

Consultation Response

Evidence to the Local Government Association - Housing Commission

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About Age UK

Age UK is the country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. The Age UK network includes around 165 local Age UKs reaching most of England. In 2014-15 nearly 5.7million people came to Age UK and our local partners for information and advice on a range of issues to do with later life. We work closely with Age Cymru, Age NI and Age Scotland.

About this consultation

The Local Government Association has set up a housing commission to look at the future of housing and the relationship between councils and communities. The Commission's Advisory Panel is seeking evidence, issues and ideas on the delivery of effective housing. It has specified a focus on four themes:

- **House building** - in particular looking at new ways that councils can enable investment in new homes

- **Place shaping, community and infrastructure** - in particular looking at the role of councils in shaping homes within prosperous places and communities

- **Employment, welfare reform and social mobility** - in particular looking at the role of housing in supporting tenants to find and progress in sustained employment

- **Health and quality of life for an ageing population** - in particular looking at the role of housing in preventing onward costs onto health and social care services

The findings will be brought together in a report in spring 2016 and presented at the LGA Annual Conference in June 2016. Our response discusses how local authorities can contribute to improvements in older people's housing

1. Key points and recommendations

- All local authorities should have an older people's housing strategy that works across all forms of provision. It should aim to promote housing choices for a diversity of older people. These choices should cater for any care and support needs they may have to enable them to live the lives they want to lead.
- Local authorities should assess and plan for a range of older people's housing needs in their areas and ensure this is reflected in the construction, development and planning of new homes and associated infrastructure.
- Planning strategies should help to identify specific sites for retirement housing but also encourage intergenerational housing developments and supported housing in existing neighbourhoods
- Resources from planning gain should help to deliver age friendly infrastructure and environments.
- Local authorities should do more to offer practical assistance and options to older people who want to downsize, particularly given the economic benefits for local housing markets.
- Local authorities should regularly review sheltered housing provision to ensure residents are receiving appropriate levels of care and support and have good access to their local community.
- Local authorities should continue to encourage extra care housing that offers older people more control over the way their care and support is delivered.
- Local authorities should consider how they can support alternative approaches to older people's housing including: well-designed flats and bungalows, accessible and well located private rented initiatives, homeshare, park homes, cohousing, cooperatives, and shared ownership schemes.
- Local authorities should facilitate the development of the 'First Stop' housing and care advice model to ensure all older people have access to a comprehensive housing options service. This should bring together advice on housing, care and financial choices.
- Local authorities should explore the savings and efficiencies that can be achieved through a one stop shop approach to independent living services.
- All new homes should be built to the lifetime homes standard (category 2) and specialist forms of housing, such as sheltered, retirement, intermediate care and extra care housing should meet higher standards.

- Although the lifetime homes standard does not require additional space, local authorities should still uphold space standards that reflect the requirements of older people. This will also help to improve the design and appeal of retirement housing.
- All local authorities should have a strategy to deliver age friendly places that work for all age groups and aim to extend principles behind the age friendly cities network, led by Manchester City Council, in a way appropriate to all localities, including towns and rural areas.
- Integrated care programmes, to reduce hospital readmission, could be enhanced by having a stronger housing support component.
- Local Authorities should review ways of improving the speed and efficiency of adaptations and repairs services to attain best practice standards – especially in the deployment of DFGs and other Better Care Funding.
- Retirement housing should have the capacity to allow older people to work from home if required.

2. Introduction

Local authorities face huge challenges in shaping the delivery of new homes and making improvements to infrastructure and the built environment. As a result of cuts in public spending, many have made dramatic cuts to services and implemented a range of efficiency measures. In this context, there is a risk that preventative measures that offer long term savings and benefits may be given lower priority. However, the demands of an ageing population mean that authorities must consider measures that can help to reduce demand on health and social care services over the long term. They need to consider how a collaborative and integrated approach, that includes housing, can improve the health and wellbeing of older citizens.

Given the limited financial resources available to local authorities they need to consider how they can deploy their planning and regulatory powers so that homes and infrastructure, whether in the private or public sector, meet basic standards of accessibility and enable older people to live the lives they choose. An inclusive approach to the design and planning of new homes and infrastructure are not costly and will help local authorities make savings.

3. House building

Local authorities should facilitate the construction of more homes designed for older people, to both buy and rent. Encouraging older people to downsize has significant benefits for local housing markets by freeing up family housing. Measures to make it easier for older people who are thinking about downsizing will help local authorities deliver homes for all age groups. In addition, inexpensive practical measures jointly commissioned with health and wellbeing boards can improve housing support services for people who chose to live independently in their current home.

1. All local authorities should be encouraged to have a comprehensive **strategy for older people's housing** that is fully operational between now and 2021 (in parallel with Sustainability and Transformation Plans to deliver integrated care and health services). This should seek to facilitate the availability of an appropriate mix of housing options and address a.) the delivery of new homes b.) improvements to existing homes and c.) integrated housing support services. All plans need to consider older people's housing in the context of an **age friendly environment** with accessible local services that facilitate social engagement and support people to achieve their goals. An inclusive approach should aim to deliver housing standards and environments that work for all age groups.
2. Demographic change represents a major challenge to local authorities across a range of services. Housing and housing support services should not be left out or given a lower priority than other services. Good housing plays a critical role in promoting the health, wellbeing and independence of older people. Despite widespread recognition of the strong links between housing, health and social care, Age UK is concerned that this is not always reflected in the support local authorities' offer to **practical housing services** that can deliver significant savings and benefits. Local authorities should be working with health commissioners and care providers to ensure that the deployment of Better Care Funding includes a housing component designed to prevent and reduce demand on health and residential care services.
3. All local authorities need an **accurate assessment** of the current and future housing needs of their older population. There are a number of planning tools they can use. Most recently Habinteg, with the Town and Country Planning Association, have created guidance for local authorities to determine the numbers of age friendly and specialist homes requiredⁱ. This guidance encourages all new developments to follow the Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG) 'category 2' standard based on the principles of lifetime homes. Local authority assessments should always involve **consultation** with older people. There are several examples of the benefits of this approach by local authorities, including Newcastleⁱⁱ and Manchesterⁱⁱⁱ. Age UK has supported guidance on how local authorities can better involve older people in the design of age friendly places^{iv}.
4. We are sympathetic to the idea of all local authorities designating and setting aside **specific sites** for affordable, accessible housing for older people as an important component of a strategy for older people's housing. Authorities should consider incentives and concessions to encourage new affordable developments by housing associations and the private sector. This might include looking at how **planning gain** resources though the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 can be used to encourage older people's housing and fund age friendly infrastructure.
5. Local planning authorities should automatically build in an **intergenerational approach** to new developments. That would mean that an agreed proportion of homes within any new housing development should be designated and designed for older and disabled people. This would be a low cost approach to increasing the

number of homes available to older people as an alternative to dedicated specialist housing. An inclusive approach to new settlements benefits everyone. In addition, it is worth considering 'pepper potting' housing units accessible to older people and their care and support services in existing neighbourhoods.

6. Local authorities should consider how they can support practical measures to make it easier for older people to **move and downsize**. The decision to move can be particularly stressful for older people and this can be a barrier to those who could benefit from downsizing. Local authorities should make it easier by linking up and encouraging existing services to offer practical support to older people to organise buying, selling and moving. These services could be offered for a small fee to help make them sustainable. This could be developed through local authorities existing housing options services. Such an approach would help local authorities to deliver housing supply targets without incurring significant cost.
7. Although we would like to see local authorities do more to encourage retirement and specialist housing, the options available need to reflect the **diverse needs** and aspirations of the older population. Local authorities should aim to encourage a range of housing choices. This should include smaller homes, bungalows and flats. These forms of housing should meet and exceed the lifetime homes standard. It should be made easier to delivery care and support in different types of new housing, if and when it is required. Action to improve housing design and make the delivery of care easier offers a low cost solution for local authorities.
8. Currently, there is some uncertainty about the future of **sheltered housing** as the result of Government policy on rents, Housing Benefit and cuts to support services. Both local authorities and central Government need to recognise the important preventative role of sheltered housing and other forms of specialist housing. It promotes health and wellbeing and can avoid vulnerable older people experiencing loneliness and isolation. Sheltered and retirement housing can also **act as a hub** for other older people living in mainstream housing^v. Although this is not a new idea, local authorities need to work more collaboratively with housing associations and health authorities to make it happen in practice. Local authorities should continue to support the availability of sheltered housing for lower income groups, who are unable to access high cost private sector schemes.
9. Age UK is particularly concerned by reports (from the resident group SHUK) that some sheltered residents are not receiving the **care services** they are entitled to. We have worries about significant variations in the quality of support services in sheltered and other forms of specialist housing. Local authorities have a duty to ensure that older people living in retirement housing have a safe and secure environment, with access to appropriate levels of care and support. Failing to address this will mean that more older people will need higher cost interventions to remain independent.
10. Age UK supports the continued expansion of '**extra care housing**'. Local authorities should continue to facilitate the development of extra care schemes as well as other forms of 'housing with care' that offer older people greater control

over the delivery of care and support. Although extra care cannot replace residential and nursing care (for older people with high levels of need) it can help to reduce demand for more costly forms of intervention. We would like to see all local authorities working with the Housing Learning and Information Network to explore the possibility of developing sustainable schemes in their area.

11. **Park homes** continue to be a popular choice for many older people, but residents need better protection from poor practice and unscrupulous site owners. They can include overcharging for services or a failure to deliver site services. The Government has recognised the need for better protection for park home owners. However, slow progress on regulation requires local authorities to take a more active role on enforcement. Given the benefits of older people downsizing to park homes, authorities should do more to protect older park home residents so that this remains a viable and safe option. Age UK would also like to see local authorities facilitate help with initiatives to improve heating and insulation, which can be a particular problem for some park homes^{vi}.
12. Local authorities could do more to encourage improvements in the **private rented sector** to make it more available and suitable for older people. Some local authorities in the Midlands have improved their offer through their home finder scheme,^{vii} - with Blaby DC taking a lead on making the service work for older people. In future we are likely to see a significant increase in older people living in this sector. This demands more progress on poor and inaccessible physical conditions and better security of tenure. We would like local authorities to encourage reputable landlords, including housing associations, to improve the offer made to older people. Related to this we would also like more practical information and advice for older people who would like to take in a lodger to occupy a spare room. This would increase the availability of rented accommodation, making better use of larger homes, and provide additional income to the owner.
13. Further consideration needs to be given to **homeshare** schemes^{viii}. For a small fee these match up someone seeking rented accommodation with an older person with a spare room. In return for providing accommodation, the lodger offers basic support to the owner on activities such as shopping and housework. Age UK is working with partners to help support and evaluate this model further and would like more authorities to consider this or a similar approach.
14. More should be done to encourage the development of **cooperative and cohousing models**. Cohousing is a successful model in other European countries^{ix}, but there are currently too many barriers to older people who want to develop this form of housing. A cohousing scheme for older people has been established in the London Borough of Barnet^x, the development of which, with Hanover Housing Association, has been a long drawn out process and involved overcoming many obstacles. Authorities should look at what can be learnt from this scheme and also consider how older residents can have a greater say in how their housing is managed. Cooperative forms of housing can offer huge benefits by encouraging older people to provide mutual care and support within a small close knit community.

15. There should be support for older residents who would like to develop their sheltered housing with a more cooperative approach. In Bath, residents of a sheltered scheme are working with community volunteers to help fill in gaps in support services. They have also initiated an innovative project to install solar panels on their scheme to reduce energy bills for residents. There is scope to facilitate similar schemes with residents to improve the sustainability of schemes and strengthen **links to the local community**. Authorities need to ensure that sheltered and retirement housing does not become cut off from local neighbourhoods.
16. A number of housing associations are involved in **community volunteer schemes** to help support sheltered schemes. It would be positive for local authorities to consider how they support schemes that help to address gaps in services. These schemes can also help to improve links between the local community and specialist housing provision.
17. **Information and advice** services for older people that bring together housing, care and financial advice, are essential and local authorities are well placed to coordinate these. They should build on the lessons of the **First Stop** housing advice service. The report '**Making the Case**'^{xi} makes a series of recommendations based on the experience of First Stop. It demonstrates that helping older people to: make the right housing choices, obtain help with adaptations, repairs, access to energy efficiency measures and insulation, offers long term financial benefits. Ensuring that older people have access to low level housing support reduces high cost interventions and lessens the demand on health and social care.

4. Place shaping, community and infrastructure

Older people's housing should be placed in the context of age friendly and accessible places that support wellbeing and independence. Making improvement to existing infrastructure at the planning stage does not necessarily involve additional costs. It should ensure that design, materials and products work for all age groups. An age friendly perspective should to be an automatic component of local planning that takes an inclusive long term approach.

18. The Government has introduced a **higher building standard** based on the principles of lifetime homes. The implication is that this higher standard should be primarily for specialist housing. However, we believe it should be the minimum requirement for all new homes. We would like local authorities to apply it as a universal standard. It is estimated that to require a home to comply with the lifetime homes standard costs around £545^{xii}. This is a small amount to be covered by home builders given the savings on home adaptations. Inaccessible and poor design can end up transferring costs to the local authority by increasing the demand on public services. Specialist housing should be expected to meet this standard and go well beyond it.

19. Older people may decide to downsize to smaller homes with less space but they still require **sufficient space** to meet their needs^{xiii}. These may include storing possessions, having a spare room for guests, a live in carer if needed, or to use as an office for work or hobbies. They may also need space to store a wheelchair or mobility scooter. The issue of space for **mobility scooters** is likely to increase in the future and lack of storage is becoming a common problem for older people. Housing options that are too small or cramped in poor locations will not encourage older people to move. Local authorities have a key role in encouraging developers to improve the design and standards that will appeal to older people and meet their needs.
20. Housing for older people needs to be developed in **age friendly places** with easy access to shops, services and health care. It needs to include consideration of level pavements, street light, public toilets, and safe green spaces that help older people to remain active and engaged. Age UK is worried about the growing numbers of older people who are living on their own and who feel cut off from their local community. We would like the LGA to encourage more local authorities to sign up to the principles of age friendly places as set out by the WHO^{xiv}. They should also build on any successful approaches that emerge from the **Healthy New Towns** Initiative.
21. Several cities in the UK, led by Manchester City Council have formed a network^{xv} to make further progress on age friendly places. The principles they have developed are highly relevant to all local authority areas, towns and rural areas as well as cities, although the way the principles are applied will differ. All local authorities should be actively encouraged to set out how they can take forward age friendly services and infrastructure. **Age proofing** should be a core component of all local planning and not added on as an afterthought.

5. Health and quality of life for an ageing population

Poor housing conditions can have a dramatic effect on the health and wellbeing of older people. Local authorities need to support and coordinate services that look to improve the home environment for the health, wellbeing and independence of all older people. Taking preventative action on housing will reduce the demands placed on the health and social care system.

22. Local Age UKs and a number of housing associations are exploring ways of coordinating **integrated care services** for older people.^{xvi} Age UK established a successful integrated care service in Cornwall in 2013. It is now setting up pilots in Portsmouth, North Tyneside, Ashford and Canterbury, East Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, Redbridge, Barking and Havering, Sheffield, Guildford and Waverley. These will focus on vulnerable older people leaving hospital and reduce readmissions by taking a person centred approach that links different support services together. We would like to see local authorities working with health and wellbeing board, hospital authorities, housing associations and voluntary agencies

to ensure that home support and adaptations are a core part of integrated care packages.

23. The Government has plans to increase funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) as part of the Better Care programme and this is welcome. **Adaptations services** still only reach a small proportion of those who would benefit from help and therefore avoid more costly forms of intervention later on. Many older people are not aware of DFG or other forms of assistance. Relatively low cost interventions can prevent or mitigate deterioration in health that may require higher cost interventions. Local authorities should ensure that these services have a higher profile and offer a speedy and efficient service to older people who need help. There is existing guidance on how this can be achieved and Foundations are looking at way of making the deployment of DFG more effective. Local authorities should also consider whether to support specific home adaptations for older people with dementia^{xvii}. For example, Norwich City Council offer specific grants that relate to visual perception and home safety issue.
24. Local authorities or a consortium of authorities could do more to use their purchasing power to reduce the costs of basic adaptations and equipment. Providing **discounted services** to older people could act as a nudge for older people to take action sooner. A good example of this is the installation of shower units. This is a basic low cost measure that makes bathing much easier for older people and reduces the need for care assistance. Measures like installing a shower, and other basic adaptations, at a discounted rate, could help to significantly reduce costs to social services. Although this is not a new idea we would like the Commission to consider how this can be progressed.
25. Local authorities should consider facilitating a **one stop shop approach** to supporting older people with a disability or restricted mobility. Co-locating independent living services is a more efficient, effective and joined up way of delivering these services. It also makes it easier for older people to obtain a package of support that meet their individual needs. It means bringing together advice on grants and finance, as well as showcasing and installing adaptations and equipment. They could also provide help with home insulation and energy efficiency measures. The local authority should make it as easy as possible for older people to consider a range of practical action that promotes their wellbeing and independence. Examples of this approach are available from Care and Repair England, and have the support of the Home Adaptations Consortium^{xviii}.
26. **Age UK Nottingham & Nottinghamshire** received funding as part of the First Stop advice programme^{xix}. They have been able to link this funding into a range of practical housing services to support older people including a handy person service, home safety and home improvement. Age UK believes that bringing services together improves coordination and speed of delivery, while reducing costs.

6. Employment

There is an expectation that more of us will continue working beyond State Pension age. Older people's housing should reflect and support these changing patterns of work.

27. Retirement housing should have the capacity to allow older and disabled people to **continue working from home**. Older people's housing should offer space, facilities and fast internet connections that allow older people to work from home, or as part of the communal facilities within a scheme. There is a potential for retirement housing to offer a work hub for older people who want to carry on working past state pension age.

28. Local authorities and housing associations should consider facilitating **back-to-work support services** for older people. This could be directly provided or through working with others, including the voluntary sector or Jobcentre Plus. Such initiatives would benefit providers by helping older people to meet their housing costs.

7. Further information

For further information from Age UK please see 'Housing in Later Life'^{xx} and 'Agenda for Later Life (2015)'^{xxi}.

ⁱ Available online at: <http://www.habinteq.org.uk/tah-toolkit>

ⁱⁱ Available online at: <http://www.elderscouncil.org.uk/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Available online at:

http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200091/older_people/7113/events_things_to_do_and_local_contacts/5

^{iv} The University of Manchester Library (2015) Researching Age-Friendly Communities. Available online at:

<http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/brochures/Age-Friendly-Booklet.pdf>

^v Housing LIN. Toolkit models of hub and spoke. Available online at:

http://www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/HSU/A_-_A_Hub_and_Spoke_Model.pdf

^{vi} AgeUK (2015) Don't leave park homes out in the cold. Available online at: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Campaigns/winter%20health/4982%20Age%20UK%20ID202741%20Park%20Homes%20Campaign%20Report.pdf?epslanguage=en-GB&dtrk=true>

^{vii} Details of local home finder scheme. Available at: <http://www.blaby.gov.uk/news-events/press-releases/2013-press-releases/homefinder-scheme-launches-in-leicestershire/>

^{viii} Details of Lloyds Bank Foundation homeshare scheme. Available online at:

<http://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/publications/news/2015/06/15/homesharepilotlaunch/>

^{ix} Cohousing network. Available online at: <http://cohousing.org.uk/research-cohousing>

^x Barnet society (2015) Available online at: <http://barnetsociety.org.uk/component/k2/uk-s-first-purpose-build-co-housing-starts-in-barnet>

^{xi} Care & Repair England, EAC, AgeUK, Foundations, Independent Age (2015). Available online at:

<http://www.housingcare.org/downloads/kbase/3402.pdf>

^{xii} Available online at: <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/costs.html>

^{xiii} RIBA (2011). The case for space. Available online at:

<https://www.architecture.com/files/ribaholdings/policyandinternationalrelations/homewise/caseforspace.pdf>

^{xiv} WHO (2007) Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide Available online at:

http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

^{xv} Age friendly cities network. List of participants available online at: <http://www.agenda-efa.org.uk/site/2013/04/uks-12-age-friendly-cities-go-global/>

^{xvi} <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/professional-resources/home/services-and-practice/integrated-care/integrated-care-model/>

^{xvii} Adaptations grants for people with dementia offered by Norwich City Council. Details online at:

https://www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20048/private_sector_housing/1097/adaptations_and_assistance_with_independent_living/2

^{xviii} Home Adaptations Consortium (2015). Available online at:
<https://homeadaptationsconsortium.wordpress.com/2015/06/22/integration-in-action-innovation-in-home-adaptations-delivery-2/>

^{xix} Details available online at: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/notts/our-services/home-safety-and-improvement/>

^{xx} Available online at: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Political/Age%20UK%20ID201813%20Housing%20Later%20Life%20Report%20-%20final.pdf?dtrk=true>

^{xxi} Available online at: http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Policy/agenda_for_later_life_2015_full_report.pdf?dtrk=true