



Age Friendly Social Housing Programme

A place-based approach to improving outcomes for older residents

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Age Friendly Social Housing programme

- A **two-year** HACT programme focussed on improving the lives of over 50s in **three pilot areas**
- Partnership of twelve **housing associations** in Southwark
- Worked closely with Southwark **Public Health** team and **voluntary sector** providers for older people
- Aimed at **raising awareness** of issues faced by older residents, fostering **collaborations** and **piloting** solutions together
- One project – **co-creating improvement to an adaptations service**



Comment made in a welfare call

Do you know who I should ask about getting the stairlift?

My husband has been a prisoner in the bedroom for two years now. He won't be able to come down the stairs and eat Christmas dinner with his family.

Can you imagine how that makes him feel... us feel?

Background – national and local

Nationally:

- **Almost half** of social housing residents have a **limiting long-term illness or disability**
- 56% of the housing association residents who **need adaptations lack them** (minority ethnic households are twice as likely to lack them)

In Southwark:

- Very high **proportion of residents living in social housing** (39%)
- **Emergency hospital admissions for falls-related injuries and for dementia** are consistently above average



Co-creating a better aids and adaptations service with one housing association

Rationale

- The need to create a unified policy and procedure following a merger
- Compliance with the consumer standards

Method

- Interviews with 9 residents and workshops with 23 staff
- Recommendations presented to the relevant director
- Changes to procedures to be implemented while waiting for policy consideration



Consumer standards – the outcomes that social landlords in England must deliver

Safety and Quality standard

Adaptations - registered providers must **assist tenants** seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.

Transparency, influence and accountability

Diverse needs – **take action** to deliver **fair and equitable outcomes**

Engagement with tenants – **take account of how** residents want services to be delivered
Information about landlord services – **communicate** and **provide adequate information..**

Issues residents experience in accessing adaptations services

- **Lack of information** about the service and it only being available online
- **Long waits** for OT assessments and the delivery of adaptations
- **Uncertainty** about what's happening in a long and complex process and who to ask for updates
- At times, **lack of clarity** about resident's responsibilities in the process
- **Complex needs** not always being understood
- **Residents' needs changing** during the waiting period



Some cases

Case 1 – Resident in her 60s struggling to deal with frequent falls. When the repairs operative arrived, she refused a clinical looking stair handrail because it didn't match the wooden one on the other side. She asked if a wooden one could be provided. While waiting for a response, she fell, broke her nose and needed dental surgery.

Case 2 - Resident is widowed, has dementia, speaks Bengali and lives alone. Arthritis makes it hard for her to turn on the kitchen tap and she has fallen numerous times due to UTIs. She has lost her confidence to move around the house. Family is unfamiliar with services for older people and that the landlord could provide a lever tap.

Case 3 – Resident in her 50s with MS lives alone in a 3-bed maisonette. An elderly Mum provides a lot of support but this is becoming increasingly unsafe. She requested a grab rail over a year ago and has the OT report. While waiting for the works, her health has deteriorated. She is unsure whether to start a new request in case it delays the grab rail.

Case 4 – Resident's husband started a request for a level access shower four years ago. Two years ago, he died before the adaptation was delivered. She started a new request for herself. When the offer was finally made, she refused it because she decided she couldn't tolerate the disruption it would cause.

Recommendations to the housing association

- **Communicate** proactively about the service and in a variety of ways
- Adopt the '**Adaptations Without Delay**' approach, including training staff as **Trusted Assessors**
- Develop a better **understanding of residents' needs and preferences**
- Give staff **discretion to prioritise** urgent cases
- **Named officers** to manage cases and be a point of contact
- **Take every opportunity to adapt and to retain** the adapted stock



Response from the housing association

- **An increase in the threshold** for works not requiring OT assessment to £2,000
 - Contractors encouraged to train their staff as **Trusted Assessors**
 - **Staff empowered** to identify priority cases and use an additional sum to deliver the adaptation
 - **Planned bathroom/kitchen improvement programmes** will deliver adapted ones within contract (for those who have requests in progress)
 - Consideration of **alternatives to removing adaptations** from voided properties
 - **Acknowledgement of the importance of the adaptation service**
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Wider impact in the Southwark partnership

- Southwark Council is exploring **options for introducing a trusted assessor role** with voluntary sector commissioned providers and NHS social prescribers.
 - **Age UK Lewisham and Southwark** took up the offer of a free trusted assessor training place for their **Handyperson**.
 - Southern Housing has undertaken a further cocreation project around **Disabled Facilities Grant processes**.
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Age Friendly Social Housing: a key recommendation from our project learning



3. Robust health & Safety

The specific health and safety needs of buildings needs a review through the lens of an ageing population to ensure that residents can live in their homes safely and independently for as long as possible.





Resources from the Age Friendly programme

[Promoting the Safety, Independence and Wellbeing of Older Residents](#)

[HACT Age Friendly Social Housing - resources](#)

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