

having our say

A Housing Action
Kit for Older People



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Foreword

I have long championed the need for older people to make their housing needs and preferences known. All too often, we consider ourselves marginalised, unaware of the choices available to us and unsure of how we can influence national policies and local funding and service priorities. However, older people are increasingly having a greater say about their housing choices and the kinds of services they expect which will enable them to stay independent and active in their community.

Importantly, Government has begun to recognise the wider contribution older people make to sustainable communities. The ongoing work of the Better Government for Older People programme is testament to this.

Yet there is much more that older people can achieve at a national, local and, in future, a regional level. This includes getting actively engaged with councils and regional bodies responsible for producing Older People's Strategies and investment plans. In some areas there are already good, close working arrangements with local community groups for older people and individual user involvement. In others these arrangements are still at a very early stage of development and need to be built upon.

Having our Say: A Housing Action Kit for Older People draws on what already works well, offers some examples of good practice, and explains why and how older people can become actively involved in planning better housing for an ageing society. Above all, it seeks to provide you with information and ideas to better enable you to influence the current and future range of housing for older people in your area. Here's a chance for you to act and have your say about all our housing futures.

David Gardiner

*Older People's Advisory Group,
Better Government for Older People*

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Part 1:

Housing for older people past, present and future



What do most people mean by “older people’s housing”?

This term may conjure up images of sheltered housing flats, bungalows and residential care homes. In fact 90% of older people live in what is often referred to as the “general housing stock” ie. ordinary housing which could be lived in by people of any age.

The majority of older people now own their own homes - 70% of people are now ‘owner occupiers’. Increasingly, people on relatively modest incomes and pensions are home owners - it is estimated that 560,000 households who bought their council home under the Right to Buy scheme during the 1980’s are now reaching their 60s and 70s. Home ownership may bring advantages in terms of choice but responsibility for maintenance and repair can be a disadvantage as people get older.

Local councils are still the main direct providers of housing for rent and a high proportion of council tenants are older people. But increasingly housing associations (also known as registered social landlords or RSLs) develop and manage what is now called ‘social rented’ housing.

This all adds up to major changes over the past 30 years in the ways that older people are housed.

Who decides how housing for older people will be developed in the future?

Central government, currently through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, decides on the broader housing policies and sets a national agenda for action. It also controls the national budgets for housing expenditure and decides upon the planning policies which affect what sort of housing the private sector develops.

The Department of Health sets the national agenda with regard to social services payments for residential care homes and the support services which enable older people to live in their own homes.

These two government departments have set out their vision for the future of housing for older people in *Quality and Choice for Older People’s Housing. A Strategic Framework* (2001, DH/ODPM).

This sets out broad principles (detailed below), and it is up to each local council to interpret the Framework and decide what housing and services are needed in their area. Councils are expected to work with local older people when deciding upon their local strategy for older people’s housing.

Where does the money for housing come from?

(Below is a simplified explanation; see Appendix B for more detail).

The majority of the money for social rented housing is provided by central government. From April 2004, central government will allocate most housing money to Regional Housing Boards, who in turn will share out the money to local councils.

Central government also gives money to the Housing Corporation who then allocate the money to housing associations (some of this money will also go out via Regional Housing Boards from 2004). Housing associations can also borrow money from commercial institutions such as banks and building societies.

New housing is also built by private developers, primarily for sale rather than renting. There is growing interest in the private sector for building leasehold accommodation for older people, some of which provides a high level of care and support. Planning permission for private sector housing is usually controlled by local councils.

Thus, even though local councils are no longer the primary builders of new housing, they are still the main organisation making the decisions about local housing development.

What does central government have to say about housing for older people?

The Government's overall housing policy objective is to *“offer everyone the opportunity to have a decent, affordable and appropriate home and so promote social cohesion, well-being and self-dependence”*.

Central government's stated aim is to improve housing quality and choice in order to improve the quality of life for older people. It also says that housing has a major role to play in enabling older people to keep in good health and live independently. Local councils are seen as having a key role to play in taking the lead in planning

housing for older people, and in giving older people more say in its development.

In Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing: A Strategic Framework, central government sets 5 priorities:

- *Diversity and Choice – services should be provided which promote independence and respond to older people's needs and preferences*
- *Information and Advice – this should be accessible to older people themselves, and to professionals, on the variety of housing and support options available*
- *Flexible Service Provision – local councils and service providers should review housing and services to make sure that they are flexible enough to support a variety of housing choices and meet changing needs*
- *Quality – housing should be of a decent standard; support and care services should be of a high quality*
- *Joint working – housing, health and social services should work together to join up their services*

Whereas other areas of government action have many specific targets, these have not been set for the provision of housing for older people. A target has been set to bring all social rented housing up to a 'decent homes standard' by 2010 and much of the money that the Government has made available for housing over recent years has been spent on meeting this target. Targets are also being set with regard to provision of new homes, particularly in the South East, and for dealing with low demand and abandonment. (These are explained in *'Sustainable communities: building for the future'*, ODPM 2003).

Government has recommended that local authorities produce an Older People's Housing Strategy, possibly including this as part of their overall Housing Strategy or as part of a wider Older People's Strategy.

What is an Older People's Housing Strategy?

It is a plan which says what the local council will do about older people's housing in its area.

Some councils have already produced "ageing" strategies under the Better Government for Older People programme, and/or have done a Best Value review of older people services which looked at housing provision. Some may have only a limited statement about older people's housing in their general housing strategy.

Ideally, an older people's housing strategy would have something to say about all of the following:

- *flexible, practical help and support for older people who live in the ordinary housing stock, either as tenants or owners*
- *good quality sheltered housing for rent, sale or shared ownership*
- *extra care services and/or the better use of sheltered housing to deliver care*
- *improvements to private sector housing, including help from Home Improvement Agencies and handyman services*
- *improved adaptation services for older and disabled people, including providing grants for adaptations*
- *services which help older people stay warmer and cut fuel costs*
- *housing and support services which can reduce older people's need for residential care, or nursing and acute hospital services*

- *reliable use of new technology and cost-effective community alarm services to support independence*
- *building new homes to Lifetime Homes standards ie. adapted and adaptable to meet the needs of people as they age or are disabled*
- *innovative new housing for older people, such as retirement villages*
- *housing for the predicted growing numbers of people with dementia*
- *new services that meet the needs of black and minority ethnic elders*
- *links to other initiatives, such as regenerating rural or urban communities, and health promotion*

Government has recently recommended that local authorities should produce a wider ranging "Older People's Strategy" which covers housing, health and social care. They have published guidance on how to do this (*Preparing Older People's Strategies*, 2003, DH/ODPM).

This may sound like a complicated amount of paper and strategies. But the good news is that local authorities are being encouraged to work with older people in planning services in ways that are inclusive and accessible. It can be seen as part of the council's responsibility to find ways to work with older people that get away from off-putting consultation papers. There are some practical examples described later in this brochure.

Why should I get involved in housing?

Up until now, involving older people in planning housing provision has not been a very high priority amongst most councils.

Furthermore, most older people's action groups have concentrated their efforts on issues such as health care, social services, transport and pensions. However, here are just some of the reasons why housing is becoming more of a priority;

- ▶ It is now recognised that most older people wish to stay living in their own homes for as long as possible. Unless their housing is in a decent state and suitably adapted this will be difficult to achieve.
- ▶ Already older people are over-represented in unfit homes. Right to Buy and other initiatives have encouraged people on very modest incomes to become home owners. Those people will now retire on modest/low pensions and may have to maintain their home for another 25/30 years after retirement -this may be difficult for some people to afford. We need to look at how government is planning for this.
- ▶ Even though most older people will be able to stay living in their own homes, as we live longer into our 80s and 90s there will be a growing need for special supported housing. Older people could play a major role in designing that housing and so avoid mistakes such as the unpopular sheltered housing bed-sits built in the 70s and 80s, or low standard residential care homes.

Developing a Senior Charter – The Housing Corporation

Researchers at the Open University and Anchor Trust have been working with groups of older people to develop a system which enables older people themselves to assess the quality of housing, support and services delivered by their landlords.

The project is now aiming to produce a flexible and user-friendly package of training for older people who want to undertake housing assessments. Initially for tenants, the system could be extended for use in other tenures. There is a short profile of the project on the Innovation and Good Practice section of the Housing Corporation website see: <http://cig.bre.co.uk/igp/new/project.jsp?id=633>

- ▶ Through initiatives such as Better Government for Older People and Senior Forums, older people have gained skills and experience in influencing and changing local services. This could now be applied to make a positive change to housing.
- ▶ Councils are not legally obliged to have an older people's housing strategy; without encouragement from local older people and related organisations, many may therefore not put much effort or resources into this area of activity - to the detriment of older people.

What can be done to influence a local strategy?

One starting point would be to find out who is the local authority's housing policy officer and ask if they have a strategy. Alternatively, copies of strategies are normally available from the library or council offices.

The Government guidance, *Preparing Older People's Strategies*, sets out comprehensive advice for councils on the issues to be addressed in drawing up their strategy. It includes reference to ways of:

- *developing a vision*
- *engaging with older people*
- *improving access to information*
- *improving access to services*
- *establishing the supply of accommodation for older people and general supply*
- *analysis of how supply operates*
- *mapping and analysing the health and social care needs of older people*
- *mapping and analysing the housing system and its links to planning and regeneration*
- *analysing the wider service systems and strategies to support older people*

The guidance can help council officers and key partners across housing, health and social care examine these issues with older people.

Appendix A sets out some of the questions that you might want to discuss with your council.

By taking some of the steps suggested in this housing action kit you can begin a debate with your council and other housing providers, and work towards extending the housing choices for older people in your area.

Where you and/or your group begin to influence the ways that services for older people are planned, commissioned and managed locally, this could result in:

- *more affordable, secure and 'home for life' sheltered housing or very sheltered/extra care housing*
- *better targeting of timely support services to owner-occupiers living in poor housing conditions*
- *improved integration of health, housing and care services*
- *better provision for marginalised black and minority ethnic communities*
- *comprehensive information and awareness campaigns that promote good health and independence*
- *the extension of community alarm services to older people and vulnerable people in their own homes*
- *greater support for community development and enabling older people to remain socially active in their communities*
- *services that prevent the early onset of dependency, a move up the 'care ladder' or hospital admission*
- *increased support and recognition for formal and informal carers, and*
- *encouraging others to become involved in making the future better for older people*

Any influence that you and/or your group can have on a local Older People's Housing Strategy will not only benefit you and current older people, but also future generations of older people in your area.

By "having your say" you can help to shape the thinking behind a strategy for older people's housing and potentially influence local action. These are important steps in empowering older people so that their voices are increasingly listened to and acted upon.

Part 2:

How older people's groups are making a difference to housing



Here is just a selection of the ways in which older people are working locally to improve housing provision in their area.

House for Life Project – Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Older people came together to form the Housing Action Group with support from the co-ordinator of Better Government for Older People. The group wanted to apply principles of Lifetime Homes standards to existing house types. The City Council agreed that the group could design the refurbishment of a traditional 1920s three-bedroom semi detached council house.

After wide ranging research into the latest adaptations, equipment and low-maintenance garden design, the older people's group worked with the design team to incorporate the features that would enable an older person to live comfortably in the house for as long as possible. The house was open to the public for three weeks and people were amazed at what could be done, and also at how little information and advice was normally available about the adaptations that enable people to remain in their own homes for longer.

This project is important in two ways – firstly because it represents very practical involvement of older people, and secondly because it gave a good illustration of how better information and advice can improve housing choice.

The group has gone on to work with the City Council in drawing up an older people's housing strategy, starting off with a '*Listening Event*' for older people to set the vision for older people's housing – (See Appendix D).

Contact: A Better Life in Later Life on 0191 233 0200 or email bgop@nhcp.freeseerve.co.uk

Liverpool Accommodation Strategies

Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary Care Trusts have worked with the people who use their services, as well as partner agencies, to develop two accommodation strategies (for older people and for supported housing). To co-ordinate the implementation of these, the partners have created a Strategic Commissioning Board (SCB) including representatives from providers across all sectors, housing, social services, health, funders, regeneration, housing and supported living.

The Council recently published a leaflet called 'Accommodation Strategies for Older People and Supported Housing' explaining the basic approach. The leaflet and the full strategy documents are available from the City Council. www.liverpool.gov

Older People's Groups in London

Greater London Forum for the Elderly is an umbrella body providing support and information to 33 local Borough Older People's Forums. It was involved in organising a successful housing conference with older people which took a holistic look at housing options.

Contact: 020 7240 6376
email: admin.glf@pop3.poptel.org.uk
GLFE, E42, Odhams Walk,
London, WC2H 9SB.

Older people are working with the Greater London Authority via the London Older People's Strategies Group on a range of issues, including deprivation. Housing is seen as an important aspect of this, particularly with regard to availability and affordability. A conference, London Divided, is being planned at which housing will be featured. The secretary of the Older People's Strategies group is Graeme Matthews on graememattthews@btinternet.com

Charter of Older People's Housing Rights

At a conference of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service in 2001 it was suggested that local groups could put forward a suggested local Charter of Older People's Housing Rights which would include a commitment to provide;

- a "home for life"
- self-contained housing, an end to shared facilities
- access to prompt adaptations
- secure design, home and surrounding environment
- simple to operate design features, such as easy to open windows, lever taps, reachable switches
- resilient, non-slip flooring
- a step-in shower
- help in tending the garden
- two bedrooms so that friends, carers and/or relatives can stay
- efficient, low-cost fuel and energy efficiency
- accessible Home Improvement Agency services across the housing stock



Sheffield's 50+ Group

Sheffield's 50+ Group is run by older people for older people. Elections are held annually amongst the 50+ Group to elect an Elders Congress. Each member of the Congress has responsibility for looking at and contributing to a different part of the council's policies. Also each Congress Elder represents their council ward.

The Congress has the power to affect the council's decisions at the beginning of the policy-making process. The strength of this is that the group feels that it does more than 'be on the receiving end of consultation'. The group was launched at a housing consultation event and has continued to work with the city council to draw up a Housing Strategy for Older People, which will form part of the Sheffield Strategy for an Ageing Population.

John Crowther is the Congress Elder who has worked on housing, and the BGOP Regional Co-ordinator is Cheryl Barrott, both on 0114 273 5426, email cheryl.barrott@sheffield.gov.uk
For strategies see www.sheffield.gov.uk

Polari – diverse solutions

Polari was established in 1993 by older lesbians and gay men concerned that the needs of older lesbians and gay men were not being represented or met within existing housing and community care provision.

In May 2002 it obtained charitable funding for 3 years to enable older lesbians and gay men to influence social care and housing services. Working in the London Boroughs of Westminster, Hackney and Kingston-upon-Thames, the group is enabling members to play a greater role in the planning of services and to ensure that service providers are more aware of this disadvantaged group whose housing and support needs are often excluded from service provision.

Contact: Polari on 020 7422 8649 or email: polari@madasafish.com

Wiltshire and Swindon Users Network

Within this Network there are eight local groups of up to 40 older people. One of the functions of the Network is to refer older people's concerns up to the bodies that make decisions. When older people in the local groups raised the issue of wanting to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and retain their independence, the Network organised a series of Safe and Sound days. These brought together workers from a range of organisations to talk about the services that were on offer and what older people actually needed.





Bell View Project in Northumberland

When the planned closure of the residential care home in the village of Belford was announced over 5 years ago, local residents came together initially to form a group to oppose the closure.

When an independent study confirmed the unsuitability of the former workhouse to provide decent residential care, the group members decided to take matters into their own hands with regard to the housing of the future for older people in the village and surrounding rural area. Since then local residents have created a charitable body which has fundraised and also formed partnerships and worked closely with the county council in order to create the housing and related support services that older people want.

Over £1.3million has been secured from various sources, including local fundraising and £300,000 from the County Council to redevelop the site of the former council run residential home in Belford. An integrated Community Resource Centre for older people and their carers is to be built and, through partnership with "Johnnie Johnson" Housing, five accessible bungalows incorporating SMART Home technology.

The Resource Centre will act as the hub for the delivery of a wide range of services and activities both on site and on an outreach basis to the local rural area. People of all ages will be involved as volunteers at the centre.

The project will support older people and carers to live independently, including tackling loneliness and isolation. A recent survey of older people's views highlighted the importance to older people of "low-level" preventative services such as decorating, minor repairs, gardening and housework to enable them to exercise choice, live independently and continue to be an active member of the local community. This survey will be used to try to gain support for the services that older people themselves say that they want and need.

The Countryside Agency have contributed to funding and identified the project as a "National Demonstration Site" which is seen as a good example of innovative rural service delivery.

Contact Details: Lynne Livsey, 01668 219220, email: bell.view@i12.com

Part 3:

Finding out more



1. Other Sources of Ideas and Information for Older People's Action Groups

Speaking Up for Our Age is a Help the Aged programme for Senior Citizens Forums offering development support, grants, training and opportunities to network at conferences. Information is supplied via the monthly Policy Update newsletter. Forum to Forum is a newsletter produced by forums for forums. For mailing list enquiries:

email: carmel.davis@helptheaged.org.uk or write to Carmel Davis, Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UZ. General information on 020 7278 1114 and www.helptheaged.org.uk

Senior Network is an information resource for older people and their organisations. Its website offers information, news, events and a chance to participate online. www.seniornetwork.co.uk

Village Voice is a national network set up by Help the Aged to bring together older people and the organisations working with them throughout rural Britain. They produce a newsletter and reports; available from Liz Stacey at Help the Aged on 020 7239 1831. www.ruralnet.org.uk/~villagevoice

Better Government for Older People (BGOP) is a UK wide networking partnership in which older people are the key partners. BGOP is about ensuring older people are engaged as citizens at all levels of decision making and in the development of strategies and services for an ageing population. Further information from www.bgop.org.uk 207-221 Pentonville Road London N1 9UZ, Tel: 0870 770 3292

National Pensioners Convention is the umbrella organisation of the pensioner's movement. Its aim is to promote the welfare and interests of all pensioners to ensure dignity, respect and financial security.

www.admin@natpencon.org.uk
Tel: 020 7431 9820 9
Arkwright Road, London, NW3 6AB

2. Housing Advice and Information (about individual housing issues/problem)

Age Concern England

Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER
General Tel: 020 8679 8000
Advice line: 0800 009966
email: ace@ace.org.uk
www.ace.org.uk

Elderly Accommodation Counsel

3rd Floor
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP
Tel: 020 7820 1343
email: enquiries@e-a-c.demon.co.uk
www.housingcare.org.uk

Foundations

(for information about Home Improvement Agencies)
Bleaklow House
Howard Town Mill
Glossop, SK13 8HT
Tel: 01457 891909
email: foundations@cel.co.uk
www.foundations.uk.com

Help the Aged

207-221 Pentonville Road
London N1 9UZ

Seniorline Advice and Information Service:

Tel: 0808 800 6565
minicom: 0800 26 96 26
email: info@helptheaged.org.uk
www.helptheaged.org.uk

Care & Repair England

(Details as per cover)

Produce a free self-help guide to house repairs and adaptations for owner occupiers.

3. Housing Related Government Departments and Organisations

Audit Commission

1 Vincent Square
London SW1P 2PN
Tel: 020 7828 1212
www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Department of Health

Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS
Tel: 020 7210 5963
www.doh.gov.uk

Housing Corporation

149 Tottenham Court Road
London W1P 0BN
Tel: 020 7393 2000
www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP
Tel: 01904 629241
www.jrf.org.uk

National Housing Federation

175 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8UP
Tel: 020 7278 6571
www.housing.org.uk

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Supporting People Team
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Tel: 020 7944 4000
www.housing.odpm.gov.uk

Tenant Participation Advisory Service

5th Floor, Trafford House,
Chester Road,
Manchester, M32 0RS
Tel: 0161 868 3500
www.tpas.org.uk

References

Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing: A Strategic Framework (2001) ODPM & DH – a summary of this framework is also available

Preparing Older People's Strategies (2003) ODPM/DH/Housing Corporation

Sustainable Communities: building for the future (2003) ODPM

Many of the government publications referred to above can be downloaded from the relevant government department website or obtained from:

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Free Literature
PO Box 236, Wetherby,
West Yorks LS23 7NB
Tel: 0870 1207 405
Email: odpm@twoten.press.net

The following are available from Care & Repair England (free to older people and their groups)

In Good Repair – a self help guide to home repairs and adaptations

Should I Stay or Should I Go? – Developing housing options advice services for older people

Healthy Homes, Healthier Lives – Health improvement through housing related initiatives and services

Appendix A

Developing Older People's Housing Strategies

Suggestions for questions that it may be useful to debate with your local council.

Developing a vision and strategy for older people's housing

How are older people being involved in shaping a vision for older people's housing?

How is the council going to engage with older people in preparing a strategy?

How are older people from black and minority ethnic communities and "hard to reach" groups, such as those who are homeless or with problems such as dementia, being involved?

Improving access to information and advice

Is there good quality information available on housing options for older people and access to advice services so that older people can make informed choices?

How do older people find out about local services? Have there been any events to highlight what is available?

Is accessible information available for people with sight, hearing and learning impairments?

What information is available for carers?

How is information shared between housing, health and social services?

Improving access to services

Are buildings accessible? Has the council carried out an access audit?

How do people get the services that they require?

Is housing being taken into account in the new 'single assessment' of what people need from health and social services?

Are services reaching people in all tenures ie. private/ public tenants/ owner occupiers?

Is any new accommodation being planned in areas that older people can easily get to e.g. with transport links, close to shops and other amenities?

Ensuring that there is enough special housing for older people as well as general housing related services

What information has been collected on the supply of special accommodation or related housing support for older people?

Do these reflect what older people want and need?

Has the council done any reviews of its services for older people? Were older people consulted?

Mapping and analysing health and social care services for older people

Do services tackle improving the health of older people e.g., those in poor housing conditions?

Can additional care and support services be delivered more effectively e.g., in extra care housing or to older homeowners?

Are there adequate preventative services e.g. to prevent unnecessary admission into hospital?

Is there evidence of joint working between the council and the PCT, Health Trust and social care services to deliver housing related services ?

What involvement do other housing and support providers have in the local health agenda?
Are older people involved?

Mapping and analysing the housing links to planning and regeneration

Are the council's housing policies, practices and procedures understood by older people?
Do older people know what they can expect?

Are the systems flexible enough to meet the housing needs and choices of older people across all tenures?

Does the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy provide help for older home owners, particularly those with health or social care needs?

Does the Homelessness Strategy address the needs of older people?

Analysing the wider service systems and strategies to support older people

How does the strategy link in to leisure/recreation and arts policies, transport, community safety, education and life-long learning opportunities?

What resources are available to provide training, support and/or funding to enable older people to participate more effectively, e.g., to support an Older People's Action Group?



Add your own ideas for questions here

Appendix B

Housing provision and finance

Local Councils

Local councils are the main providers of rented housing in the UK. Depending on where you live, the council will either be a District Council, Metropolitan Borough Council, a City Council or unitary authority.

In some areas, councils have transferred all or some of their housing to a housing association (see below). However, the council still has a strategic role for the provision of social housing. Every council must by law publish its policy on how its housing is allocated to people, including arrangements for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The majority of housing money comes from central government and is paid to local councils. This includes money for the development of new social rented housing, the repair and maintenance of existing stock in both the private and social housing sectors, the management of social rented housing and advice services.

Every council is required to produce a Housing Investment Programme (HIP) setting out its funding plan for all housing in the area. Getting resources from central government is dependent on the council being able to demonstrate that their services meet local priorities and service objectives.

Councils are increasingly working in partnership with the independent, charitable and voluntary sector plus other grant making bodies to bring in private housing finance, other public money (for example, health related housing costs) and European funding sources (for example, for the regeneration of deprived areas).

In addition, councils are able to raise Capital Receipts money from the sale of council housing and from transfer of their stock to housing associations. In future, a proportion of money raised in this way can be used by councils for regeneration schemes and for building affordable housing.

Housing Associations and the Housing Corporation

Housing associations, also known as Registered Social Landlords, are not-for-profit organisations that provide homes for people in housing need. They are regulated by the Housing Corporation, the government sponsored organisation which is also responsible for their funding.

To date the Housing Corporation has provided a subsidy, Social Housing Grant (SHG), to councils to fund housing associations to develop new affordable rented housing and low-cost homeownership. This is known as the Approved Development Programme. SHG ends with the introduction of regional funding for housing in 2004.

The Housing Corporation also provides some money for the repair, maintenance and adaptation of housing association stock. Housing associations are also encouraged to use private finance, including borrowing under the Private Finance Initiative, and/or to use their reserves to meet the cost of new housing and the repair and maintenance of their existing stock.

Regional Housing Boards

From April 2004 these will become the key way that money is passed on from central government to local government for investment in housing. As explained in the Government's paper *Sustainable communities: building for the future*, in each Government Office for the Region there will be a Regional Housing Board that will administer housing investment through a single pot.

This will include resources that previously formed the council's Housing Investment Programme and the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (referred to above). The Board will comprise of representatives from the Regional Government Office, the Housing Corporation, Regional Development Agency, and other relevant bodies in the region. The Boards produce a Regional Housing Strategy and make recommendations on the allocation of money. Funds will then be allocated to local councils against set strategic priorities and objectives, for example, regeneration projects and new town developments. At present it is unclear whether or not older people's housing will be adequately addressed.

Supporting People

This replaces the way housing related support for older and vulnerable people is planned and paid for. From April 2003, councils receive a single, cash-limited grant from the Government to pay for all housing support services in their area. This includes money that was previously administered through:

- Housing Benefit, in particular, the money paid to claimants for tenancy related support services e.g., the warden costs or community alarms in sheltered housing

- Income Support paid by the Department of Work and Pensions for support services provided to leaseholders e.g., residents in purpose-built retirement housing for sale
- Probation Accommodation Grants from the Home Office to local probation teams to meet the cost of accommodation and support
- Home Improvement Agency grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
- Supported Housing Management Grant administered by the Housing Corporation and paid to housing associations for support services, and
- Housing Revenue Account funding for council tenants, which can be used to provide housing related support services e.g., the warden service in sheltered housing

Private Sector Housing Renewal

Councils have a statutory duty to review the condition of all of the housing stock in their area and consider the best options to tackle poor private sector housing conditions.

From July 2003 local councils have new powers to help private rented tenants and homeowners who live in homes in a poor state of repair. These powers replace a national system of grants and give councils greater discretion to tackle private sector disrepair in their area through a variety of grants, loans or equity release. From 2004 money for this private sector renewal will also come from the Regional Housing Board.

Councils can only use their new power if they publish a policy, ensuring a copy is available for public inspection and producing a summary for members of the public.

Appendix C

Understanding the language

Audit Commission	The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is used economically, efficiently and effectively.
BGOP	Better Government for Older People (see Part 3)
Best Value	A duty on local authorities to review services they provide for local people and improve them by the best means possible, in consultation with users and wider local community
Better Care, Higher Standards	Since 2000, local authorities have had to have in place charters for long-term care for anyone over 18 and the standards they can expect
Community Alarms	A 24 hour emergency call service for older, disabled and vulnerable people supporting independent living at home.
Community Equipment Services	An aid or a minor adaptation to the home which assists a person with nursing or supporting daily living.
DH	Department of Health
Disabled Facilities Grant	Means-tested grant available from the council to enable people with disabilities to adapt their homes
Extra Care Housing	Also known as very sheltered housing, where there is intensive on-site care and support for older people
Equity Release	Raising income or capital on a property, eg. to finance home improvements or meet care costs
Floating Support	A housing support service not dependent on residency in a particular property, or type of property
Focus Group	A focus group draws together people for a discussion on a specific topic
General needs housing	Housing not specifically designed for a particular user group
Handyperson scheme	Small repairs, improvements, home security and adaptations, usually carried out for older/disabled people,
Home (domiciliary) Care	Personal care and domestic support to someone living in their own home. For example, assistance with washing, bathing, toileting, and the provision of meals, cleaning and laundry services

Home Improvement Agencies	Not-for-profit services helping older, disabled and vulnerable people remain independent in their own home by carrying out necessary repairs and adaptations. Also known as Care & Repair or Staying Put agencies
Housing Corporation	The public body that distributes funding to and regulates housing associations in England
Housing Inspectorate	The Housing Inspectorate is part of the Audit Commission. Inspects councils to check the quality of all aspects of housing services. Since April 03 responsible for inspecting housing associations.
Inclusive Forum	The forum has a key role in working up local Supporting People priorities. It should include all stakeholder groups including service users and carers
Intermediate Care	A short period of intensive rehabilitation and treatment to enable people to return home following hospitalisation, or to prevent admission into hospital or residential care
Lifetime Homes Standards	A set of 16 accessible housing design standards for new housing, most often applied to social housing
NSF	National Service Framework; For example, NSF for Older People sets out standards for the care of the health of older people
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the main government department responsible for housing issues.
Primary Care Trusts	Responsible for delivering better health and care to their local population, including GP and community health services
Residents'/Tenants' Associations	A group set up to meet the needs of residents or tenants in an area or estate. Residents' Association may include owner-occupiers or leaseholders as well as tenants
Sheltered Housing	Purpose-built accommodation for older people, often with an on-site warden or scheme manager
Social Housing	Housing for rent developed and managed by councils, housing associations, and some not for profit organisations
Supported Housing	Accommodation where there is a degree of daily living support for its residents to enable them to live independently
Supporting People	New funding arrangements for delivery of housing and related support services for older and vulnerable people
Tenant Participation Advisory Service	Enabling council and housing association tenants to participate in the way their landlord manages, and delivers housing services

Appendix D

Older people influencing housing strategies:

Running a “Listening Event”

The idea behind a ‘*Listening Event*’ was to provide the opportunity for older people who were currently living in a wide variety of housing situations to get together and think “without limits” about housing and services for future generations of older people.

The first place to try out this approach was Newcastle upon Tyne. The local council staff who are responsible for drafting the Older People’s Housing Strategy attended the event to listen, but not to direct the debate by putting forward their ideas or suggestions. The aim being that officers’ thinking about the strategy would be shaped by the views of older people, rather than the other way around.

People worked together in small groups on structured tasks which encouraged full participation of everyone involved. Tasks were designed to enable people to translate their personal experience of housing into guiding principles for future housing provision. The emerging key issues and major action points were then used as a foundation for the local authorities’ older people’s housing strategy.

Getting people along to an event

Invitations to the event were sent out utilising contacts which had been built up through a series of events for older people undertaken as part of a Better Government for Older People pilot project. The aim was to ensure a mix of people living in a wide range of housing; sheltered housing scheme residents, homeowners (including the local home improvement agency service users), council and housing association tenants (care home residents were not involved).

Practical Issues which can help to make an event a success

- ▶ Organise transport (eg. Community Transport)
- ▶ Use a welcoming, fully accessible venue (eg. level access, adapted WCs, good lighting and acoustics)
- ▶ Limit to half a day (this event lasted for 3 hours 1.00pm – 4.00pm)
- ▶ Provide good refreshments (eg. lunch or afternoon tea and cakes)
- ▶ Create a friendly, informal atmosphere through the choice of venue, room layout and speakers

Format of the Day

1. The chair of the Elders Council of Newcastle introduced the event, explaining its purpose and how ideas generated would be taken forward by the council. It was stressed that the council staff were there to listen to what older people had to say and then take these messages on board in the development of the housing strategy. *Having an older person as the key link person through the day is strongly recommended.*
2. A short presentation about the shaping of older people’s housing was given, both to set the scene and to stimulate ideas for discussion. *This presentation is available from Care & Repair England.*
3. Discussions took place in small round table groups (literally around round tables) and in each group there was a facilitator/note taker.

4. The structured debates and practical tasks focussed on:
 - *Housing – likes and dislikes*
 - *What do I need to enable me to live independently?*
 - *What should housing for older people be like in the future*
5. At the end of the session each of the groups gave one key message to the council.
6. The chair thanked everyone involved for their time and effort, explaining that the council would be drawing on the material produced when they drafted the Older People's Housing Strategy, People were asked for their overall view of the day and whether they were interested in attending any further such events, or following up the issues raised during the day.

Housing – likes and dislikes

Each person in turn says where they live, how they came to live there and what they think in general about their housing.

Everyone is given a pink and yellow post-it and invited to write down things that they like about where they live on the pink one and things that they dislike on the yellow. These are then placed in separate columns on the flipchart in the middle of the table.

Discussion then widens to:

Have you had to make any major decisions about where you live in the past few years? What was the outcome? Are you happy about this? Any regrets? Worries about the future? What would have made things better/easier to make the decision?

What enables me to live independently?

Each group has a sheet of flipchart paper with the above question in the middle. As the discussion starts, the facilitator writes down a summary term for the points which people make on 'sun's rays' coming out of the centre question. For example, if someone says that a downstairs WC would make their life easier, the word Adaptations is written at the end of the 'ray' and WC or any other adaptations which people mention are added along the arm. To gain a view about priorities, each participant is given 3 sticky dots to place on the point(s) that they consider to be most important (they can spread these around or even place all 3 dots on one point).

What should housing for older people be like?

Using the same 'sun's rays' diagram, as people discuss their ideas and ideals, the facilitator extracts headline ideas for the ends of the rays. Aspects of these are then listed along the ray (eg. Feeling Safe could involve security alarms, on site support, good lighting etc).

Post Event

The notes taken during the group debates plus the charts produced were collated by the Housing Policy Officer who utilised these in drawing up the strategy.

The Listening Event had a significant influence on the shaping of the council's older people's housing strategy. A copy of which can be obtained via their website on www.newcastle.gov.uk, (Community and Housing section)



No matter what their age, people wish to have access to a decent home and some choice about where and how they live.

Older people, their action groups and forums can play a key role in planning better housing for an ageing society – housing which enables people to live independent and fulfilling lives as they get older.

The main aim of this Housing Action Kit is to inspire and enable older people to influence the local shaping of this better housing.

It includes information about:

- How housing is planned and funded
- Good ideas for local action
- Where to find out more

About Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is a national charity established in 1986 to improve the housing and living conditions of older and disabled people. Its aim is to innovate, develop, promote and support housing policies and initiatives which enable older and disabled people live independently in their homes for as long as they wish.

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