



HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

7 DECEMBER 2023

REPORT TITLE:	AGEING POPULATION
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to inform the Health and Wellbeing Board about some projected demographic changes for Wirral and highlight some potential implications.

This matter affects all wards within the borough; it is not a key decision. This report contributes to the Wirral Plan objective Active and Healthy Lives.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note and comment on the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of projected population change on Wirral through quantitative analysis. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the findings.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options were considered as the report is for information purposes only.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This report was requested as part of the work programme for the Health and Wellbeing Board. It provides an overview of the current and projected population numbers in Wirral.
- 3.2 Statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show changes to the age-structure of the England population and latest population projections continue to show that the country's population is ageing. The two main factors driving this change are long-term improvements in life expectancy and decreases in the fertility rate¹.
- 3.3 Many people are living and working longer and can lead active, healthy, and independent lives into older age. However, age is a risk factor for many conditions and, as people age, they are more likely to live with a long-term condition, disability, and frailty. This is likely to have implications for health and social care.
- 3.4 Research undertaken nationally², suggests that by 2040, the number of people living with major illness in England is projected to increase by over a third (37%) of the population (2.5m people from 6.7m to 9.1m³). Most of this increase is the result of an ageing population, rather than an increase in disease prevalence. This suggests that although life expectancy is increasing, and people may be living longer, increasingly these extra years may be lived in poorer health.
- 3.5 There are a number of implications of an ageing population. In addition to the potential implications for health and social care, the projected changing demographics need to be considered when long-term strategies for workforce, built environment, housing, to name just a few are being developed.
- 3.6 As age is a risk factor for many health conditions it is important that there is a long term, preventative vision for healthy ageing across the life course.

3.7 Current Population

¹ONS,2020

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/subnationalpopulationprojectionsforengland/2018based>)

² Watt T, Raymond A, Ratchet-Jacquet L, Head A, Kyridemos C, Kelly E, Charlesworth A. Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England. The Health Foundation; 2023 (<https://doi.org/10.37829/HF-2023-RC03>)

³ Numbers do not add up due to rounding

The 2021 Census estimates the population of Wirral to be 320,200. Figure 1, in Appendix 1, shows the Wirral population compared to England. Wirral had a higher proportion of older population aged 65 years and over and a lower proportion of working aged people compared to England in 2021. Older people aged 65 years and over made up 22% of the population in Wirral in 2021. This compares to 18.5% in England overall and 18.8% in the North-West. In numbers, this was 70,390 older people aged 65 years and over living in Wirral in 2021.

- 3.8 Between the last two Censuses, the average (median) age in Wirral increased by two years, from 42 to 44 years of age. Wirral had a higher average (median) age than the North-West in 2021 (40 years) and a higher average (median) age than England (also 40 years).
- 3.9 The number of residents aged between 35 and 49 years decreased by approximately 8,900 (13.4%) between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses.
- 3.10 The population currently comprises almost 65,600 people aged 0 to 17 years.
- 3.11 Trends in number of births continue to decrease. The most recent births data (2022) showed the lowest number of births since Wirral was formed as a Metropolitan Borough in 1974.
- 3.12 Wirral currently has a higher proportion of women (51.6%) than men. This is in part due to higher average life expectancy amongst women.
- 3.13 There is considerable variation in the proportion of older people at ward level, with quite a stark West/East split, as Figure 2 in Appendix 1 illustrates. In Heswall 33% of the population are aged over 65, this compares with 12% in Birkenhead and Tranmere.
- 3.14 Projected Population Trends**
Population projections are produced by the Office for National Statistics. The latest available projections are derived from a 2018 base population.⁴ Projections are only available for Wirral as a whole, so no sub-borough analysis is possible.
- 3.15 The overall population of Wirral is projected to increase by just over 4% (from 2018 base) to 336,348 by 2043. This relatively small population increase masks large variation by age band as Figure 3 in Appendix 1 illustrates.
- 3.16 The total population age 65 years and over is projected to increase from 69,811 in 2018 to 93,081 in 2043.
- 3.17 Figure 4 in Appendix 1 presents projected population percentage change by broad age-band from the 2018 baseline year to 2043. As the chart illustrates, the largest projected percentage increases are amongst the older population.
- The population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase by approximately 33% by 2043.

⁴ Population projections have not been updated by the Office for National Statistics since before the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipated publication in late 2023 of new projections has been delayed

- The largest projected increase is in the 90 years and over (97%) and 80-84 years (70%) population.
- The population aged 20-64 years is projected to decrease by 3% by 2043.
- The population aged 0-19 year is projected to decrease 7% by 2043.

3.18 Considerations

Given that age is a risk factor for many health conditions, the projected changes to the population age structure is likely to lead to increases in the total number of people living with various long-term conditions.

- 3.19 The stark inequalities experienced within Wirral is another important consideration. There is currently a higher burden of ill-health, with higher prevalence of many long-term conditions, in the more deprived areas of the borough and, on average, an earlier age of onset.
- 3.20 Focusing on a life course approach to healthy ageing and early prevention to reduce the impact of illness and improve the quality of people's lives for our growing and ageing population is key.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The report is for information purposes only and there are no financial implications.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The report is for information purposes only and there are no resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The quantitative analysis provided within the report provides insight into how projected demographics could impact on the existing inequalities and high burden of ill-health in Wirral. The insight needs to be used to inform strategies and plans, as not doing so would increase the risks of not being able to address needs and improve health outcomes.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 No direct public consultation or engagement has been undertaken in relation to this report. The insight within this report seeks to provide an understanding of our ageing population and forms part of the Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). There is a commitment to ensure the voice of Wirral residents and communities is given equal weight to quantitative data and is reflected within the JSNA work programme.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues arising directly because of this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications that will be generated by any recommendations included in this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The report is for information purposes only and there are no community wealth implications.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Figures illustrating changing population demographics.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Watt T, Raymond A, Rachet-Jacquet L, Head A, Kypridemos C, Kelly E, Charlesworth A. Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England. The Health Foundation; 2023 (<https://doi.org/10.37829/HF-2023-RC03>).

Life expectancy in Wirral 2018-20
(<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/3666/life-expectancy-update-2018-20-final-accchkd.pdf>)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board in accordance with Section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) To develop a shared understanding of the needs of the local community through the development of an agreed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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N/A	
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