

The Care Act 2014 and the Integration of Housing: *How is the reality measuring up?*

Short summary paper for the APPG (Housing & Care) 30th Nov 2015

By Sue Adams OBE, Chief Executive, Care & Repair England

1. Overview

- 1.1. The Care Act 2014 aims to radically transform the provision of adult social care with a new emphasis on **wellbeing, prevention & integration**. Housing is specifically included in the key definitions of these elements and extensively referenced in the Statutory Guidance eg.
- Local authorities must promote **wellbeing** when carrying out any of their care and support functions and the nine point definition of 'wellbeing' in the Care Act (Clause 1(2)) includes *(h) suitability of living accommodation*.
 - **Prevention** is central to the vision of the Care Act with a clear obligation for the new care and support system to aim to prevent need, not just wait to respond when people reach a crisis point. The prevention examples included in the Guidance make clear reference to housing considerations ie. home adaptations, falls prevention, handyman & telecare (Guidance para 2.8) and adaptations/equipment (Guidance para 2.9)
 - Local authorities are obliged to ensure the **integration** of care & support provision, including health & health-related services, defining housing as a 'health-related service' (para 2.34)
- 1.2. To add impetus to the inclusion of housing in the new health and care integration agenda, a national [Memorandum of Understanding to support joint action on improving health through the home](#) (MoU) was signed by a wide range of national bodies, including DH, NHS England, DCLG, PHE, ADASS and many others across the housing, health and care sectors.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1. The National Audit Office published its assessment of the Care Act First Phase Reforms in June 15. Whilst it does not directly assess progress being made in the *Number 1 Change* listed in its analysis ie *provide services that prevent care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs* it did state that:
- Despite the challenging timetable, of local authorities with adult social care responsibilities, 99% were confident that they would be able to carry out the Care Act reforms from April 2015. ...However, it will take longer to make the culture change envisaged in the Care Act.*
- 2.2. The LGA/ ADASS/ DH Care Act Implementation Support team undertake 'Stocktakes' to identify progress being made by LAs. Again, the questions asked and the scope of the surveys make it impossible to assess progress being made with regard to the higher level objectives of Care Act reform ie wellbeing, prevention & integration, let alone specific progress with regard to integration with housing. We are left with anecdotal evidence that progress is 'patchy'.
- 2.3. The MoU is linked to a delivery plan with all partners making specific commitments to actions to progress housing integration. This plan has tracked strong progress, much of it driven by Public Health England and members of the ADASS Housing Network.

3. Illustration: Progress on new Duty concerning integrated information and advice

- 3.1. One example of a new housing related Duty placed on local authorities concerns the provision of **integrated information and advice** which specifically includes housing as a key element.
- 3.2. The Guidance strongly reinforces this (para 15.55) noting that '*.. information and advice can help people make early choices about their housing options and related services in advance of a potential crisis.*' and stating that:
- *'A local authority **must** establish and maintain a service for providing information and advice relating to care and support, and this must include advice on **relevant housing and housing services** which meet care and support needs.*(15.65)
 - *....information and advice on **housing, on adaptations to the current home, or alternative housing options or housing related services** should be included..* (15.66)
 - *People's care and support needs, **their housing circumstances** and financial resources are closely interconnected. It is only with full knowledge of ...care & support options... including **housing options** and related financial implications that people will be able to exercise informed choice.* (15.68)
- 3.3. The LGAs May 15 Stocktake report (Aug 15) noted that of local authority respondents:
81% said they had set up a comprehensive, universal information system
75% said they had set up a comprehensive, universal advice system
70% said they had set up a comprehensive, online I&A system that promotes self-service, prevention and access to wider information sources
- 3.4. Anecdotal feedback from older people's groups and the local advice/ housing service providers that Care & Repair England works with across England is somewhat at odds with these figures, with many reporting that in their experience many older people's information and advice service providers were facing significant reductions in funding.
- 3.5. One piece of more systematic evidence has recently been published by Future North West, the Regional Forum on Ageing. This report, [Search Engine Failure](#), analyses the results of a mystery shopper survey through which members investigated the provision of information and advice for older people in the 23 top tier local authorities in the NW region.
- 3.6. Using website search facilities and an emails to the local authority they sought answers to the question "*I have an elderly relative living in [local authority] who's not coping at home and struggling to get to the bathroom. Can you give me any advice?*". Only **6 localities** were judged to have provided a good response, with most categorised as poor.
- 3.7. It is early days and local authorities are under great financial pressures, but it is a worrying finding, given that there is [strong evidence](#) concerning the cost benefits to health and social care that results from such integrated information and advice.
- 3.8. A new independent evaluation of the 16 DCLG supported [FirstStop](#) housing and care options local advice services reports that even using very conservative modelling, the DCLG investment of just under £500,000 has resulted in £11.5 million annual savings arising from the avoidance of falls, unplanned hospital admissions and GP appointments.
- 3.9. Despite this success very few have yet been commissioned by their local Social Services to continue after their DCLG funding ends in March 2016 and the future of both FirstStop national and the successful local services remains uncertain.