

POLICY BRIEFING

The Coalition Government's Housing Strategy

Introduction

'**Laying the Foundations**'¹ is the Government's national Housing Strategy for England, published in November 2011. This briefing:

- draws out the key implications of this strategy for older people;
- outlines the major links with wider public policy initiatives which impact on older people;
- highlights a set of opportunities for the development of a more integrated, inclusive approach across housing, health, care, and the planning system, which would benefit local communities, and older people in particular; and
- sets out a manifesto from the Housing Learning and Improvement Network to achieve real change in response to the housing needs and aspirations of older people.

Key Themes

The strategy underlines the fundamental role of housing as the most valuable asset for most families, enabling them to live a secure and stable lifestyle, and to free up finance to help the next generation secure their own homes. Challenges in the present economic climate include the slow pace of housing supply, alongside rising demand, leading to limited choice in the housing market.

The strategy sets out a number of key themes which relate to older people, including the introduction of a 'New Deal for Older People', to help older people to continue living comfortably in their own homes; the need for communities to have more say over new housing developments in their own area to ensure they meet local needs, including the needs of older people; and the importance of good accessible design in both housing and in neighbourhoods, to enable older people to remain independent and included in their communities. The strategy points out that 60% of the projected increase in the total number of households from 2008-33 will be headed by someone aged 65+. Therefore, the provision of good housing for older people is, whether directly or indirectly, fundamental to the strategy at every level.

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/housingstrategy2011>

Housing an ageing population

The strategy sets out a series of measures and funding commitments which, together, aim to enable older people to enjoy greater housing choice, alongside the support to live independently at home. These build on the findings and recommendations from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People '**Living Well at Home Inquiry**'² (2011).

In particular, the strategy states that the Supporting People national funding pot (which includes funding for older people's housing support needs) received a less than 1% annual average cash reduction in the last Spending Review, with £6.5 billion secured over the whole Spending Review period.

Other specific initiatives include:

- Government investment of £1.5m in FirstStop³ Information and Advice services, in order to support informed choice for older people.
- Protected funding for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) by DCLG, ensuring that by the end of the Spending Review period, the national allocation to local authorities for DFGs will increase from £169m in 2010-11 to £185m in 2014-15. Since then, the Department of Health have also added a further £20m for DFGs as part of a wider package of investment into reablement services⁴.
- The provision of £51m of funding for handypersons' services between 2011-15, to help with small repairs in the home, promoting safety and security, and reducing falls and accidents – and therefore health and care costs. Work in this area will also include efforts to help extend the reach of Home Improvement Agency (HIA) services, and encourage services to become more efficient, innovative and enterprising in their approach, building on findings of the independent report, '**National Evaluation of the Handyperson Programme**'⁵. Government support for Foundations⁶, the national body for HIAs, will also be continued.
- Invitation to the Home Adaptations Consortium to take the lead in publishing a good practice report on Disabled Facilities Grant services, in order to support sector-led good practice in this area.
- Further exploration of opportunities to ensure housing support services become more personalised, including, from 2012, the introduction of personal budgets into supporting people services in some local authority areas.
- Ongoing work with industry to help stimulate the development of attractive equity release products, to help older homeowners maintain and adapt their own homes.

The strategy highlights the Government's commitment to ensuring local authorities make provision for a wide range of housing types across all tenures, including accessible general

² <http://counselandcare.org.uk/pdf/living-well-at-home>

³ <http://www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk>

⁴ http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_132040

⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/evaluationhandypersonprog>

⁶ <http://www.foundations.uk.com>

needs and retirement accommodation, as well as specialised housing options such as sheltered and extra care housing for older people with care and support needs⁷.

The Government welcomes the work of the HAPPI Panel⁸, (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) in raising the profile of good quality, innovative specialised housing for older people. The strategy sets out the Government's commitment to working with planners and developers to facilitate industry-led guidance to enable local strategic planning and delivery of this diversity of provision for older people. The **'National Planning Policy Framework'**⁹ published last month sets out councils' duty to plan for a mix of housing for different groups, including older people, based on robust data, needs analysis and local demographic projections. To this end, the Housing LIN is working with a sector led project to develop a toolkit for local planning authorities so that they are better informed about the range of accommodation choices for older people and relevant Land Use Class Orders (see also the recent Housing LIN Viewpoint on **'Planning Use Classes and Extra Care Housing'**¹⁰).

Another major strand of the strategy is the need for a greater supply of homes, both in the private sector and in social and affordable housing. This will provide opportunities for older people, where they wish, to downsize to smaller, more manageable properties, thus freeing up much-needed family housing. Alongside this, the social housing reform measures set out in the strategy include opportunities for tenants to benefit from improved "homeswap" schemes and transfers, which may, for example, enable older people to move nearer to family members and other sources of care and support. The recent Housing LIN resource pack, **'Strategic Housing for Older People: Planning, designing and delivering housing that older people want'**¹¹ provides commissioners and providers a coherent framework for developing their market position statements and better understanding the supply and demand for housing for older people.

Design for an Ageing Population

The strategy highlights the importance of good housing design in order to promote wellbeing, connect people to local services and amenities, and to create safe and inclusive neighbourhoods. The role of good neighbourhood design in enabling independent living is emphasised, as explored in more depth in the independently published report, **'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'**¹² (2011). Also, the recommendations of the Bishop Review with respect to the future of design in the built environment (Design Council/CABE¹³) are acknowledged, including the benefits of making design advice and toolkits more accessible to communities. Therefore, where local communities are contributing to neighbourhood planning processes, the Design Council will be available to provide support on design issues, in particular, around dementia friendly communities¹⁴. The Housing LIN has also commissioned a new Viewpoint on Dementia friendly communities from the University of Warwick. This will be available in the Autumn 2012.

⁷ http://www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Research_evaluation/DP2783v2.pdf

⁸ <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/happi>

⁹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

¹⁰ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/pageFinder.cfm?cid=8365>

¹¹ http://www.housinglin.org.uk/SHOP_resource_pack

¹² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2044122.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk>

¹⁴ <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/dementia>

The strategy also emphasises that as part of local housing diversity and choice, provision should include properties built to Lifetime Homes standards¹⁵, to enable independent living for all. However, the Government does not intend to introduce national regulation to enforce standards, but instead prefers to allow decisions about this to be made locally, in response to local needs and circumstances. For more details, see the recent Housing LIN Viewpoint, '**A progressive approach to accessible housing**'¹⁶ (2012).

Finally, the strategy outlines the Government's commitment to encouraging greener neighbourhoods, and to embedding environmental sustainability into good design. This includes a commitment to delivering the Zero Carbon Homes standard to all new homes from 2016, as well as other energy efficient initiatives, which will help to bring down fuel bills for older people as well as other groups, reducing fuel poverty.

Community Empowerment

The strategy places a strong emphasis on giving local communities more say over new housing developments and other types of development, including community infrastructure, in their own area.

For example, top-down targets (such as those relating to density or brown-field sites) have been removed, regional housing strategies have been revoked, and a new 'neighbourhood planning' power is being placed in the hands of local residents, businesses, councils and civic leaders, through the development of Community Led Plans and Neighbourhood Forums established for the purpose (see also the recent Housing LIN Viewpoint on planning¹⁷).

Another example is the new 'Community Right to Build' order, introduced by the Localism Act 2011, allowing community organisations to bring forward smaller-scale development on a specific site without the need for planning permission. This could, for example, include plans for specialist housing for older people, or other amenities which might benefit older people. Any plans would have to win the support of local people, demonstrated via a community referendum.

The strategy also highlights the importance of resident empowerment in social housing, promising more support for tenants to work with their landlords and hold them to account. This may provide an opportunity for older tenants, including those living in sheltered housing, to have more say over the running of their own housing services. Another example of greater tenant empowerment is the commitment to explore the introduction of Personal Budgets in Supporting People services (with the first Personal Budgets planned in selected local authority areas in 2012), alongside moves to enable social housing tenants to take control of repairs budgets for their homes.

Opportunities for Partnership between Housing, Health and Care

The Strategy highlights the key links between its themes and the 'Caring for our Future' consultation, through which the Department of Health sought views on priorities for social care reform to inform a White Paper in 2012. The Strategy recognises the role of good housing in supporting early intervention and prevention to maximise health and wellbeing. This might be by providing specialist housing options, such as extra care and sheltered housing services, or

¹⁵ <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk>

¹⁶ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/pageFinder.cfm?cid=8426>

¹⁷ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/pageFinder.cfm?cid=8365>

equally by developing a wider range of more accessible and manageable homes, enabling many older people to downsize to a property or housing scheme which supports their independence and quality of life, while freeing up family housing (see the '**SHOP**'¹⁸ resource pack and PSSRU '**Evaluation of the Extra Care Initiative**'¹⁹).

Indeed, the Strategy highlights the need for a wider range of innovative, high quality housing for older people, based on robust data and needs analysis, including demographic projections and profiling. This emphasis on housing needs analysis echoes, and provides an opportunity for alignment with, the strengthened role of JSNAs (Joint Strategic Needs Assessments). Developed by Health and Wellbeing Boards, and underpinning local Health and Wellbeing Strategies, JSNAs will provide the evidence base enabling partners (including Clinical Commissioning Groups, or CCGs) to set priorities and influence commissioning plans for future health and social care services in their local areas (see DH '**JSNA and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained**'²⁰ and CIH report '**How to... deliver quality housing and health partnerships**'²¹).

In terms of the practical links between health, housing and social care, the Strategy emphasises the pivotal role of services such as Home Improvement Agencies and Handyperson's, enabling major adaptations as well as small repairs to be completed in older people's homes, improving safety and preventing falls and accidents, thus reducing health and social care costs²².

Housing LIN – A Manifesto:

The Housing LIN advocates a number of key actions in response to this Housing Strategy, in order to improve links between health, housing and care, and to ensure a greater range of high quality housing options for older people, enabling independent living and good quality of life.

- **Robust Leadership** – Housing should have a strong place at the table on all local Health and Wellbeing Boards, recognising housing's essential role in promoting health and wellbeing for everyone, including older people. We believe that this is critical if commissioning plans are to be aligned, and services integrated around the needs of older people, as advocated by the recent '**Health Services Select Committee report**'²³ (House of Commons, 1 February 2012). All health and social care partners should acknowledge the benefits which arise from working closely with housing developers, designers, planners, providers and landlords. There is strong evidence that an integrated approach will generate not only major benefits for older people and other users of services, but also cost savings, which are essential in the current economic climate. These benefits include:
 - An improved approach to end of life care, enabling people to die in their own homes if they wish to²⁴.

¹⁸ http://www.housinglin.org.uk/SHOP_resource_pack

¹⁹ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/pageFinder.cfm?cid=8398>

²⁰ http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_131702

²¹ www.cih.org/publication-free/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/publication-free/data/How_to_deliver_quality_housing_and_health_partnerships?dm_i=YRX,Q60J,51751D,23ZBN,1

²² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/evaluationhandypersonprog>

²³ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhealth/1583/158302.htm>

²⁴ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/tags/?tag=end%20of%20life%20care>

- Access to a better range of specialist housing options, including sheltered and extra care housing, enabling people to live in their own homes, with access to care and support when and how they need it²⁵.
 - An integrated approach to Disabled Facilities Grants, delivering Telecare and community equipment services, providing life-changing adaptations and service enhancements which enable people to continue living well in their own homes for as long as possible, and reduce the need for costly residential and hospital care.
 - Joint commissioning of handypersons services, providing a wide range of low-level help in the home which can be the key to enabling an older person to continue living safely at home, and avoid significant costs to the health and social care system²⁶.
 - Advice and information to help older people make informed decisions about their housing, finance, care and support options. A holistic approach to this can help older people and their families plan ahead more effectively, as well as to cope at points of crisis. In particular, people with dementia and other particular needs can, with the right information and advice, be supported to plan for the future, ensuring that their wishes are fully understood and respected, even once they are no longer able to make decisions for themselves.
- **Good inclusive design** is critical to enabling older people to live independently in their own homes, and to 'age in place'. We recommend that new schemes and neighbourhoods must commit to meet the need of the elderly. This must be recognised by housing developers, and indeed by all partners involved in planning both general needs and specialised older people's housing and the wider built environment (see to Housing LIN design resources²⁷ and the HCA's²⁸).
 - **Personalisation** is a major theme across all public policy, and will enable older people to have more say over their housing, care and support services. Trends such as providing personal budgets to users of Supporting People, social care and health services, and giving the individual more control over assessments and care packages, all support a wider aspiration to ensure all services are more person-centred and tailored to the needs of each person, and thus more cost-effective in outcome²⁹. We believe that commissioners and providers must respond to the impact of personalisation and the demands placed on services by older people's preferences.
 - **Investment** - in the current economically straitened environment, it is critical that public and private investment in housing and housing support is used creatively in order to maximise outcomes for older people. This could be through Home Improvement Agencies looking to social enterprise models to inform cross-subsidisation of their core services, or leveraging in private capital investment in extra care housing, linked to commercial opportunities to develop high quality units of housing for sale or market rent. We consider that planners, commissioners, providers and developers investment

²⁵ http://www.housinglin.org.uk/SHOP_resource_pack

²⁶ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/evaluationhandypersonprog>

²⁷ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design>

²⁸ <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/non-mainstream-housing-design-guidance>

²⁹ <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/tags/?tag=personalisation>

decisions must be informed by local Market Position Statements that evidence future demand and support of a range of suitable housing for older people.

- **Regional Action** - the Housing Strategy, supported by the Localism Act 2011, places a strong emphasis on local communities having more influence over what, and how, housing develops in their own local area. Needs and priorities vary significantly between regions and localities; therefore it is essential that local and regional partners engage with each other and take action with local communities, to ensure that housing, health and social care services and outcomes improve for older people in every part of the country. The Housing LIN regional networks provide a useful platform to engage in partnership with practitioners across housing, health and social care to support shared learning, information exchange and improvement opportunities. With over 46,000 members, we are well placed to support how a 'New Deal for Older People' can manifest itself in your area. For information on what's new and examples of innovation in your region, go to our regional pages at <http://www.housinglin.org.uk/HousingRegions>

About the Housing LIN

We are the leading national network for promoting innovative new ideas in enhancing the housing choices for older people and supporting change in the delivery of housing and related care and support services.

To get involved, visit our website at www.housinglin.org.uk

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