

Supporting older people to live well with frailty

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Age UK



- Local, national and international charity working for and with older people.
- 135 Network partners across the four nations, delivering diverse services and activities.
- Age UK - nationally - is involved in service development, research, campaigning and public policy
- Information and advice services with around 6 million+ contacts pa.



Frailty as a lived experience



Older people's perspectives on frailty



Language and perceptions

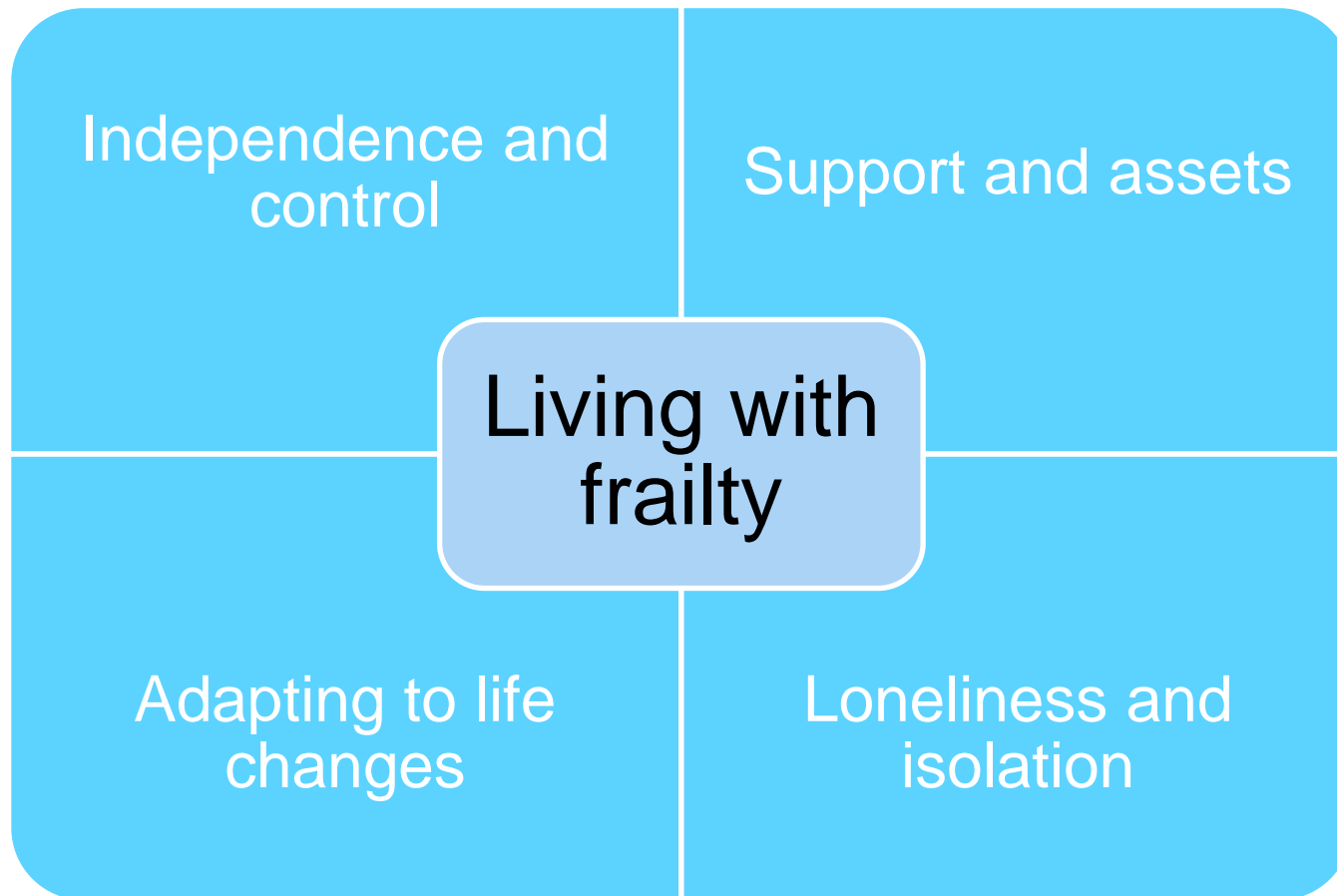
- *Frailty is a distinctive health state related to the ageing process in which multiple body systems gradually lose their in-built reserves. Around 10 per cent of people aged over 65 years have frailty, rising to between a quarter and a half of those aged over 85 (BGS).*
- We use frailty to describe something a person lives with, not what they are.
- 'Frailty' captures a range of needs, typically underscored by reduced, or reducing physical capacity.
- Also indicates proximity to risk – a shock or crisis could have severe consequences for health and wellbeing.
- People living with frailty might find it difficult to 'bounce back' from relatively minor health or life events.
- We see it as a collection of modifiable health and social needs, rather than an irreversible *state*. People can move in and out of living with frailty, as their health and circumstances change.

Language and perceptions

- Older people don't see themselves as frail; they don't want that negative association.
- But they talk about loss – of independence, of good health, of opportunities, of freedom.



Understanding the lives of older people living with frailty



Concepts of frailty

Biomedical	Lived experience
Risk	Change/transition
Deficits	Fear [of implications] and loss
“Unsuccessful” ageing	Loneliness
Compliance	Adaptation
Outcome of unhealthy behaviours	Resilience



Older people's health and care

- Four waves of pandemic research – representative polling and free text surveys: August 2020, February 2021, September 2021, March 2022
- Annual surveys of older people's health and care.
- **Online survey promoted through Age UK networks and social media (October 2022)**
 - 4,256 responders (423 answering on behalf of another person)
 - 88% aged 65+; 4% aged 90+
 - 73% at least one long term condition
- **Representative online poll older people (Kantar, October 2022)**
 - All respondents aged 60+ with 17% 75+
 - 53% female; 42% from more disadvantaged groups
 - 14% from Black Asian Minority Ethnic communities



Health is declining for many older people

- **32% older people said health had got worse.**
- **65% were not confident that their health would improve.**

Being less physically active has made mobility and health conditions worse.

- **27% older people unable to stay fit**
- **37% can't walk as far**
- **27% less steady on their feet**
- **31% finding climbing stairs more difficult**
- **24% walking short distances more difficult**
- **32% in more pain**

I have become less able to walk. Pre- covid I took a senior dance class; it has not restarted. Similar swimming. More aches and pains so cannot walk as much as previously.

Depression got worse during Covid lockdowns. This affects the fibromyalgia and meant I also did less exercise which affected the arthritis and all round health and wellbeing .. Vicious circles!

The visible deterioration in all the services from the NHS has really got me down. Having to wait for months while my condition has worsened has obviously been very upsetting.



Impact of waiting for NHS services on people with long term conditions and their carers

Older people with long term conditions have not had access to their usual appointments to help manage their conditions. Resuming regular appointments has been slow and inequitable.

- **23% of older people were waiting for NHS referral, diagnosis or treatment**
- **Significantly more older people from the more disadvantaged groups (25%) are waiting than those from the less disadvantaged groups (20%)**
- **10% Carers have been waiting more than 18 months, compared to 5% non-Carers**
- **13% Carers have been waiting more than 24 months, compared to 6% non-Carers**

I think if getting thru to the Drs wasn't has stressful that would be a great help. Also not dreading having to go to hospital because of long long waits would be a vast improvement and might make it so that people put up with their problems till they can stand them no more actually asking for help from Drs, hospitals etc as soon as they needed to.

A proper diagnosis, instead of guessing, and appropriate treatment, and quicker apts. This has been going on for 3-4 years!



The loss of social contact continues to affect older people

Many older people are still feeling isolated, as previous activities and opportunities to meet people have not resumed, or they have lost confidence to go out.

- **20% older people rarely go out of their home for social activity**
- **8% older people never go out of their home for social activity**
- **9% older people rarely have social contact with others, in person**
- **70% older people feel lonely to some extent**

I got very used to being at home during COVID lockdowns and I have found it difficult to motivate myself again.

I used to be a confident lady, I went shopping, I drove, shopped, I looked after my youngest 2 grandchildren whilst my daughter worked. Now I rarely leave my home.

My mental health has declined to a point where I'd rather be asleep than awake. Lack of mobility has affected my ability to see friends and that makes me feel cut off and isolated, one starts to feel lack of motivation.



What can Age UK do to help you?

- Support and information
- Sounding board
- Access to large Network of local Age UKs



- Home from Hospital
- Discharge Lounges
- Transport to hospitals and clinics
- Small repairs and adaptations
- Information and Advice
- Support with assessments
- ...



Useful resources and contact details

- [Age UK's website](#)
- [Age UK's Health and Wellbeing Research](#)
- [Understanding the lives of older people living with frailty](#) Ipsos MORI for Age UK
- [Doddery but dear? Examining age related stereotypes](#) (Centre for Ageing Better)
- [Patiently Waiting. Older people's experiences of waiting for surgery](#) (Independent Age)

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