



Latest Census data shows “demographic time bomb” set to hit UK care sector

- 3.3 million people over 65 now living alone, an increase of around 420,000 over the past decade
- Strong link between living alone and deteriorating health and use of public health services
- Foretells likely surge in demand for social care services with government reforms delayed indefinitely

Rapid growth in the number of over 65s living alone looks set to drive a surge in demand for later life social care and other public health services according to **retirement specialist Just Group**.

Analysis of the 2021 Census data¹ released last week shows that 3.3 million over 65s are now living alone – a 15% increase from the 2011 Census when 2.9 million over 65s were in one-person households.

The extra 420,000 over 65s living alone – three in 10 people among this age group – is significant because research² demonstrates a close link between living alone, poor health and greater use of public health services.

Stephen Lowe, group communications director at Just Group, said the growth in the sheer numbers of people in this age group, was likely to start increasing demand for health and social care services.

“Every year, household data shows the clock is running down on a demographic time bomb for the UK’s creaking social care sector,” he said.

“These latest government figures show double-digit growth in the number of over 65s living alone over the past decade. Older people are more likely to suffer from health conditions as well as loneliness which in itself can contribute to deteriorating health.

“The almost inevitable knock-on effect from this will be an increased demand for public health services such as social care, piling pressure on a sector that is already struggling to cope.”

Research from Just Group’s 2022 Care Report – the tenth in a decade-long series – found that three-quarters (75%) of those aged over 65 have not thought about care, planned for it or spoken to loved ones about it.

Fifty-nine percent also said that they were confused by recent government announcements on social care.

Stephen Lowe added to concerns that the social care system could be overwhelmed when such a large, unprepared cohort starts to increasingly need its services.

“Our Care Index shows year after year that millions of people in our ageing society are unprepared for the eventuality that they may need care in later life. And who can blame them?”

“Pronouncements and retreats typify government policy on social care for the last twenty years, the public is confused by the constant change and losing faith that the problem will ever be tackled. If the government wants to encourage people to plan then it must set out a clear timeline for implementing the latest reforms.”

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Notes to Editors:

Footnotes

1 – **Census 2021**, People's living arrangements in England and Wales:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/livingarrangementsofpeopleinenglandandwales/census2021>

2 – **The Health Foundation**, Older people living alone are 50% more likely to visit A&E than those who live with others: <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/news/older-people-living-alone-are-50-more-likely-to-visit-ae-than-those-who-live-with>

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