK, 2016). Equality Act 2010 suggests that everyone should be treated equally, regardless did age gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, marriage, sex and sexual orientation (Equality Act,

2010). Although it is a legal requirement discrimination still do happen, especially among the older population. The Human Rights Act 1998 defend people rights, such as everyone should be treated with dignity and respect (Human Rights Act 1998). Nowadays people are treated in a person-centred care manner, they are involved in their treatment and care they receive. They contribute to planning their care and support, make decisions about their treatment which are made to meet their best interest. Their hobbies, activities, religion and beliefs are also taken into consideration (Care Quality Commission, 2022). However not anyone has the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves, but if someone lacks the mental capacity, they can always require an advocate to speak on their behalf.

Summarising the concept elderly population has rapidly increased over the past decade and continues to grow. As people get older, they face numerous issues, such as health problems, loneliness, isolation, abuse and ageism. Even though there are laws in place, The Care Act 2014 and Equality Act 2010 to treat everyone equally and live a life free of abuse and neglect, unfortunately this is still happening. Elderly population increase it has positives and negatives impact on the individuals and society. The people get to spend more time with their loved ones and enjoy life, but poor health can be a serious issue. Also, the health and social care is overwhelmed, as an older person need special care and support. Lack of funding is also a major issue within health and social care sectors. The government is planning to tackle those issues by increasing the pay rate and fund the health and social care sectors, there is more it could be done. Such as increasing the retirement age, as this is a principal factor causing financial instability, loneliness, isolation, physical and mental health problems, as well as staff shortages. According to Mauk (2010) if people keep active they are more likely to age successfully, a healthier elderly population means less care and supervision.



Img. 2. GOV.UK (2016) Health matters: getting every adult active every day

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