



Housing LIN

*Connecting people, ideas and resources*

## Case Study 181

# A call for wellbeing – Nightingale House offers HAPPI placemaking in Wolverhampton

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# Introduction

Nightingale House is a flagship wellbeing scheme delivered by whg, transforming the former Grade II listed Royal Hospital in Wolverhampton, England, into high-quality affordable housing for people aged 55 and over.

As part of the wider Royal Quarter regeneration, the award-winning scheme provides 48 one and two-bedroom apartments, combining heritage conservation with modern, accessible design. Each home is self-contained, with step-free access, walk-in showers and energy-efficient heating powered by a communal air source heat pump system, supporting both affordability and sustainability.

The building itself has been carefully restored, retaining key historic features including stained glass, vaulted ceilings and original stonework, creating homes that feel both distinctive and aspirational.

Sustainability measures were integral to the scheme. Converting a heritage building into a carbon-efficient development required innovation: secondary glazing and targeted fabric upgrades improved thermal efficiency, achieving a 55% uplift against current building regulations and Future Homes Standard equivalence. A centralised air-source heat pump network provided a no-fossil-fuel heating solution, complemented by EV charging points and biodiverse landscaping to enhance environmental performance.

Alongside self-contained private apartments, customers benefit from a range of shared spaces designed to support everyday wellbeing, including:

- Communal lounges and kitchens
- A library and cinema room
- Arts and activity spaces
- Landscaped gardens and social areas

A dedicated wellbeing service sits at the heart of the offer. An on-site wellbeing officer works with customers to run social activities, helping people stay connected and reducing isolation.



This preventative, holistic model extends and complements existing older persons' accommodation options by providing high-quality, affordable rented homes for people aged 55 and over who want to live independently in a safe and secure environment.

# Placemaking

Nightingale House is a central part of the Royal Quarter, a major regeneration scheme delivering 450 mixed affordable tenure homes and community infrastructure in Wolverhampton. It sits at the heart of the development.

Delivered through a strong partnership between whg, Morro Partnerships, Homes England, City of Wolverhampton Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and YMCA Black Country, the development exemplifies place-based working for the long term.

Placemaking for whg does not stop at handover. At Nightingale House and across the wider Royal Quarter, whg continues to play an active placeshaping role through quality stewardship, partnership working and community support. Experienced whg officers are on site, making themselves accessible to customers and partners and helping to respond quickly to emerging needs. This close working relationship with YMCA Black Country and City of Wolverhampton Council is helping to build a successful, thriving community long after the homes have been completed.

The former Royal Hospital building had been derelict since closure in 1997. Its transformation has:

- Brought a landmark, Grade II Listed building back into use
- Transformed a key gateway into the city
- Supported local jobs, apprenticeships and supply chains
- Driven wider investment and confidence in the area

Crucially, and aligning with the recent All-Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry report on '*Creating Intergenerational Communities*'<sup>1</sup>, the Royal Quarter has been designed as a multi-generational neighbourhood, combining:

- Housing for older people (Nightingale House)
- Affordable rent, social rent and shared ownership homes
- YMCA accommodation for younger people
- A nursery, community spaces and public realm

This intentional mix supports interaction across age groups, helping to build a more connected and resilient community.

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(1) <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/appg-inquiry-intergenerational-communities/>

# People – Meeting local needs and aspirations

Nightingale House has been designed to respond directly to local need.

Wolverhampton faces significant health inequalities, including lower healthy life expectancy and higher rates of long-term conditions. In response, the scheme prioritises health, wellbeing and social connection.

The impact is already clear:

Customers have taken part in health advice and health checks, support to develop digital skills, exercise for life, social prescribing support, crafts, gardening and cooking activities. Nightingale House has hosted fish and chip suppers, online quizzes, bingo, film nights and cultural events.



Over 70% of customers have taken part in structured activities with 100% reporting improved health and wellbeing (Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale).

Customers benefit not just from a safe, warm home, but from a supportive environment that reduces isolation and builds community.

One customer had said: *"It's a lovely community spirit... it's given me a new lease of life."*

The scheme also supports connection beyond the building. Its location within a wider mixed community enables customers to:

- Access local amenities and services
- Engage with younger generations through shared spaces
- Remain part of a wider neighbourhood, not a standalone scheme

This reflects a key principle of intergenerational living, ensuring older people are not isolated, but remain active participants in community life.

# Key learning points

Nightingale House offers a number of important lessons for the sector:

## **1. Prevention, not just provision**

Traditional housing models often respond to existing health needs. Nightingale House shows the value of preventative support, where older people are active and feel part of a community.

## **2. Placemaking enables intergenerational living**

Intergenerational outcomes don't happen by accident. They require:

- Mixed-tenure, mixed-age neighbourhoods
- Shared spaces and infrastructure
- Intentional design and partnership working

The Royal Quarter demonstrates how this can be achieved at scale.

## **3. Heritage can be an asset, not a barrier**

The redevelopment of a complex listed building required creativity and collaboration, but ultimately delivered homes with a strong sense of identity and pride.

## **4. Partnership is critical to unlocking complex sites**

From land assembly to delivery, the scheme relied on long-term collaboration across public and private partners. This enabled:

- Risk-sharing
- Funding alignment
- A consistent vision for place

## **5. A replicable model for ageing well**

As the population ages, there is growing demand for housing that supports independence and wellbeing. Nightingale House provides a scalable, evidence-based model that can be applied elsewhere.

# Conclusion

Nightingale House is a model for how housing, health and placeshaping can come together to transform lives.

By combining high-quality homes, a preventative wellbeing offer and a genuinely mixed community, it demonstrates how we can support people to age well, stay connected and thrive, within places that work for everyone.

## Note

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

## About whg

whg is a housing association that provides affordable homes for rent, shared ownership and sale across the Midlands. Formed in 2003, it owns and manages around 22,000 homes and works to ensure residents have safe, secure and comfortable places to live. Beyond housing, whg invests in community development, regeneration projects and support services that improve wellbeing, employment opportunities and local neighbourhoods. Its mission is to create sustainable communities and help people thrive.

## About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 15,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England, Wales and Scotland to exemplify innovative housing solutions for an ageing population. Recognised by government and industry as a leading 'ideas lab' on specialist/supported housing, our online and regional networked activities, and consultancy services:

- connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing that enables older and disabled people to live independently
- provide access to intelligence on the latest funding, research, policy and practice developments
- raise the profile of specialist and supported housing with developers, commissioners and operators, and
- attract business to help and support clients plan, design and operate aspirational housing and services for people of all ages.

And if you found this of interest, check out the Housing LIN'S dedicated webpages on intergenerational housing at:

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Housing/HousingforOlderPeople/intergenerational-housing/>

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