

Foreword

We have something to celebrate!

We are living longer, and the good news is that we are living more of those years in good health. Since I was born in the 1960s, life expectancy at birth in the UK has increased from just over 70 to just over 80, that is an extra 10 years! Advances in medical science and healthier living have seen this trend continue. The Office for National Statistics told us almost 10 years ago that one-in-three babies born today will see their 100th birthday.¹

Parallel to the trend that has seen increases in longevity, we have also seen birth-rates fall over recent decades. The impact is that the demographic pyramid, where we had a large number of young people in society supporting a small number of older people, is starting to look more like a column. Government retirement and benefit systems in the UK and many other countries are coming under increasing financial strain and responsibility is shifting to the individual to take care of themselves.

How we prepare for a 100-year life will require us to fundamentally reexamine how we live, our relationship with work, and what we need to do to achieve financial security over the course of our lives. This may sound scary, but with a little bit of imagination, personal leadership, and social solidarity we can find a way forward that is sustainable, equitable, fulfilling and rewarding.

For generations we have lived our adult lives in three distinct phases: starting with a period of education or training, followed by work, and ending with a few years of retirement. If you use the analogy of life as a journey, we have added our gift of extra years to the end of the motorway without changing any of the on and off ramps that signify different phases of our lives. In my case, you could see it as adding 10 miles to the end of the journey without getting access to any service stations on the last stretch. There is a chance I will run out of petrol or get bored, neither situation is desirable.

We need to reimagine how we will live in the future, so that we can do the things we want in our personal lives, achieve the things that are important to us professionally, and ensure that we have the financial security to make this all work. We will dip in and out of education and work more frequently and at different times of our lives than we have in the past. To do this, we will need to have a clear picture of what is important to us and a roadmap of how we want to achieve this.

We can see responsibility is shifting to the individual when it comes to preparing for retirement; we need to proactively take responsibility for other aspects of our careers and personal lives to make sure that we are creating a sustainable future for ourselves – one where we can achieve our goals and realise our dreams. This book

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/articles/whatareyourchancesoflivingto100/2016-01-14>

gives us the tools to build our own roadmaps, and the encouragement to experiment and think in new ways.

In the post-war years, the concept of being a teenager developed to describe the years between childhood and adulthood. It reflected cultural shifts that were happening at a time of increased prosperity and were coupled with changes and advancements in the labour market. Arguably, we are going through comparable cultural and technological changes today, but the group impacted are not young adults, but people who are mid-career, those trying to figure out what's next. We have not come up with a term like 'teenager' that will provide these people with the sense of identity that will give them a voice and help them create a movement. Whoever comes up with the name will certainly solve a big challenge for many of us working in the longevity space. That aside, key to helping this group find their way forward and thrive in the future is to help them achieve self-empowerment and sustainable personal leadership.

Mike Mansfield
CEO ProAge