

Decent Homes for Ageing Well



Not a lot to ask?

Poor housing costs the NHS
£1.4 billion p.a. ⁽²⁾

Older people across the country tell us their homes are very important for their health and wellbeing.

They simply want to:

- *Be safe, warm and independent*
- *Live as part of their community*
- *Stay actively involved with their family and friends*
- *Age well at home*

But over 2 million older people are living in non-decent homes ⁽¹⁾, putting their health at risk and adding to NHS costs ⁽²⁾.



2 million older households (55+) in non-decent homes





Number of 75+
living in a
non-decent home

2012 - 533,000
2017 - 701,000

An
increase of
31%

Good homes for ageing well

The vast majority of older people live in ordinary housing - 96% of households 55+ ⁽³⁾.

Most (80%) are happy where they live. Many will need just a little practical housing help so they can live independently and well at home.

- **Out of a total of 4.2 million non-decent homes, 2 million are lived in by older (55+) households, the majority of whom are owner occupiers (78%)**

"The handyman put in a bath grab rail [which] helps me to not worry about a fall. He also repaired the lock on my patio doors when he heard I'd been burgled recently."

Mrs J, 78yrs

Poor housing, poor health

Poor housing causes or exacerbates many of the common chronic health conditions of later life (e.g. respiratory illness, heart disease, arthritis, depression). The main cause of accidental injury or death amongst older people is a fall at home.

Reducing housing health risk is a crucial step towards making sure more people can live and age well at home. It will also reduce calls on the NHS.

- **By far the most common hazards in non-decent homes are fall risks and excess cold**
- **The number of people aged 75+ living in a non-decent home has increased by 31% in 5 years**

'Falls and fragility fractures can result in loss of independence, injury and death. In health service terms, they are high volume and costly.'

Royal College of Emergency Medicine & RoSPA (2017)



“ I’m not as stressed now the jobs have been done [by the handy person]. I no longer have to worry about them.”

Mrs C, 76yrs



Unequal ageing

Where you live has a major effect on your life expectancy, as well as the number of years lived without ill health and/or disability ('healthy life expectancy')⁽⁴⁾.

- **The gap in life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas of England was 9.4 years for men and 7.4 years for women**
- **For healthy life expectancy the gap was 19.1 years and 18.8 years respectively**

‘Poor housing conditions... affect quality of life and well-being’
World Health Organisation Housing & Health Guidelines



Priority – improve existing homes

With 80% of the homes that people will be living in by 2050 already built, the condition of existing homes is a critical determinant of health and quality of life for people of all ages.

The importance of prevention is highlighted in the NHS Plan and housing links are noted in government’s Prevention plans.

- **Working with GPs, hospitals and local councils, home improvement agencies and handy person services could deliver highly cost effective, targeted action to remedy housing hazards and prevent deterioration of homes**

‘The biggest and more urgent challenge lies more with ... improving the condition of private housing, especially the homes of older owner occupiers.’
The hidden costs of poor quality housing in the North, The Smith Institute (2018)

A third of all non-decent homes could be repaired for £1,000 or less



References

(1) Figures and references are taken from new (2020) reports published by the Centre for Ageing Better using analysis of 2017 English Housing Survey data by the Building Research Establishment. www.ageingbetter.org.uk

(2) Nicol S et al (2015) Briefing Paper: The cost of poor housing to the NHS, BRE

(3) Garret H & Burris S (2015) Homes and ageing in England BRE

(4) ONS (2019) Health state life expectancies by national deprivation deciles, England and Wales: 2015 to 2017



Prevention is better than cure

Enabling older people to age well at home needs to be the guiding principle for housing, planning, health and social care.



Housing Action for Ageing Well

We need new older people's housing, health and care policies which:

- Listen to people - are based on real lives
- Help the many - not just the few
- Improve housing across the country - especially neglected areas
- Protect critical infrastructure - our current housing stock
- Prevent rather than react to crises

“I am very elderly and live alone. I find it very difficult to find trustworthy builders to do large and small jobs around the house.”

Mrs M. 89yrs

Action Now

- Revitalise housing renewal and regeneration initiatives to repair and improve current homes
- Practical support for older homeowners to maintain and improve their homes to be available nationally e.g. home improvement agencies and handyman services linked to NHS
- Universal access to impartial information and advice about housing in later life
- Boost help with home adaptations to enable safe, independent ageing
- Make improved housing quality a priority outcome for health and care integration and prevention plans

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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