



Housing LIN

Connecting people, ideas and resources



HOUSING LIN / CENTRE FOR AGEING BETTER CHAMPIONING CONTEMPORARY ADAPTATION DESIGN GRAND CHALLENGES ROUNDTABLE

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Introduction

This briefing captures the key discussion points that emerged from a joint roundtable meeting organised by the Housing LIN and hosted by the Centre for Aging Better. Chaired by Jeremy Porteus and Rachael Docking, it explored how we can better champion more contemporary and stylish adaptations design and influence how the sector can best respond to the changing lifestyle aspirations of households with an older and disabled person. We are grateful for all those that contributed.

Open discussion

- Tricia Grierson, of Johnnie Johnson Housing, spoke about the NHF's Greenhouse Project, [Adapting with Age](#). 95% of older people live in mainstream housing – a huge majority. This represents a significant potential market for better designed adaptations, focusing not on dependency but on supporting independence. The aim of the project was to design innovations which could be scaled up across the sector – 'not just another pilot'. Very few people 'plan to be old' – and they (we) worry that installing minor adaptations in our homes signals 'the beginning of the end' in terms of continuing to live active, positive lives.
- We need to develop 'products of aspiration rather than desperation', taking inclusive design from hospitals and hotels into mainstream homebuilding.
- The question was asked: is there a natural home for organisations to come together to think about design aspects of adaptations? Architects, product designers, academics, government, OTs, manufacturers, housing associations, activists and campaigners are all looking for opportunities to explore these issues together.
- People are not exposed to the well-designed products that do exist. The market needs to challenge what is currently on offer, which is not good enough, but which is dominated by companies who don't see the need for change (after all, why change when the products are selling?). A much greater level of understanding of what is possible is needed across the board, including on the part of Occupational Therapists (OTs) in particular.

- From a retail perspective, until there is an upsurge in demand for something better, alongside real innovation and the emergence of more accessible, high quality options, there will not be real change; the supply side is being dominated by a handful of retailers.
- From a health and social care perspective, there is a need to amend some aspects of the NHS approach to the procurement and purchasing of equipment and adaptations, to ensure that people can access better quality products within that pathway.
- There is a need to look at the community equipment budget and understand better how it can be better used to support integration in this area, alongside Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).
- [Motionspot](#), as cited in RIBA's [Age Friendly Housing](#) book, provides a great example of the delivery of good design. The public need to be made more aware of what could be possible in this area.
- We need to get better at showcasing the inclusive and attractive products that do exist and at a decent price point. This should come alongside developments in digital and technology, which are beginning to come closer together alongside the adaptations and community equipment sectors.
- Design Council: What is good design? 'Useful, usable and desirable at an affordable price'.

Grand Challenges

Each roundtable group was asked to look at the following three questions and report back

1. **Grand challenge on adaptations: with an ageing society, what are the barriers to innovation, product improvements, market growth?**

- Too many equipment items and adaptations look clinical and stigmatise the people who need to use them. We need to call for more aspirational products.
- Designers are stuck in current mindset, focused primarily on the functional. However, glasses are example where design has changed the trend – you can use design but need greater public awareness to make this viable. The market is not challenging what is on offer.
- [Recent press coverage](#) about lenses and glasses has highlighted that a single Italian company designs most of the world's spectacle frames; this has significant implications in terms of choices within the market. A similar issue applies to the adaptations market.
- The local authority financial structure needs to change – professionals need to be able to signpost people to other products available for self-funders. This would also reflect the ethos of personalisation, including for those people with a personal budget. Major and minor adaptations may need different approaches.

- In the self-funder market – people often buy their own products which are not meeting their needs. This is due to a lack of public awareness and understanding about aids and adaptations in general, suggesting a need for better hubs of information - from Disabled Living Centres to high street shops.
- However, the need for increased levels of awareness extends across the board - encompassing retailers, contractors, architects, designers, occupational therapists, as well as the general public. There are so many people are involved in this supply chain who need to be appropriately trained.
- The Centre for Ageing Better found that there is still only a fledgling level of [evidence](#) around the value of adaptations.
- New resource: The Royal College of Occupational Therapists are refreshing their guide, 'Adaptations without Delay' (due out shortly).

2. *Grand designs*: what examples are there of accessible stylish products and adaptations or improvements in the home that could be mainstreamed? Are there lessons we can learn from other sectors?

- Glasses – clear example of a declining health related product that became fashionable
- Oxo good grips range. Also, the Ford Focus; Accessible IKEA (note the new OMTÄNKSAM range of furniture, aimed at people with 'different needs').
- The language around accessible and inclusive design is important – we need to create a new narrative that is easily understood by people that does not highlight stigmatising negativity and decline.
- For example, in Copenhagen, priority seats are indicated with a plus sign, rather than one of the more stigmatising images often used to designate disability or particular needs.
- MotionSpot were able to share that the hotel sector has influenced the products for the better, because they are responding to a clear demand for accessible accommodation, alongside demanding consumers, which has together helped to create better income streams (for hotels) and offers greater guest experience (for customers).
- We need to consider the role that the creation of need can play in taking this agenda forward – reflecting that many of the most important products and services over the past 10 years have been innovations which we didn't know we needed - e.g. Alexa, Kindle, smart tablets and Spotify.
- We should explore the digital revolution and rapid changes in technology and IT, and see the latter as being strongly aligned to work to improve the design of aids and adaptations in the home.

3. **Grand opportunities**: how can we create incentives in the system to transform adaptations in the UK? What new opportunities are there to deliver the change that is needed?

- Language / public awareness / training. *What's the equivalent of Grand Designs? Chic adaptations?* How can we engage the mainstream homebuilding / interior design media in this agenda?
- The incentives needed for local authorities are different to the incentives which will be effective for retailers. Local authorities should not be afraid to signpost to other products, which people can buy themselves.
- At a local authority and NHS level, in order to gain real traction with commissioners and providers, and also in housing associations, there is a need to demonstrate the Return on Investment (ROI) of better designed products, in terms of both the financial and the social value.
- Legislation – there are more funds available within DFGs. Many councils are starting to do things differently – for example, no longer means testing. Also, could we use the Care Act to enable greater choice, control and market development?
- However, delegates were disappointed not to see more in the NHS Long Term Plan about the important role of housing in health and wellbeing.
- The provision of accessible homes should be mandatory – and accessibility and inclusivity should become the norm.
- HAPPI design principles should be extended to include an emphasis on the adaptability of homes to become 'care ready'.
- Better asset management of social housing stock is required. For example, a cyclical approach to repairs and maintenance should be standard.
- [The Design Council Spark programme](#) works with people with lived experience who also have the potential to be entrepreneurs. The programme will take them through a design process and connect them with designers. There are 10 places on the programme – everyone gets £10,000 to spend and they connect them with the market. At the end of the programme the teams pitch for a share of £250,000. Launching February 2019.
- A new MHCLG-led design competition will be announced soon – 'Home of 2030' - reflecting the needs of an ageing population and the clean growth agenda. Look out for Housing LIN updates.
- There is an opportunity for inclusive design to be used to differentiate a company in a positive way – i.e. as the accessible or inclusive product provider. Any effort to do this needs to be embedded in the wider company strategy, with a clear policy to train staff in the products and in the inclusive philosophy.
- Also, real attempts to improve the design of adaptations and equipment must embed a co-design approach with end users, and draw on lived experiences.
- More support for knowledge sharing to aid professional development on adaptations would be helpful.

- The most inclusive examples of design can look extremely contemporary and high-end. Social media can provide a great forum for sharing bottom-up innovation and exemplary practice – for example the **#inclusivechic thread on Instagram** – where people share the good stuff they have done for themselves in their own homes.
- Please see the [Housing LIN dedicated webpages](#)

About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 40,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales to exemplify innovative housing solutions for an ageing population.

Recognised by government and industry as a leading ‘knowledge hub’ on specialist housing, our online and regional networked activities:

- connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing choices that enable older and disabled people to live independently
- provide intelligence on latest funding, research, policy and practice developments, and
- raise the profile of specialist housing with developers, commissioners and providers to plan, design and deliver aspirational housing for an ageing population.

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk>

About the Centre for Ageing Better

The Centre for Ageing Better is a charity, funded by an endowment The National Lottery Community Fund, working to create a society where everyone enjoys a good later life. We want more people to be in fulfilling work, in good health, living in safe, accessible homes and connected communities. By focusing on those approaching later life and at risk of missing out, we will create lasting change in society. We are bold and innovative in our approach to improving later lives. We work in partnership with a diverse range of organisations. As a part of the What Works network, we are grounded in evidence.

<https://www.ageing-better.org.uk>

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