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| *Content type* | **Publications** |
| *Date* | 4 May 2011 |
| *Title* | **Can Localism work for Older People in Urban Environments?** |
| *Excerpt* | This research questions whether Localism can work for older people living in urban areas and sets out a number of recommendations that will help ensure that the views of all people are considered in new local decision-making processes. |
| *Body copy* | This research argues that the success of the Localism Bill depends on equitable access to social networks and information, as well as substantial levels of political interest and community engagement. But it finds that these are lacking for some people, particularly older people, living in urban communities.ILC-UK undertook critical analysis of the British Social Attitudes Survey to inform a new research paper on the impact of the Big Society and Localism Bill on older people living in urban environments. The analysis found that:Political Engagement• Older people in urban areas were not as interested in politics – twice as many older people in urban areas said they had little or no interest in politics (35%) compared to older rural residents (18%).• Not only were adults of all ages in urban areas less interested in politics, they were significantly less likely to vote in all or most local elections than those in rural areas.• While older people are generally more interested in politics than working age people, older people in urban areas show around the same degree of interest in politics as working age people in rural areas.• The report finds that disadvantage drives several of these differences. It finds that having no qualifications or living in social housing negatively predict political interest and voting in local elections – more urban residents share these characteristics than rural residents.• These findings are of concern as there is little detail in the Localism Bill on strategies that will help those from disadvantaged backgrounds engage with the new political structures.Access to information and services• Older people in urban areas are significantly less likely to have access to the internet at home (two-fifths do) than older people in rural or suburban areas (over half do).• Older people across all areas are significantly less likely to have access to the internet at home than people under 65. Under half of older people across all areas have access to the internet at home compared to over three-quarters of people under 65. Even fewer older people actually use the internet.• Older people in urban areas are more likely to be dependent on public transport to reach local shops and services than in rural areas (24% versus 8%), and are more likely to report that there are areas within a mile of their home that they are afraid to walk through (61% versus 33%).• These findings are of concern as there is little detail in the Localism Bill on standards for ensuring access to information and new decision making structures.Intergenerational relations and Big Society• Older people in urban areas are more likely to agree or agree strongly that young people do not have respect for British values, almost 90% do.• But, working age people (under 65) in urban areas appear more sympathetic to older people continuing in the workforce and to raising the benefits given to pensioners.• Nevertheless, these findings are of concern as they suggest that the quality of intergenerational relations in urban areas may be lower than in rural areas. To make the Localism Bill work and ensure that no group or generation loses out, good intergenerational cooperation is needed.Many of our findings reflect wider concerns about the ability of less advantaged people to participate in decision making structures, and to lobby for the continuation of services upon which they may be reliant, without clear guidance and minimum standards in place for the provision of information.In publishing this report, ILC-UK recommends that:• Policy-makers should seek to strengthen interpersonal, intergenerational, and multigenerational networks, particularly in urban areas.• Policy making under Localism should find a way to ensure that decisions reflect the diversity of the electorate.• Local and central Government should engage in a programme of activity to encourage community engagement among more hard to reach groups.• The National Planning Framework, which will provide guidance for local development, should include provision for housing an ageing population and ensuring the adequate provision of affordable housing.• The Government should introduce minimum standards for the provision of timely information should be set in place to facilitate engagement among older and more deprived residents.• Community meetings, referendums and other opportunities to participate in the Big Society in urban areas should be structured around the specific needs of older people to ensure adequate representation.Author: Dylan Kneale |
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