

Freedom to live



“You can live the way you’ve always lived ... everything you need is here, anything you want is here”

Successful retirement living

This paper summarises the key findings from a research study of Happiness and Wellbeing in village communities, undertaken by independent research consultants, Dataloft Ltd. The researchers conducted a series of workshops with **Anchor residents**. It is one of two studies, its sister publication investigates the physical attributes of a successful village community.

Passing the time of day

Neighbours that you recognise who have time for a friendly smile is an age-old sign of a strong community and highly prized by residents.

Peace of mind

Knowing there is a framework in place for future needs in healthcare, and daily support as well as for household budgeting, creates a feeling of security.

Non-familial support

Residents valued staff that they could rely on, without feelings of guilt and imposition as they might if living with family.

Freedom to live

Far from retirement enforcing barriers on life, residents felt a sense of freedom that for many was unexpected.

What makes downsizing worthwhile?

Passing the time of day

“You need never be alone”

Neighbourliness,
caring, community spirit

“We are neighbours and acquaintances – we say hello, nod, are friendly, there’s a connection”

Friendships, mutual
understanding, shared respect

Peace of mind

“Financial certainty is valued”

Home-owner,
single-maintenance fee,
no payback on sale

“The ability to adapt for the future”

Leisure facilities, clubs/
societies, care packages
in the home

Non-familial support

“Nothing is too much trouble”

Friendly approachable staff,
concierge service, ‘can do’
attitude

“There’s always someone who can help”

Generosity, caring,
supportive community

Freedom to live

“Leading my life as I want to”

Retaining control, free from
the burdens of home ownership

“Make it what you want it to be”

Independent decision making,
choice, happiness

Happiness and wellbeing **in retirement living**

Of the entire UK population,

**those aged
between 65
and 75 are
the happiest¹**

This statistic alone should make it easy to create happy retirement communities. But research also shows that substantial lifestyle changes, particularly moving home can induce anxiety. This research investigates the lifestyle changes associated with downsizing and factors associated with happiness and wellbeing in retirement living.

¹ Office for National Statistics, National Well-being indicators (2016)

Those aged 70-74 lead the nation in happiness and wellbeing

■ UK population ■ 70-74 year olds

% ranked very highly



34.8%
44.0%

Happiness



34.4%
43.4%

Worthwhile



29.2%
38.6%

Satisfaction

% ranked low



40.8%
47.0%

Anxious

The decision to downsize

Research indicates that over half of those aged over 60 are actively looking to downsize their property. While personal circumstances top the list as a reason to move, **one in four are motivated by wanting a smaller or more suitable property¹** and many of those consider some form of retirement housing.

With the number of +65 households anticipated to rise by 3.5 million over the next 20 years, and a prediction that by 2039, 37% of all households will be headed up by someone aged over 65², identifying the attributes of a successful downsizing move is critical to the wellbeing of our wider society.

58%

Of over 60s actively looking to downsize

Demos, 2014

10.3 million

UK Households will be headed up by someone aged over 65 by 2039

DCLG/dataloft

¹ Survey of English Housing (2016)

² Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), (2016)

The importance of happiness

Increasingly, happiness is considered to be the key measure of social progress and the most important goal of public policy. Four in every five Britons believe that the government should prioritise happiness over wealth. Indeed, the UK's levels of contentment has been monitored since the launch of the national wellbeing programme in 2010.

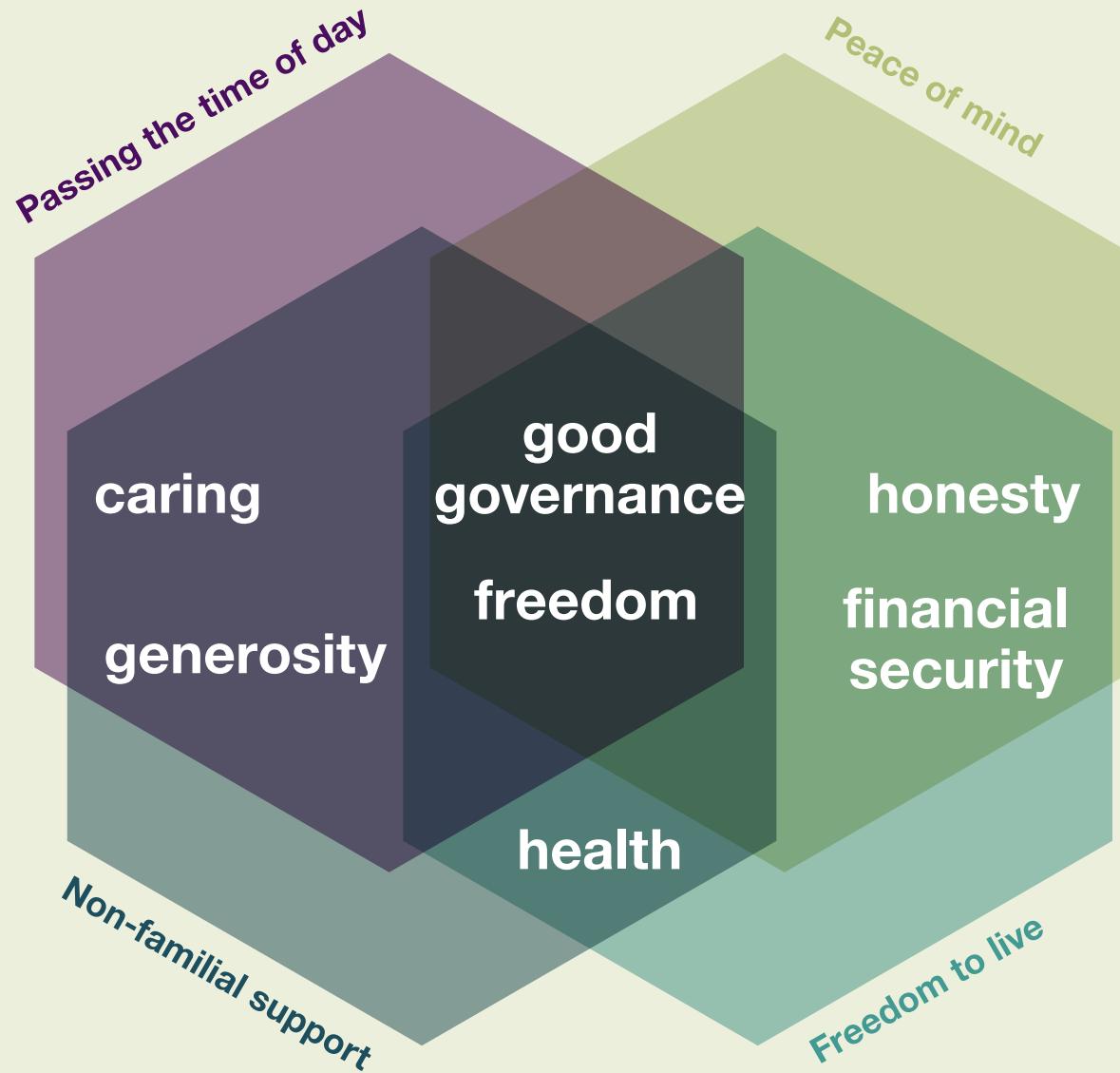
The launch of the **World Happiness Survey** in 2012, placed the issue of happiness on a global stage. Now in its sixth edition the factors found to support happiness at a national level are: **caring, freedom, generosity, honesty, health, financial security and good governance.** These factors were explored through a series of workshops held with residents of Anchor's retirement villages in March 2017. Each of the four core elements of retirement living we identified through this research align to these attributes.



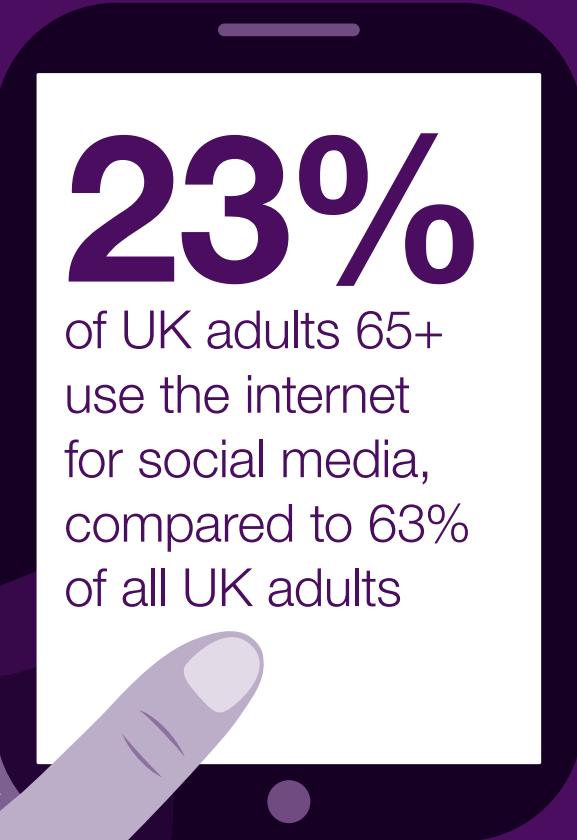
81%
of Britons believe the government should prioritise happiness over wealth

GfK, NOP

Interplay of retirement living and happiness



Passing the time of day **in a supportive community**



23%

of UK adults 65+
use the internet
for social media,
compared to 63%
of all UK adults

Among residents we found a strong appreciation of the importance of passing the time of day with others, articulated as neighbours making eye contact, or taking time for a short conversation over a newspaper, or sharing a coffee in communal areas.

While virtually two-thirds of adults use social media to connect with friends and acquaintances, this falls to just 23% of those aged 65+, making face-to-face interaction significantly more important.

In passing the time of day residents notice if someone is absent, or not quite their usual self, they gain **a mutual trust and understanding** and can ensure each other feel valued and cared for in the simplest of ways.

Passing the time of day

“Happiness lies in the person sitting beside you and your ability to talk to them. Happiness is clear-headed human interaction and empathy”

Dennis Lehane, American Author

“We are neighbours and acquaintances: we say hello, nod, are friendly, there's a connection”

“The coffee shop offers us a place to meet without imposing on neighbours”

“The Bistro is a great way to meet your neighbours”

“You need never be lonely here”

We're all here for the same reason – that's a good enough start for friendships”

Peace of mind and financial security



“It’s easy to look after my money, I just don’t worry about it”

“At home, there was always the possibility of unexpected and urgent repairs – here the service charge is predictable and manageable”

Many reports note that a successful downsizing move can release equity, either to assist with later life or to help children. Very few residents cited financial motivations as a main factor in their decision to downsize. However, reduced utility bills, a clear monthly maintenance fee and easy to understand support packages do offer financial security.

This predictability of expenditure is highly valued by residents. Reducing the number of uncertainties in the household budget is reassuring for both residents and their families.

Peace of mind and a clear road ahead



“I expect to live in this community for a considerable length of time”

83%

A successful downsize move includes catering for all the ‘what ifs’ of the future, many of which are health related. Many residents expect to remain part of the retirement community for a considerable time, and very few expect to move again. **Residents highly valued the clear road ahead offered by a retirement village**, from the inclusion of leisure facilities and clubs to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle, to the option of on-site support from care teams and the provision of on-site care facilities, if and when needed.

Having planned for their future, there was a clear sense of security and peace of mind among village residents.

Non-familial support and a sense of community



“Nothing is too much trouble, the staff are full of life and humour, they are simply wonderful ”

“I don’t need to worry my family about the little things”

As well as passing the time of day with neighbours, regular conversations and support from staff were highly regarded. Offering a concierge-type service and with a ‘can do’ attitude, many residents commented that nothing was too much trouble for staff. They valued staff that they could rely on, without feelings of guilt and imposition as they might if living with family.

Many also welcomed interaction with the wider community, either through theatre or shopping trips to the local area, or through forging friendships through participation in leisure activities which are open to non-village members. The retirement village does not stand in isolation. It is part of a wider community and that enables residents to live the life that they want, with the knowledge that support is on hand if and when it is needed.

Freedom to live living life



**“I can make up
my own mind
about things”**

**“Here you can
live the way
you’ve always
lived, on a
smaller scale”**

91% of residents had
no regrets about moving

Far from ignoring their advancing years, those involved in our research were honest about challenges in their future, independently making the decision of when and where to move. **Many wished they had made the decision sooner.** For those in good health, active and mobile, downsizing has had little impact. ‘Normal’ life continues with much time spent outside of the village community itself.

For those who have moved due to health or often personal reasons, such as the loss of a loved one, the retirement village has provided the opportunity to reduce fears and anxieties. A freedom of knowing they will never be isolated, that there is always someone on hand to help. For both, a freedom from many of the normal responsibilities of property ownership, such as maintenance, gardening and security concerns.

Happiness in retirement living

“I never want to be institutionalised – it’s not like that here”

While many people think getting older and downsizing in retirement will result in a loss of control over daily life, our research found quite the reverse. **The decision to downsize was a positive lifestyle choice**, offering predictability for the future self-sufficiency, a sense of being liberated and for many a new lease of life which was quite unexpected.

In a world where traditional communities are disappearing, **passing the time of day** with neighbours that you recognise and who have time for a smile or chat is of paramount importance for ensuring happiness in retirement living. In such a simple gesture residents feel supported, cared for and part of a community.



About Anchor

Anchor is England's largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care for the over-55s, providing services to more than 34,000 older people in 1,000 locations. Anchor provides a range of services from rented and leasehold retirement properties to residential care homes, specialist dementia care homes and retirement villages.

Many thanks to the residents of Hampshire Lakes who contributed to this research report and its sister publication, *The Perfect Village*.

About Hampshire Lakes

Hampshire Lakes retirement village is set in stunning woodlands alongside Yateley Lakes, nestled between Yateley and Sandhurst, in Hampshire.

At the heart of Hampshire Lakes is the village centre, the focal point of community life, which includes Senses, a state-of-the art Wellness Centre and Spa, with its indoor pool and first-class gymnasium. Adjacent to the Wellness Centre sits the Lakeside Bistro, Zest Juice Bar and Cotton's Delicatessen. The luxurious development facilities, also include a hair dressing salon, library and landscaped gardens.

Hampshire Lakes retirement village has 74 prestigious independent living apartments (one and two bed) and a 36 room care home, Willow Gardens, on site. The second phase of the development will add a further 45 apartments (one and two bed) to the village.

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