Homes fit for ageing

Why ageing well at home is key to health, housing and care

Making homes fit for ageing can save NHS costs & reduce care needs.

Poor or unsuitable housing costs the NHS £1.4bn p.a.¹

Most of the common chronic health conditions of later life (respiratory illnesses, stroke, heart disease, depression etc), as well as falls risk, have a causal link to housing conditions.

- Adapting and improving the current housing stock will have the greatest impact
- Most older people like their current home and want to live there as they age
- Those who do want to move would like the option of well designed mainstream homes as well as supported housing options.

⁴ Lloyd, J. (2015), Older Owners Research on the lives, aspirations and housing outcomes of older homeowners in the UK. London: Strategic Society Centre
Homes fit for ageing are...

In good repair

2 million older households are living in non-decent homes, the majority of which are owner occupied \(^1\).

Low income home owners now outnumber low income tenants.

**Action:** There is a pressing need to reverse the decline in low cost services which help disadvantaged older people repair and maintain their homes, particularly home improvement agencies and handyperson services.

Safe and adapted

Home adaptations can transform lives. They enable independence and reduce risks eg. falls.

Nearly 2 million people say that their home needs to be adapted to their needs and nearly half have not had these adaptations made \(^3\).

**Action:** Fast, effective assistance (both practical and financial) with installing home adaptations should become a core part of future integrated health and care systems.

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\(^2\) HSE 200529. Copyright © 2011, Re-used with the permission of The Health and Social Care Information Centre cited in Melzer D 2012 AgeUK health care quality for an active later life

Places we choose to live

Inequality exists at all ages, and some people have far more options than others when it comes to later life living arrangements. Whatever a person’s situation, it is still important to be able to make a fully informed decision about housing, care and finances. Some older people also need help to implement their choice eg. with moving home. Such provision, particularly the EAC FirstStop model, has been shown to reduce costs to the NHS and Social Care.

Action: Increase access to independent, impartial specialist information and advice about housing, care and related finance in later life.

Well designed for a lifetime

Staying put is not for everyone. Some older people will wish to (or have to) move to a more suitable home. This might be a well designed mainstream home or housing built especially for ageing (eg. sheltered, retirement, extra care, co-housing etc.)

Action: Create a wider range of housing options for those with later life care and support needs, as well as future-proofing all new homes through introducing national accessible design & space standards.

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4 housingactionblog.wordpress.com
5 www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk/resources-partners/independent-evaluation.aspx
Homes fit for everyone

Older people tell us that their home is of the utmost importance.

A safe, secure, suitable home underpins health and wellbeing, particularly in later life when people spend an increasing amount of time at home.

Age friendly communities and neighbourhoods can support ageing well at home, enabling people to remain active and involved with their friends and family.

Call for Action Summary

- Repair, maintain and improve existing homes for good ageing through revitalising home improvement agencies and handyperson services
- Adapt current homes to enable safe, independent later life through boosting help to carry out home adaptations
- Increase access to independent, impartial specialist information and advice about housing, care and related finance in later life
- Create a wider range of housing options for those with later life care and support needs
- Future-proof all new homes through national accessible design & space standards

“...there has been a collective failure to address the implications [of population ageing] and without urgent action this great boon could turn into a series of miserable crises.”

Lords Select Committee on Public Services and Demographic Change Report ‘Ready for Ageing?’ (2013)

Time for a paradigm shift in policy

All policies related to housing, planning, health and social care should be underpinned by the broader objectives of:

- enabling people to age well at home and
- extending healthy, independent later life for all.

About Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation (Registered Society with Charitable Status 25121R) established in 1986 which aims to improve older people’s housing. It aims to innovate, develop, promote and support practical housing initiatives and the related policy and practice which enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they wish, particularly for older people living in poor or unsuitable private sector housing.

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