Developing Age-Friendly Rural Communities: the contribution of local participatory planning processes

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This study focuses on rural communities in England, and the challenges and opportunities they present for ageing populations. It is specifically concerned with Neighbourhood Planning - a participatory planning process that involves communities taking an active role in shaping the development of their area. It explores the potential of Neighbourhood Planning to deliver age-friendly action plans in rural contexts to help create communities that foster healthy ageing.
The project builds on previous SPHR research that developed an evaluation tool for Age-Friendly Cities/Communities. It will lay the foundations for a larger study that will produce a resource on which rural communities can draw in developing plans and strategies that promote healthy ageing.

The project will provide:
1. An overview of Neighbourhood Planning in relation to promoting healthy ageing in rural settings, based on existing literature.
2. A description of rural Neighbourhood Planning areas in England that focuses on their location, population, deprivation levels and health-related priorities – highlighting those particularly relevant to healthy ageing. This will be based on analysis of online information plus a stakeholder survey.
3. Case studies of three rural communities that will examine the processes, structures and outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning with regards to supporting healthy ageing. Local information will be collected through interviews and group discussions.

Led by the University of Cambridge, the study is being carried out in collaboration with researchers from the Universities of Sheffield, Liverpool and Durham, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

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