



Housing LIN

Connecting people, ideas and resources

## The 'I's have it – building a movement for change

*Written by Jeremy Porteus, Director of the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network)*

The election sound and fury is over – now the attention turns to policy priorities.

I set out below the Housing LIN's manifesto around retirement housing options and the need for accommodation to be the third plank in the integration of services such as health and social care. Coincidentally, each begins with the letter 'I' – perhaps reflecting that we live in the information age.

The party manifestos were disappointingly devoid of ideas on these vital issues. Instead, targets for building new general housing and the plight of those in 'generation rent' and first time buyers dominated the housing debate. There were no pledges (or indeed discussions) around the quality and range of housing choices for older people and those with disabilities.

Similarly, while the major parties recognised that integration and prevention should be the watchwords for health and social care, the role housing plays in promoting wellbeing, independence and choice for older people in particular went largely unremarked.

Last winter's pressures on A&E, which some warn are now a year-round problem, illustrated perfectly the case for ensuring older people are living in warm, accident-proof homes where they receive appropriate support.

So here is my eight point strategy for the government that emerges from the current negotiations.

**1. Integration: Recognise the connection between housing, health and wellbeing.** Practical actions could include beefing up the representation of housing on health and wellbeing boards.

Every local authority should be required to have a strategy for maintaining and improving the housing stock to support independent ageing. This would include helping those in privately owned or rented housing. I highlight other practical implications and actions flowing from this below.

**2. Investment:** Building on that, the integration agenda – whether through the new Better Care Fund (BCF) or 'vanguard' plans to require closer working between health and social care locally – must include housing.

This must extend to the £5.3b being used to support specialist housing initiatives and technology-enabled care to meet the needs of older people. Building on this and the specialised housing funds, future capital investment in housing for older people not only needs to be higher but better integrated.

3. **Insight: Reinforce this by establishing a cabinet committee or sub-committee on health, housing and wellbeing.** During the last parliament, there was not even a cabinet committee on health and wellbeing – let alone one that included the housing dimension.
4. **Intelligence: Local authorities and their partners need to be smarter at collecting and analysing data around specialist housing need in their communities.** Ministers and their agencies should encourage them to use existing tools such as **SHOP@** (the Strategic Housing for Older People analysis tool<sup>1</sup>) to ensure they make informed decisions that reflect future local demand and supply.

**Comment [C1]:** Hyperlink  
<http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingExtraCare/ExtraCareStrategy/SHOP/SHOPAT/>

Such tools can help councils – and private and third sector developers – identify local specialist housing needs and the number and type of new homes that will meet that need. Councils in particular need to better understand the specialist housing market and produce evidence to make the case for public and private investment. The government can help by planning changes, notably around the community infrastructure levy.

5. **Inclusion: In seeking to reach their elections targets for the building of new housing, politicians must ensure that these new homes and communities reflect our ageing population.** This means building ‘age-inclusive’ homes that can meet – or be easily adapted to meet – the changing needs of their occupants as they age.
6. **Innovation: Policymakers, providers and development partners should commit to design quality and innovation, as outlined in major documents such as Lifetime homes, lifetime neighbourhoods, HAPPI and HAPPI2.** In this way, specialist housing will be more attractive to older people because of an emphasis on quality design and a sense of belonging to the community. Only by building and promoting housing and designing products and services that improve quality of life and provide lifestyle choices and safeguards can we avoid specialist housing turning into the residential care of the future.

The new government must tackle the anticipated 240,000 shortfall of specialist housing units by 2030.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/SHOPAT/>

**7. *Involvement:* The case for user involvement or co-creation throughout the planning and construction of new specialist housing has been building for some time.**

Just this week, AmicusHorizon published a [report](#) looking at the financial benefits of such an approach. Written by the University of Westminster, it argues that involving people not only improves satisfaction and service delivery, but provides value for money.

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<http://www.amicushorizon.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=20553&p=0>

**8. *Information:* Invest in information and advice services that help older people find solutions that meet their housing, health and care needs.**

Ministers should also update directions to local authorities and clinical commissioning groups to commission information and advice services that meet all these needs.

**A call to action**

Before and during the election the parties accepted that our ageing population had massive implications for the NHS and social care budgets.

Ministers and other MPs elected yesterday must recognise that housing can help to reduce those pressures and improve the independence and quality of life of millions of older people.

Over the last decade or more, the Housing LIN and its partners have supported, developed or been involved in the production of numerous toolkits and strategies that will help the sector play that role.

It really is now time for politicians to ensure that they and their public, voluntary and private sector partners turn some of those proposals into reality and use or adapt the tools already available.

Older people turned out to vote yesterday. The time is right to ensure they and those nearing old age have the housing options and quality homes that will meet their changing needs and reduce their demands on the NHS and social care.

Is there a coalition of views to ensure that this happens over the next five years?

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