

1 Assessing the Housing Needs of Older People in Wales: a practitioner workshop

Report to Expert Working Group

2 Introduction

The Expert Working Group on Housing for Older People has received evidence on the [assessment of housing needs for older people in Wales](#); to supplement this a workshop was organised by the Housing LIN with practitioners to test the evidence and emerging findings in this area. This short report provides a summary of the discussions and includes the recommendations made by half day workshop participants in this area held on Wednesday, 23 November 2016 in Cardiff.

The workshop was attended by practitioners representing local authorities and registered providers, and both housing and social care; it included representation from Welsh Government and from national sector organisations including WLGA and Community Housing Cymru.

The workshop heard presentations from:

- John Howells, Director of Housing and Regeneration – including a reflection on the evidence heard across the range of themes being considered by the Expert Group.
- [Juliet Bligh, Institute of Public Care](#) – an overview of the key considerations in developing an assessment of older people's housing need, the main challenges this may present, and setting out the key questions for the workshop to explore.
- [Neil Ayling \(Flintshire\)](#) and [Shayne Hembrow \(Wales and West Housing\)](#) – providing a local authority and provider view of the assessment of need, and
- [Jim McKirdle \(WLGA\)](#) – describing the development and current status of the LGA guidance on the assessment of housing need.

The workshop then discussed a series of questions considering whether further guidance is needed in this area; the capacity and capability of local authorities to carry out effective assessments of housing need; the opportunity to work collaboratively across housing, social care and health; and how good practice should be shared.

Each table group took their own notes and these are summarised below, with key messages highlighted as appropriate; examples of good practice were also suggested by groups and these are included although no follow up has been done to better understand the relevance of the example. We suggest that if further guidance is developed it would be valuable to include information about these or other good practice examples.

3 Guiding and supporting the assessment of housing need

Questions posed to workshop:

Should Welsh Government update its Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMA) guidance and signpost Local Authorities to assessment tools which can support them in assessing the housing needs of their ageing population more fully?

If so, what sources of data should be include to enable Local Authorities develop a fuller understanding of the housing needs of their ageing population, across all tenures?

Whilst there was some difference of opinion about the need to update the current LHMA guidance the majority view suggested that either an update was needed or some additional guidance on older people was required. The following concerns were raised and suggestions made:

- The current LHMA guidance is dated and, although the more recent [Step by Step guide](#) is helpful in supporting consistency with numbers, it does not help with the qualitative information needed
- The guidance relies heavily on waiting list data and participants expressed concern and is largely concerned with social housing: this does not accurately reflect housing need, and also provides only a partial picture of need; it only reflects people who have known about options and have registered now (and some of these may not want to move now anyway); it does not gather information about where people want to live or their lifestyle aspirations.
- There is very little reference to older people within the LHMA guidance, and the Population Needs Assessment guidance needs more on housing.
- The guidance tends not to reflect the diversity within particular age groups – cannot assume everyone over a certain age is going to have a particular need.
- We need to understand what the next generation of “older” people will want – need to have meaningful conversations – this is about planning for the future.
- Need to explore the difference and parallels between “need” and “demand”.
- We need to ensure people have sufficient information about potential options to express a preference. This includes jargon-busting information (and for professionals).
- We need to better understand the outcomes being delivered through existing services – what works and what does not work. We also need to understand pathways through services and the impact this has on demand for housing (for example, hospital discharge, alternatives to residential care).
- We need to understand the affordability of housing management services (for example, service charges in social housing and leasehold or shared ownership).
- There is a wide range of data potentially available and relevant which we need to tap into (for example, public health, health, social care, private sector, as well as analysis tools such as the Housing LIN’s Strategic Housing for Older People Analysis Tool or [SHOP@](#)). It would be helpful to have signposting to these within any additional guidance.
- There may be the potential to build on [SAIL](#) report on the feasibility of Supporting People funding as source of data and evaluation of specific services.

- We need to look across the whole older population not just those needing social housing.
- We need to look at local situation/circumstances – one view is that a national database might lose ownership. One option may be to sample areas within a community to assess housing need.

Suggested examples of good practice:

Powys – needs analysis across care homes and housing

SHOP@ - review of housing for older people shortfall across 6 North Wales authorities that come under the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

4 Capacity and Capability

Questions posed to workshop:

How should Local Authorities ensure that they have the skills and capacity to enable key data to be analysed and understood properly at the local level?

How can Local Authorities should work more collaboratively across their Health and Social Services functions and ensure that assessments of the accommodation needs of their ageing population is closely linked with assessments of care and support needs taking place, eg under the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act?

There was consensus that there was not the capacity to deliver older people's housing needs assessments currently, with the following issues raised:

- Housing strategy resource has been depleted: “*most LA's have no research officers/teams with the right skills*”; we need to develop a better understanding of the skills and capacity across Wales; we should invest in local authority skills and capacity.
- Regional approaches to develop capacity were an opportunity to address this but needed to ensure that this did not result in losing the local focus.
- Need to work collaboratively with partners (especially health and social care) to draw on other skills and capacity; must learn from good practice; should recognise that local authorities cannot do it all on their own.
- Need to align work on [population needs assessments](#) to support the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act with an assessment of housing need.
- Should build on the work of LSB/PSB function and the need to evaluate data more broadly; it is a challenge to draw together and analyse different strands of data; it is also a challenge to draw together data held on different systems.
- We should recognise that we need to consider different types and sources of data, for example on loneliness or the work of the [SSIA](#) on building community resilience.
- There is a role for Welsh Government in providing a clear steer to support collaboration and enable consistency.

- Housing does not necessarily/consistently have a voice at a regional level, and so difficult to ensure housing for older people is considered strategically by regions; one approach suggested is for there to be a specific accommodation working group at a regional level. It may be helpful to consider a regional role to co-ordinate and promote housing for older people.
- We need to learn from the successes from the Intermediate Care Fund, and build on these.
- Need to recognise the differences in language, planning timescales, etc when working across housing, social care and health – success is often dependent on relationships rather than structural/functional approaches.

Suggested examples of good practice:

- Western Bay health and housing group
- Swansea City region “healthy communities”
- Conwy research officer/team
- Gwent “In One Place” project

5 Service improvement

Question posed to workshop:

What sector-led services improvement and knowledge transfer activities should be in place to share good practice examples and approaches to assessing strategic housing needs?

A range of suggestions were made of current good practice and/or the areas where more work needs to be done to identify and understand what works looking more widely than the assessment of need:

- The impact of integrating housing in front line services, particularly within health settings.
- Understanding how housing can impact on demand for health and social care services; developing a better case around potential savings.
- Equity release and how to enable owner occupiers to protect assets.
- Improvements in housing advice so, for example, utilising the [Elderly Accommodation Counsel's HOOP toolkit](#).
- Developing a better understanding of the outcomes delivered by housing options.
- Developing a consistent approach to planning strategically for housing for older people with social care and health, for example aligning with regional partnership boards to better integrate at home service provision.
- Reviews of specific services, such as sheltered housing, Care and Repair/Staying Put and technology enabled housing and care services.
- Understanding potential and potential impact on demand of taking asset based approaches.
- Understanding capital and revenue funding models going forward

- Encourage a greater diversity of tenure and housing types and improve the design quality of housing for older people, for example extra care housing and a Welsh version of [HAPPI](#).

In terms of sharing good practice the following comments made:

- Welsh Government should provide a steer and/or priorities, for example linked to the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act.
- Are we making best use of the information and information sharing networks we already have in place?
- WLGA has a responsibility for sharing good practice through [Good Practice Wales](#).
- Ideas: masterclasses on specific issues; national advisory groups overseeing regional groups on themes (for example, older people or learning disability).
- Regional partnership boards could have task focused working groups looking at specific housing for older people issues/themes.
- We should maximise the potential of population needs assessment.
- Access wider sector membership for the (health and housing) collaborative agreement.

6 Key Messages

Our interpretation of the key messages from the workshop for the Expert Working Group is as follows:

1. There is recognition that the current approach to assessing housing need for the older population needs improvement.
2. Improvement will need to be supported in a number of ways:

Commissioned by the Welsh Government:

- a. The development of additional and/or updated LHMA guidance or a framework to support a consistent approach to the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, ensuring population needs assessment guidance includes the assessment of housing need for older people or cross-references other guidance and its relevance to social services and health.
- b. Building capacity and capability starting with a clear steer nationally on what good looks like in this area.

Supported by the WLGA

- c. The development of a collaborative or partnership approach to the assessment of housing need drawing on data and expertise across housing, social care and health; this will include sharing resources and good practice.
- d. Ensuring housing has a voice within regional strategic partnerships, and there is recognition of the potential benefits for health and social

care of considering housing issues; this may be more appropriate as a sub group of the main boards.

Sector-led improvement

- e. There is also an appetite for sharing good practice more effectively, as well as developing capability around the assessment of housing need. This may be through strengthening existing networks or through new approaches, but will need to be driven and co-ordinated at a national level.

With thanks to Juliet Bligh for writing up the notes from the workshop and additional comments from Jeremy Porteus.

Institute of Public Care/Housing LIN
November 2016