



Housing LIN

Connecting people, ideas and resources

Happy to be involved in HAPPI3

Steve Sadler, CTO, Tunstall Healthcare talks about his experience of giving evidence to the Housing and Care for Older People APPG

I was honoured to be asked to give evidence to the new All Party Parliamentary Group report on housing and care for older people which has been launched on 8 June 2016.

“Housing our Ageing Population: Positive Ideas” (HAPPI 3¹), written by Jeremy Porteus, Director of the Housing LIN, calls for a significant change in the focus of Government policy away from solely concentrating on first time buyers, towards those in later life. Chair Lord Best is keen to emphasise the benefits from supporting older people to enjoy better health and wellbeing in new homes and that it should be perfectly acceptable to be able to move to a new home before you are forced into it due to health or financial reasons.

My evidence centred on the technological and infrastructure aspects of developing new homes which were designed with later life in mind. Here, I had focused on innovations in digitally-enabled (IP) systems in housing, and which are providing new options for supporting and connecting residents. So, I find it very encouraging that HAPPI3 recommendations include a need for Local Authorities to focus on plans for older people’s housing, and that Housing Associations should move forward with ‘care-ready’ features that exploit new connected home technologies, to provide greater autonomy and control for residents.

Technology sits at the heart of every sector today, so why not in providing housing, care and support?

Having worked with the housing sector for 20 years, I have been exposed to technology infrastructures required to support a diverse set of services – from basic warden call, through dementia and mental health to social and digital inclusion. Matching needs and aspirations to the relevant technology-enabled services is key, and the technology is fast-moving world, so we can’t stand still.

Currently there are significant shifts towards the connected home (and person), where IP (internet protocol) connectivity is creating new opportunities. Importantly for us all, we hope that this will enable the delivery of more flexible and integrated models of housing with care, offering personalised solutions at lower cost.

But this is not a straightforward journey, as made clear through our work with the Housing LIN², we have seen that there are barriers to technology integration. We have learned that the biggest barrier to technology adoption is **cultural** – we are all stretched in our day jobs, and it is so easy to slide back into business-as-usual,

¹ www.housinglin.org.uk/HAPPI3

² www.housinglin.org.uk/pagefinder.cfm?cid=9467

where change can easily be seen as a risk rather than an opportunity. The reality is that the technology changes and the newly-enabled services will become reality, and we ignore them at our peril. I'm hopeful that initiatives such as HAPPI help to bring us together to share, test and exploit the innovative opportunities that are before us.

The housing sector owns a fundamental role and responsibility in supporting people through life, and eases the burden on health and social care services. Integrating services, which count, for every individual should be a key objective for all housing providers. There are examples of excellence out there – the opportunity to transform housing and service delivery by leveraging technology is huge and will bring significant benefit to all parties.

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