

Letters to the Editor

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The cruelty of coercing pensioners into downsizing their homes

SIR – As if contending with the implications of the assisted suicide debate wasn't bad enough, Britain's beleaguered older people now are expected to surrender to the pernicious agenda of the downsizing brigade.

When will "helping" older people downsize become coercion? I do not believe that 60 per cent of old people in Britain are looking to downsize (Letters, March 2). I know lots of people who are busily fortifying and upgrading their homes as they approach older age. With old age comes the need for mental security from familiar surroundings. To shoe-horn people into retirement flats is cruel and unhealthy.

It is obvious why there are so few retirement properties built: pensioners don't want them.

Margie Haynes
Colchester, Essex

SIR – Mike Duggan, Lord Best and their fellow signatories (Letters, March 2) say that only 110,000 properties have been

built for purchase as retirement homes. Does the figure refer to last year's build? In Surrey alone they crop up everywhere. As someone ready to consider downsizing, I see many disadvantages to living in "retirement apartments".

To begin with, they are expensive to buy, and maintenance charges are eye-watering. Limited space allows for few possessions and no grandchildren. Once the leaseholder dies, sale of the apartment is difficult.

Rosamund Edwards
Sanderstead, Surrey

SIR – I am increasingly irritated by those who blame "older people" – anyone over 65 – for the nation's ills. I have no desire to spend my remaining years in a commune with people whose only common link is age. Is it not time that ageism was ranked alongside sexism, racism and all the other "isms" proscribed by law?

Kathleen Lund
Torquay, Devon

SIR – Do the authors of the letter plan to downsize to a one-bedroom flat without a personal garden space? Neither do my wife and I.

J David Thompson
Ipswich, Suffolk

SIR – Here in Middlesbrough, there is much house building going on, with hundreds of new four- or five-bedroom "executive" type houses. These will never be occupied, as the area lacks "executives", and has nothing to attract them.

Allan J Byrne
Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire

SIR – Flats for the elderly would be more appealing if they featured decent-sized patios. Juliet balconies look romantic, but what we want is something big enough to accommodate some potted plants and four ladies sipping gin and tonics and playing Cribbage or Rummikub.

Zoe Percy
Orpington, Kent

Aid as investment

SIR – Aside from the moral case, there is a compelling argument to be made for aid as a good investment for Britain ("Ebola outbreak shows why Britain's overseas aid commitment is worthwhile", telegraph.co.uk, February 3).

The least-developed countries have the greatest growth potential and a large share of the world's strategic minerals and resources. States whose citizens enjoy higher levels of development and opportunity are less prone to violence, terrorism and refugee crises. It is no wonder that many countries see aid as a key part of their national security strategy.

Natalie Samarasinghe
Executive Director, United Nations Association-UK
London SW1

Reporting child abuse

SIR – When I was a teacher in the Eighties, staff at our school were instructed to believe anything we were told by a pupil regarding physical or mental abuse, sexual