

‘Keep on Moving’: Inactivity approaching later life

Amy McSweeney
Evidence Officer, Centre for Ageing Better
06.10.2021

Why are we concentrating on people approaching later life?



We want people to spend more years healthy and free of disabling health conditions, and to reduce the disability-free life expectancy gap between the wealthiest and poorest people in England.

Research Questions

- What can we learn from analysis of national surveys about the intersecting characteristics of the most inactive adults in mid-life (50-70)? e.g. gender, ethnicity, caring status, disability?
- Considering adults who are inactive in mid-life, what are their attitudes towards; preferences for; knowledge and past experiences of physical activity?
- What challenges do inactive adults face in becoming physically active?
- What do we know about adults who were active or fairly active and then became inactive? What, if anything, could enable them to become more active again or stop them from becoming inactive in the first place?

Evidence review (March 2021)

- This age cohort not particularly well represented in the existing evidence base
- Qualitative studies looking at either specifically at, or including, 50-70 year olds
- 13 studies met inclusion criteria- mostly pre-2010

Qualitative interviews (July 2021)

- Interviews with 54 people 50-70, with a mix of people who are active and inactive
- People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and BAME backgrounds slightly over-represented as per national surveys
- Probing people's attitudes, experiences and their relationship with activity over their life course

Barriers and Motivators



Social and emotional



“Because I’ve got some friends and I see them with a stick, younger than me. And I think why, why have they got a stick, you know. I don’t really question people but you’re not supposed to be like that, you know what I mean?”

“No, I did go to the gym a few times.
But there’s too many girls, tiny little
girls there so I kept stopping it.
Couldn’t do anymore.”

Practical



“When I was caring for my mum I would take the children to school then the rest of the day would be spent sorting her out. Washing her, getting her dressed, appointments, making appointments, and then, then getting the children home from school then everybody for dinner, baths, everything. Yeah, that was always no time for yourself. I hadn’t got a lot of time for myself.”

Recommendations

National government

- Prioritise increasing activity levels as part of the recovery
- Invest in cost-effective strength and balance training for people in mid-life
- Promote, test and pilot behaviour change interventions

Local government

- Adopt whole systems place-based approaches to supporting people aged 50–70 to become more physically active.

Health and leisure sector

- Create an inclusive and welcoming environment for people of all ages
- Ensure staff are trained to support people aged 50–70 with long-term health conditions



Thank you

amy.mcsweeney@ageing-better.org.uk