



Older people deserve accommodation that meets their needs and desires

Written by Nick Sanderson, Chief Executive, Audley Retirement

The ILC-UK's report¹ might come as a surprise to those that don't know much about the retirement village concept. For those of us that run retirement villages with flexible care provision, it serves primarily to add statistical evidence to what we have long believed to be the case: living in this kind of accommodation has a positive impact on quality of life.

For me, the finding that really stood out was the greater sense of control felt by those living in retirement villages over their daily lives, nearly 10% higher than those living in the community. It has been suggested that moving from your long term home to a retirement community is ceding control. This research proves this is simply not the case. Living in the right accommodation, with flexible care, gives our owners the opportunity to live their lives as they choose, on their own terms.

The strong sense of community when living with like-minded individuals is important as well. A thread running through this report is the low levels of loneliness and social isolation felt by those living in this kind of extra care housing. In fact, the average person in a retirement village experiences half the amount of loneliness than those in the community.

I have been advocating the need to promote alternatives to care homes for many years. We know that no one wants to live in one, and except in specialist cases, they shouldn't need to. Previous research² from the ILC-UK, which Audley was involved with, showed living in retirement villages with extra care provision results in people over 80 with care needs being half as likely to need to live in an institutional care home in the future.

And as also recognized in the recent All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People inquiry report, 'Housing our Ageing Population: Positive Ideas'³, people are living longer, and with the housing shortage in the UK, the government should move its focus away from first time buyers, and onto the right kind of housing for older people, who could then free up family homes for the other end of the market. These reports provide further proof that this is worthy of further investigation by the government.

The demand is there, our own experiences has been that we can't build villages fast enough to meet demand. As the research shows, the government must look at ways of working closely with the private sector to stimulate the building of good quality retirement housing are sensible. We should all support them to ensure older people are able to enjoy the retirement they deserve.

Published on Monday, 26 September 2016 by the Housing LIN

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http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/village_life_independence_loneliness_and_quality_of_life_in_retirement_vill

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http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/village_life_independence_loneliness_and_quality_of_life_in_retirement_vill

³ http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building/HAPPI/?parent=8649&child=10165