



Ideas for action: Older people shaping local housing policy and practice

Older Londoners influencing the Mayor's housing strategy

About this guide

This **'how to' guide** is part of a series produced by Care & Repair England in partnership with the Older People's Champions Group and older people's groups and organisations. The guides offer practical ideas for older people's groups and forums around the country who want to influence local housing policy, plans and actions.

The guides describe the ways that local groups have gone about raising housing issues with decision makers, their successes and lessons for others. They also show how local groups have tried different ways to involve a wider range of older people, especially those whose voices are often ignored.

At a glance

In 2017 Age UK London set up a series of consultations and events to ensure that older people across London gave their views about what the Mayor's London Housing Strategy should contain around ageing and older people.

For some of the events Age UK London worked in partnership with Positive Ageing in London (PAiL) and Care & Repair England also contributed.

The events and partnerships developed, ensured that the response to the draft strategy was developed by older people across London and reflected a wide range of views.

The strategy has subsequently been published and it does now cover some of the issues that were raised by older people.

1. What the Age UK London action was aiming to achieve

1.1 Aims and objectives

- To influence the Mayor's emerging London housing strategy by obtaining the views of older people across London on housing issues that affect them setting them in the context of relevant research and evidence
- To consult in different ways with older people from all tenures and in all housing circumstances
- To build on the relationships developed to continue to respond to the emerging strategy and plan (recently published see [here](#) and below¹) so that older people have their views heard

1.2 Who is involved

Age UK London is the regional voice of independent Age UKs and Age Concerns in London supporting and enhancing local work and championing the voices of older people in London.

PAIL (Positive Ageing in London) was founded in 2011 as the London regional forum on ageing, bringing together older people (over 50) and others to raise key issues affecting older people in London, develop older people's policy and voice, challenge for change, engaging, advocating for and promoting older people in London.

1.3 Events and consultations on the draft housing strategy

Age UK London, with funding from Hyde Housing and through commissioning work from Care & Repair England, aimed to produce a response to the Mayor's draft housing strategy for London (published in 2017) that was developed from the views of older Londoners themselves. They aimed to reach groups often on the margins. To do this they undertook the following action during late 2017 to ensure a wide input from older people across London, working with a range of partners.

- Organising a special housing conference – 'Homes for Older Londoners' – funded by the Hyde Foundation and in partnership with Positive Ageing in London (PAIL) which was addressed by a Greater London Authority (GLA) official involved with production of the Mayor's Draft Housing Strategy. This involved over 50 older Londoners from all parts of London and from all housing tenures and captured all the views expressed and the issues raised. Notes of this event and all other interactive discussions are set out both [here](#) and below.²
- Undertaking research³ and staging a related conference (supported by the Nationwide Foundation) on the specific subject of older people and private rented housing (this event was also addressed by a GLA representative). There were 60 participants in addition to staff and speakers.

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/tackling-londons-housing-crisis>

² <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/london/news--campaigns/views-older-londoners-housing/>

³ *Living in fear – experiences of older private tenants in London* Age UK London

- Working, again with PAIL, and funded by Hyde Foundation set up an interactive outreach housing discussion event in a Good Neighbours centre in South London and at a drop-in session for older tenants in Brent. This engaged around 75 people and involved a questionnaire for participants (anonymised) on their housing circumstances and concerns as well as both general and one to one discussions about housing issues in London. Notes of these events are [here](#) and below.⁴
- Drawing on the findings of an interactive housing event organised by Care & Repair England and MRS Independent Living in Hackney involving 80 people discussing their housing and care options.
- Assessing the results of an online survey (using Survey Monkey) – the questionnaire used is [here](#) – of older people's views about specific aspects of housing and ageing in London and what they thought was important. Twenty-six replies were received and analysed which identified the following responses in summary:

Summary results of online survey Nov 2017

- The priority of most importance was the delivery of genuinely affordable homes
- Most people saw housing affordability as a very important issue with around half of those surveyed seeing repairs and adaptations to the current home as very important too
- People felt building more social and specialised housing was very important. One person said there should be more options for older people both to rent and for sale
- Half of those surveyed agreed with the target of 90% of new homes accessible with a further 42% suggesting the target should be more ambitious. 61% strongly agreed with the proposition that new homes should also meet high environmental standards
- Most people either strongly agreed or agreed (52% and 30%) that there should be maximum use of Disabled Facilities Grant to support low income people adapt their homes
- Most people felt that older people need access to impartial independent advice about moving home and 96% agreed that the strategy should make more comment on tackling housing disrepair
- In relation to the private rented sector most identified repairs and the cost of rent as major problems (65% and 69%)

⁴<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/london/news--campaigns/views-older-londoners-housing/>

2. Achievements

A rounded response⁵ to the Mayor's Housing strategy was submitted based on the views gathered in the ways described above. Added to this was the wider experience of Age UK London about issues raised by older people concerning their housing through a range of programmes and projects and a thorough literature and data review, drawing on key government housing data sources (particularly the then Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) English Housing Survey, Building Research Establishment and Census data) as well as academic and grey literature concerning housing and ageing.

The response raised many specific issues from older people's experiences and covered a wide range of housing issues that impact on older people in London living in many tenures and circumstances. It identifies, too, that older people are concerned about housing issues not just for themselves but for their wider family and community.

In summary the main issues identified include:

- A broad welcome to address the shortage of affordable homes in London
- Support to improve standards for Londoners renting privately, to help leaseholders get a better deal and make sure more is done to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
- The importance of tackling the condition of the current housing stock, where most Londoners will continue to live for many decades to come
- An endorsement that building homes which are healthy places to live, with decent space standards, that are accessible, affordable to heat and environmentally sustainable will also result in long term financial and social benefits to both occupants and the wider economy e.g. through improved health and hence lower NHS and care costs
- The need to strengthen the links between housing and health and acknowledge the wide variety of needs and preferences of older people in London

3. Learning points

It takes a lot of planning and effort to make a consultation process of this kind accessible. The practicalities can be challenging in terms of finding the resources to engage people in accessible ways, not only online.

It also takes a lot of thought to organise discussions to connect older people's lived experiences and the target of influencing a complex, technocratic official strategy.

⁵ *Age UK London submission to the Mayor's draft London housing strategy*

4. Next steps

Age UK London welcomed the final strategy published in May 2018 (available [here](#) and below⁶) and is poised to consult and engage older people further in responding to the plan and actions proposed.

Age UK London is also looking to resource further partnership work on older people living in the private rented sector.

5. Contact regarding this guide

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⁶ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/tackling-londons-housing-crisis>

Organisations involved in this guide

Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation which aims to improve older people's housing. The contact for all information on all the Ideas for action guides.

It is a Registered Society with Charitable Status Reg No 25121R.

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Older People's Housing Champions

The Older People's Housing Champions is a network of older activists who support action by older people's groups to improve housing and related services for an ageing population across England.

Website: www.housingactionblog.wordpress.com

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Age UK London

Age UK London is the regional voice of independent Age UKs and Age Concerns in London and supporting and enhancing local work and championing the voices of older people in London. The contact for all information on this guide.

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PAIL (Positive Ageing in London)

PAIL (Positive Ageing in London) was founded in 2011 as the London regional forum on ageing, bringing together older people (over 50) and others to raise key issues affecting older people in London, develop older people's policy and voice, challenge for change, engaging, advocating for and promoting older people in London.

Website: <http://pailondon.org.uk/>

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About Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation (Registered Society with Charitable Status Reg No 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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