Alliance welcomes Older People's Housing Taskforce response

The Housing and Ageing Alliance (HAA) has welcomed the Government's response to the Older People's Housing Taskforce, saying it could give millions of people greater choice over where and how they live as they grow older.

The Taskforce's landmark report, *Our Future Homes*, set out a comprehensive package of recommendations designed to increase the supply, quality and choice of homes for an ageing population and better integrate housing with health and social care.

Housing & Ageing Alliance co-chairs Mario Ambrosi and Professor Julienne Meyer CBE, who was also chair of the Older People's Housing Taskforce, said:

"We warmly welcome the Government's recognition that improving housing for older people must be a national priority and plans to develop a roadmap for housing for an ageing population.

"Too many people are growing older in homes which do not meet their changing needs, while the supply of accessible housing remains far below what is required.

"We need swift and sustained action to create more choice and better homes for people in later life."

"Getting this right is not just about housing. The right home can help people remain independent and well for longer, strengthen communities and reduce pressure on health and social care services.

"The Housing and Ageing Alliance looks forward to working with Government, local authorities, the housing and care sectors and older people themselves to translate these ambitions into lasting change."

The Taskforce estimated that 30,000 to 50,000 new later-living homes are needed each year, compared with around 7,000 currently being built annually. It also found that more than nine in ten people aged over 65 live in mainstream housing, while only 12% have level access at the entrance to their building.

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The Older People's Housing Taskforce was set up by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – now, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in 2023 and its report was submitted to Ministers in May 2024. It made 10 key recommendations:

1. Standardise definitions of older people's housing. To enable partnership working across the private and public sectors and to build public understanding of what's available, we need to be speaking the same language.

2. Incentivise a wide range of older people's housing. Senior citizens in the UK are not a homogeneous group. They are highly diverse in their needs, wishes, backgrounds and identities. Meaningful choice must be available and accessible to all.
3. Ensure more housing is designed for later life. We have a growing ageing population and housing stock that does not meet their needs. We need to optimise all forms of older people's housing including mainstream housing, community-led housing, service-led housing (supported living and assisted living) and though not the focus of this report, care homes.
4. Create age-friendly, dementia-inclusive, faith and culture-sensitive communities. Because the community beyond the front door - the built environment, local infrastructure, communities and mutual support - enables people to live independently and well, whatever housing they choose to live in.
5. Expand older people's housing at scale and ensure it is affordable to live in, and viable to finance, build and operate. To increase supply, we need to create greater incentives for inward investment, including private and public sector capital support; thereby enabling a greater mix of housing that is affordable to those in the 'lower to middle-affluence market' (the largest group).
6. Recommendation 6 – Strengthen planning policies. National and local planning policy and practice can incentivise and accelerate the development of new forms of older people's housing; and help shape mainstream housing and the built environment to be more age-friendly, dementia-inclusive, faith and culture-sensitive.
7. Establish a national information platform and local hubs. For people to take up options they must first understand what they offer, what would best meet their needs and how to take them up. Accurate and trusted sources are vital.
8. Build consumer confidence. To increase demand, we need to build consumer trust and confidence in a range of different types of housing; and to increase supply we need to provide regulatory clarity for providers and potential investors.
9. Enhance innovation, research and professional development. There are gaps in our knowledge of senior citizens' needs and what works to meet them. A strategic approach is essential to generate and embed the greatest value from private and publicly funded research, with an increase in funding for the latter.
10. Create collective leadership to drive change. To achieve a step change, we need to inspire and empower ambitious action, from the top of government and outwards to communities and families. We need to fully integrate housing health and social care at all levels of the system.

The Housing & Ageing Alliance is made up of a broad spectrum of organisations working together with a single objective; to bring about improvements to the housing and living conditions of older people. It believes that homes, communities and housing related services should be planned and designed in ways that enable choice, control, inclusion and independence in later life.

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