Improving planning for an ageing population

The work included new projections for different ethnic groups, drawn together with other studies of predicted changes to the labour market, and to housing, health and social care.

The research highlighted the need for targeted support and policy responses at Local Enterprise Partnership and local authority levels, and for national policies to give greater consideration to their regional impacts. Over the next 25 years the population of the North of England will continue to grow, and age, as a result of health improvements. This tendency will be less pronounced in urban centres due to a combination of migration and higher levels of fertility among black and minority ethnic groups.

Summary

An ageing population brings challenges in the provision of social care, health care and appropriate housing. By modelling and forecasting patterns of demographic change at a range of spatial and temporal scales, the regional impacts of national policy changes can be highlighted and planned for.

Challenge

Adaptation to demographic change has previously focused on national policy changes with little evidence for the regional impact of these policies, which requires modelling and forecasting patterns of demographic change at a range of spatial and temporal scales.

Solution

A multidisciplinary team drawn from the N8 universities, including geographer Emeritus Professor Phil Rees from the University of Leeds, modelled and forecast patterns of demographic change in the North of England between 2011 and 2036 at varying spatial scales.

There is a strong two-way interaction between demographic changes and patterns of labour supply and demand. There are business opportunities as people work and live longer; including development of new specialist products such as clothing, health care services and financial services, and the adaptation of the housing stock to enable people to continue to live in their own homes. There is also potential for entrepreneurship and community activism among the over 50s and people from migrant communities, especially in the arts, entertainment, recreation and education.

Benefits
Policy insight

The N8 partnership project yielded a number of reports across the four strands, and a wealth of publicly-available spatially disaggregated demographic and socioeconomic data.

These data allow Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities to model demographic change, to highlight the impacts of demographic change on health and social care

infrastructure and address specific policy challenges.

LEPs in the North of England are using the research findings to give a higher priority to developing economic opportunities that may arise from an ageing population. The *Future of an Ageing Population* Foresight project drew upon N8 partnership data to examine health trends in the north-east of England. The research supported the decision by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to investigate the role of entrepreneurship amongst over 50s.

The research also underpinned the second N8 Industry Innovation Forum meeting, held in November 2012, on the topic active and healthy ageing. The event resulted in follow-up projects with N8 funding including Virtual Cycles of Wellbeing, which has created wound care products for older people on low incomes.

Further reading
Future of an Ageing Population (2016)
N8 project summary report