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HOUSING AND
CARE FOR
OLDER PEOPLE

The Regeneration of Outdated Sheltered Housing

Housing our Ageing Population Panel for
Innovation (Re-HAPPI)

This report was researched and written by
Lois Beech and Ian Copeman, Housing LIN,
and funded by Abbeyfield Living Society

June 2024





HOUSING AND CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE



Image Credit: Greenhill Housing Association

Cover Image Credit: Read Construction



Thanks

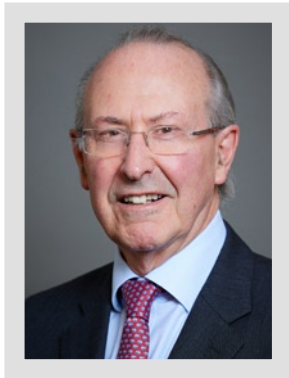
Sincere thanks are due to all those who attended the Inquiry meetings and to our Panel of Parliamentarians and experts, as listed in Appendix 1.

Special thanks go to Lois Beech, Ian Copeman and colleagues at the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) who administered the Inquiry, wrote and produced this report, and for the support provided by Lord Best's Parliamentary Assistant, Chloe Halsted. The APPG is also very appreciative of the input of Abbeyfield Living Society, especially to Abdul A Ravat who brought this issue to the attention of the APPG and supported the Inquiry throughout its deliberations. We are also grateful for the contributions provided by three members of the Abbeyfield Family (The Dales, South Downs, and Wessex Societies) that has enabled the APPG to produce the report and host the launch event; as well as to Housing 21 for ongoing support for the APPG.

Sincere thanks are also due to those organisations who supplied images, tables and plans for inclusion.

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Richard Best

Inquiry Chair,
Co-Chair, APPG on
Housing and Care for
Older People

Chair's Foreword

Most of the Inquiries initiated by the APPG on Housing and Care for Older People relate to the urgent need for more, new, purpose-built homes for later life. Brilliant work since the seminal (2009) HAPPI report on good design for older people's housing continues to provide inspiration. Annual design awards consistently demonstrate excellence in creating new homes for "right-sizers". We know what "good" looks like and we want more of it.

But this Inquiry was different. It looked at the existing accommodation for our ageing population and notes that some of it is well past its sell-by date. The report considers "what next" for the worst of yesteryear's "sheltered" housing – the bedsits and tiny flats, often from the 1960's/70's, and the shared houses from a different era, with poor energy efficiency and major repair requirements.

The need to invest in updating older housing chimes with the new consumer focus of the Regulator of Social Housing, backed by the Housing Ombudsman and propelled by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act of last year. This is also reflected in a new interest in regeneration from Homes England. This change of emphasis rightly puts pressure on social landlords to bring their existing housing stock – including their accommodation for older people – up to 21st century standards.

Meanwhile, the housing associations/registered providers and local authorities with retained housing stock face considerable financial pressures: increases in costs and interest rates, rent rises below inflation, spending on remedial building safety and decarbonisation, insecure revenue support for care, and more. Some general needs providers are retreating from older people's housing provision and transferring their stock to specialist providers. Whilst others are having to resort to selling homes on the open market.

However, most providers continue to see the inclusion of homes for older people as part of their whole purpose as a social landlord: not least because an older social housing tenant moving to later living accommodation releases a much-needed family home for the next generation. But this housing needs to remain attractive.

This report looks at different ways of tackling outdated sheltered housing. This starts with a full review by providers of their current stock. Some older schemes need a major upgrade: a new programme of Decent Homes tackling energy efficiency, accessibility and the need for all homes to be fully compliant of the more stringent fire/safety requirements particularly following the Grenfell tragedy.

Some sheltered housing is past saving. Demolition – with all the accompanying decanting traumas – is the only answer. This can bring the opportunity for a brand-new replacement scheme incorporating today’s design and quality features and the Inquiry saw some wonderful examples.

However, to date, government funding for such schemes has been primarily dependent on achieving additionality, i.e. increasing the total number of homes provided. Yet, renewing older people’s housing merits investment just as much as the deployment of public funds for new homes: after all, if homes become redundant, replacing them will be far more costly, not to mention the embedded carbon footprint.

Sometimes the most sensible option will be to re-purpose the whole scheme to meet other needs. However, the reletting of some unimproved flats to younger people with special problems, is likely to upend the harmony of a settled community.

Sometimes the social housing provider will conclude that an outdated sheltered scheme – perhaps a single house shared by several older people – must be sold. This raises local concern: where will the remaining residents be rehoused? How can the loss of accommodation for older people be replaced in the same locality?

At a time when all are agreed that demographic change necessitates a bigger programme of homes for older people, it seems tragic to be selling the little we have got. The Inquiry has drafted a protocol – a Charter – to suggest how providers of retirement accommodation should act when considering whether to dispose of outdated accommodation. In essence, we believe social housing organisations should do their utmost to avoid losing precious housing stock for older people.

Our report concludes with an appeal to government – and Homes England and the GLA – to be mindful of the special value of housing for later living. Investment in improving and enhancing the nation’s legacy of existing sheltered housing represents real value for money.

We appeal also to the social housing providers themselves to recognise just how valuable is their role for older people, improving health and wellbeing, supporting companionship, saving NHS and care budgets, easing fuel poverty and enhancing independence and dignity. We hope providers seek not just to build more HAPPY-style homes but to improve and update the asset we already have.



Richard Best
Inquiry Chair,
Co-Chair, APPG on Housing and Care for Older People
June 2024

Introduction



Image Credit: Gateway Housing Association

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Care for Older People, jointly chaired by Lord Best and Peter Aldous MP, launched an Inquiry in June 2023 to explore the problems and opportunities arising from the age, condition, and suitability of existing sheltered housing provided by social and private housing sector providers.

The APPG Inquiry, brought together a group of Parliamentarians and Panellists (see Appendix 1, p.45 for list) and held Inquiry sessions to hear and evaluate evidence from sector experts on approaches to regeneration of existing sheltered housing stock, new contemporary sheltered replacement housing and the service models suitable for residents. In addition, Inquiry sessions were held to share the

key findings and draft recommendations at an open session of the APPG and, at a session, with representatives from government departments, and trade and professional bodies. Written evidence was submitted by individuals and organisations listed at the end of this report (see Appendix 2, p.47).

This Inquiry ran in parallel to the Government's Older People's Housing Taskforce (OPHT) which has considered options for the provision of greater choice and quality of housing for older people. We hope the findings and recommendations of this APPG inquiry have added to the learning and outcomes of the OPHT.

This Inquiry report highlights the problems facing the sheltered housing sector and sets out recommendations - based on the evidence heard by the Inquiry - for Government, local authorities, registered providers of social housing and private sector retirement housing operators.

Context

What is sheltered housing?

‘Sheltered’ housing is a contested term; defining it is a challenge. For the purpose of this Inquiry, sheltered housing is defined as ‘purpose-built’ self-contained accommodation in the private and social housing sectors with an age-threshold (i.e. residents must be of a certain age to live there). In general, the age-threshold has been set at 55+. However, there is a degree of variation. Some providers set this at 60+ and some accept younger adults with a support need.

A crucial characteristic of sheltered housing is the provision of a housing management service with a degree of support provided to residents enabling people to live independently. This tends to include staffing, such as a scheme manager, which is complemented with technology-enabled devices, for example, access to a lifeline or pendant community alarm linked to a telecare system. Staff typically provide ‘housing-related support’ as distinct from ‘personal care’. However, the type, amount and availability of staff varies widely. Indeed, many sheltered housing schemes have had staff support significantly reduced in recent years or staff have taken on managing more homes.

Using this definition, there are estimated to be c.527,000 properties designated as sheltered housing in the UK; there are also an estimated additional c.124,000 age-designated properties which tend not to provide the level of housing management and support detailed above.



Image Credit: PRP Tim Crocker

As an asset, sheltered housing is the single largest purpose-built specialist form of housing available for older people in the UK with 79% developed and operated by the social sector (registered providers and local authorities).¹

In the private sector, the term ‘sheltered’ housing is not typically used; instead, terms such as ‘retirement’ housing, ‘independent living’ or ‘later living’ housing are used that focus on marketing an attractive ‘lifestyle’ choice for older people.

This report draws attention to the need to develop more appropriate terminology to describe sheltered housing.

The Inquiry considered ‘regeneration’ in relation to sheltered housing. In this report ‘regeneration’ is defined as all aspects of replacing, repurposing, and refurbishing existing sheltered housing provided for older people.



Image Credit: Gateway Housing Association

1 Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC), 2024

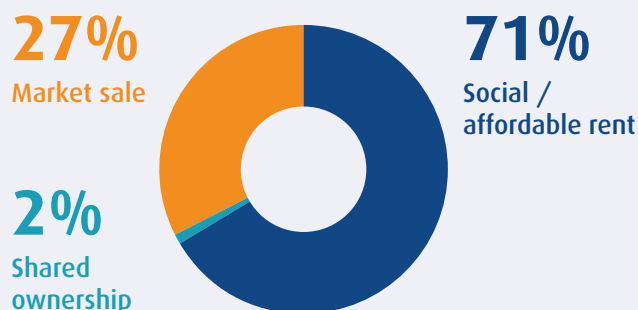
Size and scale of 'sheltered' stock

This section provides an overview of the size and scale of the sheltered housing stock in the UK using the most recent data from the Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC).² According to the EAC there are c.527,000 'sheltered' housing properties in the UK with the largest proportion in England (86%). There are an additional c.124,000 homes that are classed as 'age-restricted' housing but not classified by their providers as 'sheltered' housing.

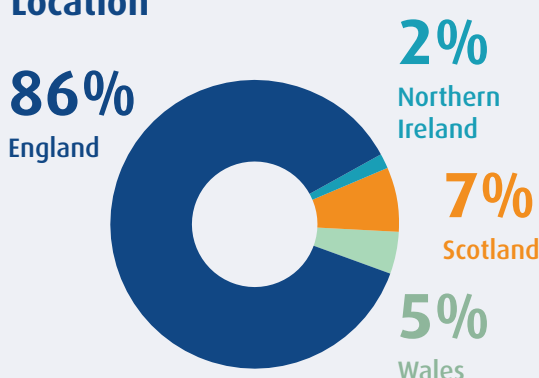
The majority (79%) of existing 'sheltered' housing stock is provided by social housing providers³, with 71% of the total stock available as social/affordable rent.

There is an absence of evidence that can definitively determine the amount of sheltered housing that should be considered to be outdated. A substantial amount - around 73% - was built pre-1990 when standards were much lower than today. Some of this older stock has already been successfully updated but much is now in need of refurbishment.

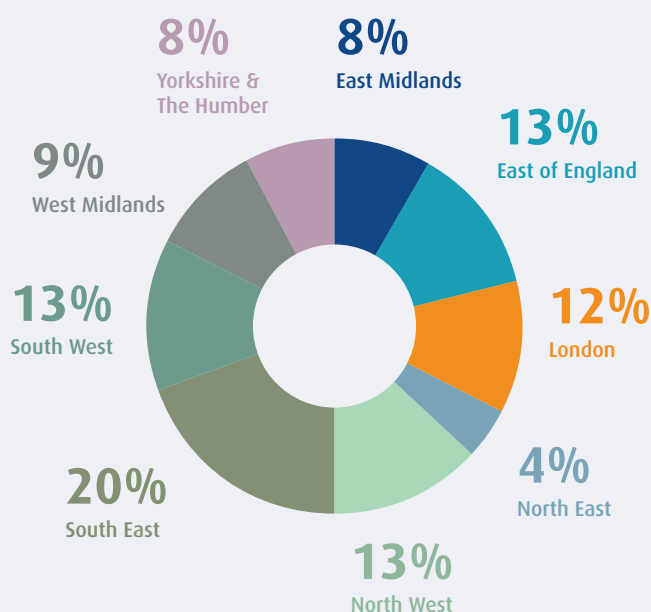
Tenure type



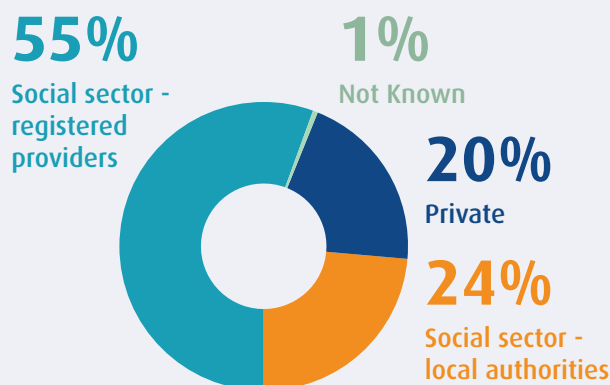
Location



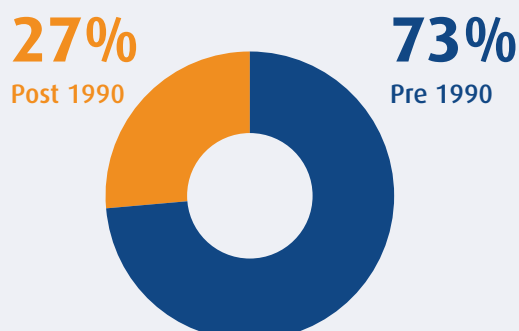
Location (England only)



Provider type



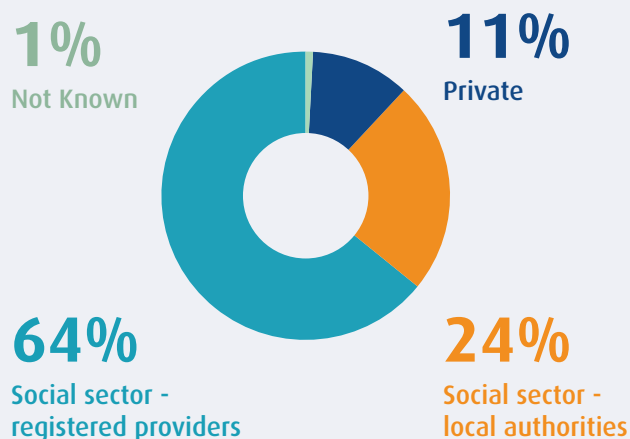
Built



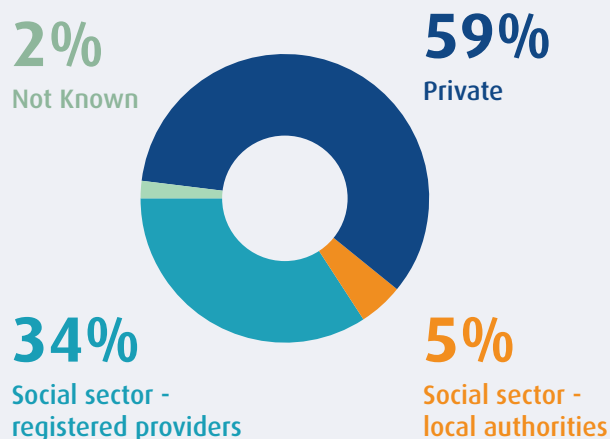
² Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC), 2024

³ In this context provider means 'current owner/manager'

Built up to 1990 by provider type



Built post 1990 by provider type



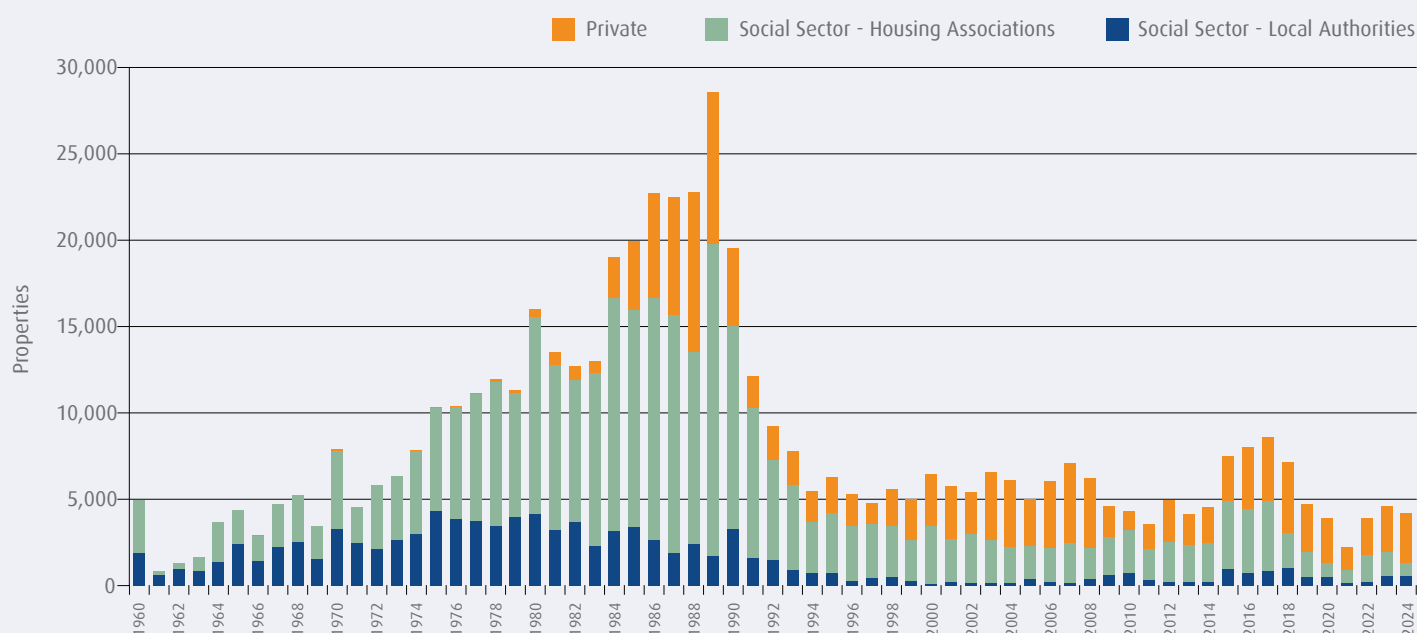
The graph below shows the annual rate of building of sheltered housing from 1960 to 2024. This rose rapidly from 1960, reaching a peak of over 20,000 units per year between the mid 1980s and early 1990s before declining rapidly to an average of 5,000 – 7,000 per year during the last 3 decades.

The data on the number of homes built per year indicates that up until 2000, new private provision of sheltered housing was constantly below new social provision. It also indicates that between 2001 and 2024, as a whole, new private provision exceeded social provision - averaging 52% of new build stock over the period. But there were wide variations, and many years

where the numbers of properties provided by the private sector fell below 50% of new build stock per year.

It is important to note that whilst the graph below shows the number of newly built sheltered housing properties per year, it is estimated that c.2,000 sheltered housing properties per year over the last 20 years are either demolished, disposed of and/or repurposed. This means that the overall estimate of c.527,000 sheltered housing properties in the UK will change over time depending on the net balance of the number of new sheltered housing properties developed in a given year minus the number of sheltered housing properties that are demolished, disposed of, and/or repurposed.

Sheltered properties built by year and sector



Recommendations

A. Overarching recommendations

1. The continuing value of sheltered housing should be recognised and the loss of any existing accommodation should be avoided, despite financial constraints.
2. A significant proportion of sheltered housing should be refurbished/regenerated; attractive and contemporary sheltered housing can enable down-sizing/right-sizing that allows families to obtain much-needed homes – including vacated ‘general needs’ social rented properties.
3. As far as practically possible, the re-design of sheltered housing should be consistent with “HAPPI” (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation)⁴ design principles; should align with today’s energy efficiency standards, address decarbonisation commitments, be technology-enabled, and provide ‘care-ready’ homes. (See Appendix 3)
4. Regenerated sheltered housing should be tailored to meet the needs of a diverse range of older people, including people living with dementia, people from ethnic minority communities and people that identify as LGBTQ+.
5. Agreement should be sought with representatives of residents and providers to develop and promote new terminology for sheltered housing.

B. Recommendations for MHCLG, DHSC, Homes England and the GLA

6. A 10% target for older people’s housing should be part of a flexible approach by Homes England/Greater London Authority for future capital investment, including the 2026-2031 Affordable Homes Programme and other funding streams, of which at least a third should be for replacing, updating, and refurbishing existing forms of sheltered housing.
7. Homes England and the GLA should have dedicated older persons’ housing teams (for example as part of specialist/supported housing teams) with an accountable officer; and an older person’s housing sector Advisory Group should be established to provide oversight and monitor activities.
8. Recycling of ‘historic’ grant funding, previously awarded to registered providers by Homes England and the GLA, should be permitted for refurbishing existing sheltered housing schemes (as well as for developing new schemes for older people).
9. Homes England and GLA capital grant funding rules should ensure that housing providers can apply for and use capital grant to refurbish and upgrade existing sheltered housing schemes without ‘additionality’ requirements.
10. MHCLG should work with the Treasury and DHSC to identify and secure revenue funding that can be used by local authorities and/or providers of sheltered housing to meet the revenue costs of providing support to residents of sheltered housing.
11. The DHSC should ensure that a future round of the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CaSSH) Fund includes explicit criteria in its prospectus that any future capital grant is permissible for the refurbishment, upgrade or remodelling of existing sheltered housing stock, where it can be evidenced that such improvements will deliver improved health and social care outcomes.

⁴ Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) (2008). Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/HAPPI/>

12. The DHSC's £300m Housing Transformation Fund should be reinstated (or an equivalent introduced); a proportion of this funding should be made available to local authorities where they identify and include current and future requirements for older people's housing in their Housing Needs Assessments and Local Plans.
13. As part of the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, MHCLG, in consultation with the older person's housing sector, should develop common standards that can be used by housing providers and local authorities to assure the quality of sheltered housing.
14. The MHCLG supported housing team, in consultation with the older person's housing sector, should develop and provide 'good practice' tools and approaches to undertaking strategic reviews of sheltered housing.

C. Recommendations for local government

15. Local authorities should undertake periodic Older Persons' Housing Needs Assessments to determine local need and demand for all types of housing for older people, including sheltered housing, in addition to housing for older people that falls within the definition of supported housing in the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act.
16. Using their Needs Assessment (of the need for all types of housing suitable for older people), local authorities should develop a local plan/strategy to promote and enable the regeneration of outdated sheltered housing.
17. Every 5 years, local authorities should provide MHCLG, as part of their Supported Housing strategies, with the number of units of sheltered housing in their area and the number of units of sheltered housing that have been regenerated/refurbished.
18. Despite financial pressures, local authorities with social care responsibilities should make available revenue support to residents of sheltered housing, which is covered by recommendation 10, above.
19. Local authorities should work with their Integrated Care System/Board partners to raise awareness of the importance and value of supporting and promoting the regeneration of existing sheltered housing as well as developing new build housing suited to older people.
20. Local authorities should use the Better Care Fund - which incorporates Disabled Facilities Grants - to support capital projects for the modernisation/regeneration of sheltered housing stock.



Image Credit: Read Construction

D. Recommendations for social and private housing providers

21. All social and private landlords with sheltered housing stock should conduct a strategic review of their portfolio's current and future suitability, identifying options for:
 - a) refurbishment/upgrades
 - b) repurposing for other people/uses
 - c) replacement development
22. Disposals/sales should be avoided where possible. Both the Regulator of Social Housing, as part of its new standards regime, and all social housing providers should adopt a 'charter for disposal of supported accommodation for older people'. (A suggested charter is provided in this report at Appendix 4.)
23. Providers should work with Councils, other landlords and charitable enterprises where appropriate to assist any necessary displacement/'decanting' of existing residents during building works.
24. As part of their renovation and improvement programmes, social housing providers should address the energy performance of their sheltered housing and scope to attract grant from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.
25. A service model in sheltered housing should cater for a diverse range of older people and be carefully crafted to balance the benefits of non-resident staff with an on-site presence along with the integration of technology to enhance resident contact, experience and support social interaction.

26. Providers should follow the "TAPPI" (Technology for an Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation)⁵ principles when considering technologies to support independence to ensure that co-production and connectivity are considered from the outset.
27. Providers should commit to supporting the digital skills of residents to avoid digital exclusion, particularly in the light of the digital switchover which has now been extended from December 2025 to January 2027.

These recommendations are also relevant to the UK's devolved administrations/nations.



Image Credit: Ryder Architecture/Central & Cecil
(a subsidiary of the Aster Group)

⁵ Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (TAPPI) (2024). Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/tappi/>

Regeneration of existing sheltered housing

Evidence to the Inquiry Panel demonstrated the need to regenerate the existing sheltered housing stock and that doing so can have impressive results, bringing schemes closer to contemporary standards and creating better living environments for residents. However, the scale of regeneration required is significant and expensive, further compounded by a lack of funding available to providers.

The drivers of regeneration

The Inquiry Panel heard that several factors are driving the need to regenerate sheltered housing aimed at improving the quality of accommodation and residents' living conditions.

Housing providers presented evidence that much of existing sheltered housing is not 'fit for purpose'. Small space standards (compared with contemporary standards and practice) and inaccessible design features such as narrow corridors, steps and stairs with no lifts, inaccessible bathrooms and kitchens, render schemes unsuitable for individuals with mobility needs. Evidence to the Inquiry is that the regeneration of existing sheltered housing should be consistent with the 10 HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation)⁶ design principles as far as practically possible, providing 'care-ready' homes⁷ (see Appendix 3).

The condition and potential future investment needed in relation to energy efficiency as well as issues with repairs, damp/mould and fire safety are also influencing factors as the quality of some homes is relatively poor.

Recommendation 2

A significant proportion of sheltered housing should be refurbished/regenerated; attractive and contemporary sheltered housing can enable down-sizing/right-sizing that allows families to obtain much-needed homes – including vacated 'general needs' social rented properties.

Recommendation 3

As far as practically possible, the re-design of sheltered housing should be consistent with HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) design principles; should align with today's energy efficiency standards, address decarbonisation commitments, be technology-enabled, and provide 'care-ready' homes. (see Appendix 3)

In some instance, these factors are contributing to high void rates and a lack of demand for housing that is increasingly considered unattractive or unsuitable for older people. The National Care Forum stated that older people now expect housing with modern amenities like private bathrooms, modern décor, sufficient storage, and technology. However, much of the existing sheltered housing stock requires major renovations to meet these expectations.

However, the evidence from the Local Government Association (LGA) indicated that regenerating outdated sheltered housing can address issues such as

⁶ Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) (2008). Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/HAPPI/>

⁷ 'Care ready' housing typically means that a home is capable of adaptation over time to meet changing needs including space for aids and adaptations. Through good design homes can be built to be better suited to possible future requirements such as the need to have an over-night carer, storage for mobility scooters and space to retain independence.

high void rates, as well as declining property values, enhancing the financial sustainability and long-term viability of housing schemes.

The Panel heard that the number of sheltered residents living with dementia is also increasing but that much of existing stock does not meet the needs of people living with dementia. Evidence from Wrexham County Borough Council demonstrated that regenerating their existing sheltered housing involved integrating dementia-friendly design principles that supports people with dementia to live independently for longer.

Recommendation 4

Regenerated sheltered housing should be tailored to meet the needs of a diverse range of older people, including people living with dementia, people from ethnic minority communities and people that identify as LGBTQ+.

The image below provides an example of the criteria driving regeneration as part of a strategic review of sheltered housing, provided by Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing.

Table 2. Sheltered Housing Quality Review

| QUALITY CRITERIA | QUALITY INDEX | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Accommodation Type | Studio / Room with shared bathroom | Studio with en-suite / bathroom | Self contained Flat, Bungalow, House |
| Accessibility (of housing and communal areas) | Steps and stairs with no lifts | Mostly level access with no more than 6 steps at communal front door | Level access including wheelchair accessible |
| Space and layout | Significantly restricted circulation spaces and poor layout | Small spaces and narrow corridors | Good sized rooms (equivalent to NDSS) with good circulation space |
| Condition and future investment need | Needs extensive refurbishment / major works | Needs some planned investment | |
| Communal areas | No communal garden / poor accessibility | Small garden, usable space for residents | Good sized gardens with space for seating |
| Range / quality of shared facilities | No shared or ancillary facilities | Shared facilities, poor condition | Range of shared facilities, good condition |
| Letability | Consistently difficult to let with frequent long term voids | Difficult to let to current customer group | Lets well with no long term voids |
| Suitability for Sheltered | Not suitable for Sheltered use | Not suitable for Sheltered but alternative uses | Suitable for Sheltered use and flexible for alternative uses |
| Local Authority Relationship | Not in a key or core borough | In a key or core borough but limited other sheltered / supported provision | In a key or core borough with extensive other sheltered / supported provision |
| Local Amenities & Services | Limited amenities, services and public transport | Some local amenities and services but good public transport links | Good amount of amenities, services and public transport |

Underscoring the need to regenerate sheltered stock is evidence of its value to residents and the potential dangers of losing this accommodation. The Panel was directed to the 2017 ‘The Value of Sheltered Housing’ report⁸ that highlights the benefits to the individual, to the community and to the taxpayer of sheltered housing, mostly as a preventative housing model and service. This was supported by Mick Rose, a Housing 21 resident and Inquiry Panel member who shared that sheltered housing offers residents safety, security, independence, and fosters a good sense of community, helping to tackle loneliness and isolation. These health and wellbeing outcomes of sheltered housing are recognised by the Panel and considered a key justification for the need to regenerate and maintain the sheltered housing stock.

As pointed out by Panel member, Neil Revelly from ADASS/LGA, this evidence suggests that raising awareness of the importance and value of sheltered housing is crucial for the regeneration of existing stock and new builds, particularly amongst local authorities with their Integrated Care System/Board partners.

Panel member, the Housing LIN’s Jeremy Porteus, told the Inquiry that while its emphasis is rightly on regenerating individual outdated schemes, sheltered housing also has the potential to take on a wider ‘placemaking’ role in the regeneration of local communities. As highlighted in the examples and in Appendix 3 of this report, this can include utilising communal spaces to facilitate community in-reach and outreach services for residents and local people to creating a ‘hub’ as part of an age-friendly neighbourhood.

Recommendation 1

The continuing value of sheltered housing should be recognised and the loss of any existing accommodation should be avoided, despite financial constraints.

⁸ Berrington (2017) The Value of Sheltered Housing. Available at: https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Value_of_Sheltered_Housing_Report.pdf

Recommendation 19

Local authorities should work with their Integrated Care System/Board partners to raise awareness of the importance and value of supporting and promoting the regeneration of existing sheltered housing as well as developing new build housing suited to older people.

The challenges for housing providers seeking to regenerate

The Inquiry Panel heard that there are significant challenges for housing providers seeking to regenerate existing sheltered housing stock, for example, from recycling housing grant to utilising the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Perhaps the most significant is securing adequate capital funding for regeneration projects. Inquiry evidence from sheltered housing providers highlighted that regeneration works have primarily been funded through housing providers own resources (e.g. from housing associations’, and private operators’ own funds), although in some cases government capital grant funding and/or funding via Private Finance Initiative (PFI) has been used. The evidence to the inquiry is that the HRA can be successfully used by local authorities to regenerate sheltered housing, but further financial support is needed.

Inquiry Panel member Hugh Owen from The Riverside Group shared the challenge that the scale of re-investment required in sheltered housing is very significant. Whilst some housing providers, such as The Riverside Group and others that presented to the Inquiry, are refurbishing their sheltered housing stock, the scale of this activity currently in the social sheltered housing sector, does not yet match the scale of the problem.

Recommendation 8

Recycling of ‘historic’ grant funding previously awarded to registered providers by Homes England and the GLA should be permitted for refurbishing existing sheltered housing schemes (as well as for developing new schemes for older people).

Recommendation 20

Local authorities should use the Better Care Fund to support capital projects for the modernisation/regeneration of sheltered housing stock.

The Inquiry noted that the current 2021-2026 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) delegated to Homes England and the GLA is worth £11.5bn. By setting a 10% target for older people's housing for the 2026-2031 AHP, this would equate to £1.15bn using current figures. The Panel suggests that a third of that is ringfenced for the refurbishment and regeneration of outdated sheltered housing stock which would result in a c.£383m allocation.

It was reported that Homes England funding is typically not available for refurbishment where 'net additionality' is not provided (i.e. where more homes are not provided through a regeneration programme for sheltered housing). This is problematic for social housing providers because many refurbishment projects tend to result in a loss of homes as a result of the removal of bedsits or by enlarging apartments to align with contemporary space standards. Evidence to the Inquiry also noted that a further barrier is the inability to use Recycled Capital Grant Funding to reinvest in existing stock as well as new provision.

These financial barriers put significant financial pressure on social housing providers of sheltered housing; the Inquiry heard that many housing providers are not able to deliver regeneration of sheltered housing without at least a degree of capital funding from Homes England or the Greater London Authority, or that the extent of improvements through regeneration and refurbishment can be relatively limited as a result.

The challenge for providers in relation to the cost of undertaking regeneration has been further exacerbated by the higher interest rates and increasing cost of materials and labour in the post-COVID era.

Inquiry Panel member, Abdul A Ravat from Abbeyfield Living Society explained that significant issues face smaller housing providers who may have limited access to capital funding and indeed may be more likely to sell their properties as a result. This view was supported by evidence from MuirCroft Housing Association, a small provider with 102 homes in Southampton. They stated that as a small provider they don't have access to the financial or other resources needed to regenerate their sheltered housing.

The Panel heard that in London greater GLA grant flexibility would allow capital grants to be recycled thereby enabling providers, particularly smaller providers, to retain and use this fund on regenerating existing stock (see Gardener House case study on p.27).



Image Credit: Housing 21

Another challenge with regeneration/refurbishment is the extent to which an existing scheme can comply with HAPPI design principles or achieve statutory and regulatory requirements given the restrictions of an existing building. Paul Tennant from Abbeyfield Living Society pointed out that this is particularly challenging for older buildings (particularly pre second world war buildings and earlier) which can't be adapted as easily. He highlighted the difficult decisions that have to be made to balance financial viability along with the limited extent to which an older property can meet the needs of existing and future tenants.

Recommendation 6

A 10% target for older people's housing should be part of flexible approach by Homes England/GLA for future capital investment, including the 2026-2031 Affordable Homes Programme and other funding streams, of which at least a third should be for replacing, updating, and refurbishing existing forms of sheltered housing.

Recommendation 8

Recycling of 'historic' grant funding previously awarded to registered providers by Homes England and the GLA should be permitted for refurbishing existing sheltered housing schemes (as well as for developing new schemes for older people).

Recommendation 9

Homes England and GLA capital grant funding rules should ensure that housing providers can apply for and use capital grant to refurbish and upgrade existing sheltered housing schemes, without 'additionality' requirements.

Recommendation 11

The DHSC should ensure that a future round of the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CaSSH) Fund includes explicit criteria in its prospectus that any future capital grant is permissible for the refurbishment, upgrade or remodelling of existing sheltered housing stock, where it can be evidenced that such improvements will deliver improved health and social care outcomes.

Recommendation 12

The DHSC's £300m Housing Transformation Fund should be reinstated (or an equivalent introduced); a proportion of that funding made available to local authorities where they identify and include the current and future need for sheltered housing in their Housing Needs Assessments and Local Plans.

One source of funding for adaptations to existing, unsuitable and inaccessible homes, is from Disabled Facilities Grants. These contributions, paid by government via local authorities, have been increased over recent years.

Where the landlord/provider is applying for the DFG there is no means-test. It is well worth private and social housing providers liaising with their local authorities to explore the potential for funding home improvements from this source.

Strategic reviews by social housing providers

Evidence to the Inquiry highlighted that whilst several housing providers have conducted strategic reviews of their sheltered stock, there is a lack of understanding about how to approach strategic reviews and/or what contemporary sheltered housing should look like. The Inquiry believes there is an urgent need for providers of sheltered housing in both the social and private sectors to undertake strategic reviews of their sheltered housing assets and services. To support other housing providers with strategic planning, the Inquiry Panel suggest that MHCLG should develop common standards that can be used by housing providers and local authorities to assure the quality and performance of sheltered housing as well as good practice guides for strategic reviews.

Recommendation 21

All social and private landlords with sheltered housing stock should conduct a strategic review of their portfolio's current and future suitability, identifying options for:

- a) refurbishment/upgrades
- b) repurposing for other people/uses
- c) replacement development

Undertaking reviews will identify ways to make sheltered housing better suited to the needs of an ageing population and provide an attractive housing offer than can encourage people to 'right-size' and potentially make available family-sized homes.

Recommendation 13

As part of the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, MHCLG, in consultation with the older person's housing sector, should develop common standards that can be used by housing providers and local authorities to assure the quality of sheltered housing.

Recommendation 14

The MHCLG supported housing team, in consultation with the older person's housing sector, should develop and provide 'good practice' tools and approaches to undertaking strategic reviews of sheltered housing.

Case study: Retirement Living Improvement Programme, The Riverside Group

In 2016, The Riverside Group conducted a systematic review of their sheltered housing that placed 16% of sheltered stock (33 schemes) in a category of schemes that require significant intervention to ensure long-term sustainability over and above normal cyclical investment.

The Riverside Group has partially addressed the problem through a £33m Retirement Living Improvement Programme which has, since 2018/19, benefitted 39 schemes, principally larger ones. Whilst this is a significant contribution, there is a lot left to do and subsequently new priorities have emerged such as decarbonisation.

Works have generally been limited to a major upgrade of communal facilities to create attractive environments which meet contemporary safety standards, rather than a major refurbishment and reconfiguration of individual homes which is picked up as part of The Riverside Group's major repair programmes. At costs per unit of c.£20-30k (under £1m per scheme), this is substantially less than some of the remodelling examples presented to the APPG.

Following the systematic review, The Riverside Group have also disposed of three schemes with more in the pipeline, as well as remodelling one older sheltered scheme in London as Extra Care housing. Another is likely to be repurposed as a different form of housing altogether.

The Riverside Group has a significant development programme for housing for older people, though this is exclusively extra care housing they have completed 138 new homes in 2022/23 in London and Greater Manchester and have a further 302 in their development programme.



The Panel heard that local authorities are seeking a greater understanding of the need and demand for older persons housing and the requirement for sheltered housing as part of a range of accommodation types supporting older people to live independently. Local authorities require a robust evidence base regarding the supply of sheltered housing homes, including those that have been refurbished, as well as evidence of future need and demand.

Evidence to the Inquiry indicated that the existing policy arrangements create another barrier to regeneration; providers are seeking a dedicated 'older persons' housing team as part of specialist/supported housing teams at Homes England/GLA.

Recommendation 15

Local authorities should undertake periodic Older Persons' Housing Needs Assessments to determine local need and demand for all types of housing for older people, including sheltered housing, in addition to housing for older people that falls within the definition of supported housing in the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act.

Recommendation 16

Using their Needs Assessments (of the need for all types of housing suited to older people), local authorities should develop a local plan/strategy to promote and enable the regeneration of outdated sheltered housing.

Recommendation 17

Every 5 years, local authorities should provide MHCLG, as part of their Supported Housing strategies, with the number of units of sheltered housing in their area, the number of units of sheltered housing that have been regenerated/refurbished.

Recommendation 7

Homes England and the GLA should have dedicated older persons' housing teams (for example as part of specialist/supported housing teams) with an accountable officer and an older person's housing sector Advisory Group should be established to provide oversight and monitor activities.

Encouraging and supporting the regeneration of sheltered housing

Despite the challenges, the Inquiry Panel learnt that there is an appetite amongst many housing providers to regenerate outdated sheltered housing stock and some providers have done so with impressive results. The regeneration of existing outdated sheltered housing has tended to involve one of the following:

- Refurbishment i.e. upgrading the interior, including potentially structural works.
- Refurbishment and extension, i.e. upgrading the interior, including potentially structural works, improvements to the exterior fabric and/or extensions to the building.
- Repurposing for other uses, e.g. as supported housing, temporary accommodation, or general needs housing.

The Panel heard that regeneration work offers improvements and benefits to providers and residents alike, including:

- Reduced energy and operational costs
- Lower repair and building maintenance costs
- Fewer voids and quicker relets
- Increased asset values
- Improved scheme's attractiveness and identity
- Promoting better health and wellbeing for residents
- Improved affordability and bills
- Improved a sense of place, community and belonging

Regenerating older stock is the key moment to improve energy efficiency. Energy costs represent a highly significant factor in the budgets of older people and upgrading insulation, boilers, alongside wider improvements to the fabric are essential elements of a renovation programme. Moreover, when account is taken of the embedded carbon in existing buildings, the value of refurbishment rather than new build, is enhanced. Abbeyfield drew to the Inquiry's attention that Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund disadvantaged smaller providers who could not bid for the funding.

Examples of refurbishment, refurbishment and extension and repurposing of sheltered housing are provided below.

Refurbishment

Evidence to the Inquiry highlighted some good examples of housing providers refurbishing existing schemes to increase the lifespan of a building.

Case study: Ferndale Court, Consett, County Durham (Karbon Homes)

Ferndale Court, built in 2001 contains 35 flats, Karbon Homes have made a range of improvements over the last few years, both to the flats and to the communal areas.

As part of a full rewiring of the block, Karbon upgraded heating systems and lighting within flats as well as installing kitchens with new units and worktops, sinks with lever mixer taps for ease of use, and seven choices of slip resistant vinyl flooring for residents to choose from.

For the residents' bathrooms, a choice was provided between a standard bathroom or wet room, with the majority going for wet rooms. There were nine choices of slip resistant wet room flooring, three colours to choose from for the new aqua wall boards which replaced the dated wall tiles, and all were fitted with drop down seats and grab rails at positions requested by residents.

At every stage of the modernisation process, residents were offered choice, and provided with a decorating allowance of £300 after the works were complete, to decorate hallways and bedrooms.

Karbon also modernised all communal areas with new paint and replaced all communal carpets and vinyl along with window blinds and installed new suspended ceilings.

Total cost: £901,000

Improvements to flats: £643,000

Upgrade of communal areas: £258,000



Image Credit: Karbon Homes

Case study: Harmony House, Birmingham (Housing 21)

Housing 21 acquired Harmony House in 2020 and are carrying out a full refurbishment to transform the scheme. This includes new high spec bathrooms and kitchens in the 36 apartments as well as a hotel-style refurbishment of the communal lounge. The new digital warden call includes secure video door entry and a free wi-fi service for residents.



Image Credit: Housing 21

Case study: Union Court, Otley, Leeds (Leeds City Council)

Following a 2014 review of their sheltered housing, Leeds City Council have been working to improve existing sheltered housing, prioritising those that did not meet decent home standards and consisted of bedsits with shared bathing. In 2018, Leeds City Council rebranded their sheltered housing as Retirement LIFE (Living In a Friendly Environment).

Union Court was built in 1971 and comprised 40 homes, 24 bedsits with shared bathing and 16 1-bedroom flats. It is an example of a council completing refurbishment works to improve existing sheltered housing but without extending the building.

Completed in the 2017/18 financial year, the refurbishment work involved knocking through bedsits/shared bathrooms to create a site with 1-bedroom flats. This did however reduce the scheme from 40 to 32 homes. The works also involved upgrading the bathrooms, kitchens, communal areas and installing a lift.

Leeds City Council also updated 6 other sheltered schemes between 2016 and 2020.

Total cost: £2,587,924.85

Build cost: £2,251,624.85

On-costs: £336,300 (including budget provision of £100k for removal costs, assisting with packing, decorating etc)

Funding: Union Court was wholly funded through the HRA. However, for the other 6 sheltered schemes updated, 2 schemes funded wholly via the HRA and 4 schemes were through PFI contracts.

Refurbishment and extension

Evidence to the Inquiry highlighted some good examples of housing providers refurbishing and extending existing schemes to increase the lifespan of a building and improve the availability of accessible accommodation and communal space.

Case study: Sheltered Housing Redevelopment Programme, Wrexham County Borough Council

Wrexham County Borough Council have embarked on an ambitious sheltered housing remodelling and refurbishment programme which to date has involved significant remodelling and refurbishment of Tir y Capel in Llay and Llys y Mynydd in Rhos. Work is also underway at two other sheltered sites, Maes y Capel in Coedpoeth and Wisteria Court in Wrexham.

The refurbished homes are designed to be 'care ready' with the latest technology. The main works carried out include:

- Remodelling the existing layout to increase the sizes of the flats
- Providing good storage facilities within the flats
- Refurbishing the communal lounges to make them more attractive
- Improving the energy efficiency of the scheme (air-source heat pumps, triple glazed windows, internal wall insulation, solar PV and EV charging points)
- Increasing the car parking provision where possible
- Designing to dementia-friendly and HAPPI principles
- Providing 4 new independent living apartments at Tir y Capel, Llay

The completed refurbishments work at Tir y Capel and Llys y Myndd involved a reduction in homes. In Tir y Capel this meant a reduction from 21 to 17, although 4 new apartments were built. At Llys y Myndd the refurbishment meant a reduction from 29 to 26 apartments.

Total Cost: £6,500,000 (for the 2 refurbishments)

Grant from Welsh Government: £667,000

Funding from own resources (HRA): £5,833,00



Image Credit: Read Construction

Case study: Paxfold House, Stanmore, Harrow, Northwest London (Greenhill Housing Association)

In 2015, Greenhill Housing Association completed the refurbishment and extension of Paxfold House. Paxfold was a 'traditional' low-rise, sheltered housing scheme, built in 1979 and comprising 48 flats - 31 Studios and 17 one-bedroom flats.

A single storey building was demolished and replaced with a 3-storey building and new lounge, an additional 3-storey building was provided to the rear, extending into the wooded area behind.

From conception to completion the extension took 3 years and included a land swap with the neighbouring Catholic Church to maximise the number of flats that could be built on the site. The scheme now has 69 apartments, 41 of the original studio apartments and a further 28 new one-bed flats for older people over the age of 55. Of the new flats, 2 are built to full wheelchair standard with 26 flats built to Lifetime Homes standard.

'New' Paxfold was designed to meet the Code for Sustainable Homes (CFSH) level four, with enhanced ecological and energy efficiency measures including:

- improved high levels of insulation
- solar panels on the roof and
- water-saving measures including a green roof.

The old building has also been updated with new windows, bathrooms, upgraded to wet rooms, and kitchens. The corridors and front doors have been decorated throughout giving a sense of consistency. There was considerable tenant liaison with the developer and architects across all stages from concept to completion.

Total build cost: £5,530,288

GLA grant funding: £1,915,000

GHHA funds and borrowing: £3,615,288



Image Credit: Greenhill Housing Association

Case study: Eccles Grange, Backworth, North Tyneside (North Tyneside Council)

The refurbishment of Eccles Grange in Backworth, North Tyneside was part of the council's £300m North Tyneside Living project, which saw more than 920 modern, independent living homes created or refurbished at 26 sites across the borough, by 2017.

The refurbishment involved creating a new, relocated spacious front entrance with modern automatic doors and space for seating that created an attractive and obvious entrance way. All flats were refurbished which involved installing new kitchens and bathrooms. The communal lounge, corridors and garden areas were also modernised with new furnishings and kitchen. From the outside, the previous exposed brickwork was rendered to change the external look and feel.



Image Credit: North Tyneside Council

Total refurbishment costs: c.£2.1m

Funding: Private Financial Investor contract, the investor has borrowed the money up front and North Tyneside Council pay it back over 28 years via monthly unitary charge payments.

Case study: Vic Johnson House, Mile End, London (Gateway Housing Association)

The regeneration of Vic Johnson House located in Mile End, created 32 new apartments and refurbished 24 existing apartments. Feasibility appraisals identified opportunities to extend the retained building at both ends with one of the principle objectives being to relocate the main entrance closer to the amenities on the Roman Road and in doing so improve the access for residents. The entrance now includes a new communal hub for residents to socially interact, linking these areas with a south facing and regenerated communal garden.

The decision to retain the majority of the existing building and retain residents in situ during construction provided significant challenges for the design team and construction process but was a strong sustainability option and on a social value level, allowed residents to stay on their homes.



Image Credit: Gateway Housing Association

Case study: St Mary's, Torrington, Surrey (Kingston Churches Housing Association)

The development at Torrington, St Marys Road will deliver 11 new sheltered housing apartments for Kingston Churches. The scheme, on a back land site in Elmbridge, is designed to meet Passive House Standards to deliver high-quality energy-efficient, affordable housing.

A collaboration between WWA architects, urban designers and planners led to a design that includes a roof extension to the existing building in addition to new development to the rear. The design has been kept subservient to the existing property while using materials that are in keeping with the existing building to create a contemporary design.

Extensive consultation was held with the existing residents influencing the siting of the buildings and layout for the site. A key part of this was retention and enhancement of as much garden space as possible and the detailed design of this will be co-produced to ensure it meets the requirements of the current residents.

The development will provide additional affordable housing for older people in an area where the cost of housing is prohibitive for many and through taking a Passive House approach it shall remain affordable for the future.

Total cost: £2.3million (estimated)



Image Credit: WWA Architects / Kingston Churches Housing Association

Repurposing for other uses

The evidence to the Inquiry demonstrated that in some cases repurposing sheltered housing to cater to different client needs or different uses presents a possible solution, however providers should ensure the repurposed housing meets the specific requirements and preferences of its intended occupants.

Case study: Repurposing sheltered housing as housing for care/key workers

Mark Slater, Design Director at WWA studios suggests that sheltered housing could be repurposed for care workers as a way of addressing the cost of housing challenges experienced by care workers. His view is that provided the building is in good condition, a relatively low-cost refurbishment of a scheme could provide it with a new lease of life, delivering a co-living model that provides care workers with a private studio and some shared communal space. In most cases, the private studios would not meet modern space standards; however, this is the case in contemporary co-living schemes. The benefit of a smaller private studio is that the rental costs could be lower for the occupants. Furthermore, the provision of housing for care workers could assist with recruitment, which is difficult and could form part of an employment package.

The written evidence from the LGA indicates that Nottingham City Council have also successfully changed the use of some sheltered housing to accommodate keyworkers.

<https://www.wwa-studios.com/repurposing-sheltered-housing-for-care-workers/>

Case study: Repurposing outdated sheltered housing for people experiencing domestic abuse, Merseyside (Torus)

Torus is the largest social housing provider in Merseyside, with a portfolio of 3,905 homes for older people. In 2009, following a review of their sheltered housing stock, one of their schemes was repurposed as safe accommodation for people experiencing domestic abuse.

The decision to repurpose was driven by the unsuitability of the scheme design and its location for sheltered accommodation. The scheme comprised 20 bedsits, with no internal communal areas, was not accessible for people with mobility issues and is in a secluded location. This led to low demand and made refurbishment or redevelopment impractical.

Simultaneously, existing safe accommodation in Merseyside was also deemed unsuitable, providing shared accommodation including shared bathrooms with limited office space and health and safety and safeguarding concerns.

In 2012 the site was converted into 18 single self-contained bedsits and 1 fully accessible ground floor unit, upgrading each bedsit with new kitchens and bathrooms, furniture, and furnishings. Two units were removed to provide office space and communal lounge with laundry facilities.

In 2023, an extension was added to include additional communal space to work with children and victims, a separate laundry, additional toilets for staff and residents and improvements to the office space. The total extension cost £211,803.

The outcomes have been extremely positive for customers with 100% satisfaction rates.

Disposal

The Panel heard that, at a time of financial stress for social housing landlords, some providers are selling existing older people's accommodation.

Disposals raise controversy at a time when there is a severe shortage of affordable housing. In some areas more accommodation is being sold than is being created, leading to a net loss despite the demographic imperatives of an ageing society. But disposal may be the only realistic option.

There are several circumstances that can raise the issue of disposal of supported housing/housing for older people, including:

- properties that are no longer in demand/fit for purpose because of their type, form or design;
- housing where refurbishment costs are uneconomic – particularly as decarbonisation and energy efficiency become greater priorities;
- loss of revenue funding following a change in local authority commissioning practices.

Recommendation 22

Disposals/sales should be avoided where possible. Both the Regulator of Social Housing, as part of its new standards regime, and all social housing providers should adopt a 'charter for disposal of supported accommodation for older people'. (A suggested charter is provided in this report at Appendix 4.)

Case study: Gardener House, Muswell Hill (Abbeyfield Living Society)

Gardener House is a detached Edwardian house which was renovated in 2002 but still maintains its period features. It consists of 13 spacious rooms, mostly en-suite and with a kitchenette and freshly prepared home cooked meals are provided twice a day, 7 days a week.

Gardener House is one of 43 Abbeyfield Living Society sheltered housing schemes that has been identified as needing investment in the next 5 years to ensure it:

- Provides energy efficient and sufficiently insulated homes, compliant with future social housing environmental legislation.
- Adheres to ongoing compliance with all landlord health and safety regulations such as electrical, gas and water safety compliance testing and improvements.
- Adheres to ongoing compliance with all Fire Safety requirements.

In the next five years, based on the assessment of the condition of Gardener House, the investment to achieve the minimum standards is set out in the table below. This does not take account any changes that may occur in the future regarding statutory, regulatory, and environmental standards.

| Property Investment Required in next 5 years | |
|---|-----------------|
| Energy Efficiency | £144,000 |
| Fire Safety, Health and Safety | £31,100 |
| Property maintenance including structure of the building and all Mechanical and Electrical components | £490,600 |
| Other | £5,300 |
| TOTAL | £671,000 |



Image Credit: Abbeyfield Living Society

This review formed part of Abbeyfield Living Society's duty and responsibility to robustly assess and understand future cost implications to feed into Abbeyfield Living Society's long-term business and financial planning which has been shared with respective Housing and Care regulators.

The current estimated cost of renovating the 43 schemes is £35 million.

A new generation of sheltered housing

Evidence to the Inquiry Panel indicated that regeneration is not always possible, particularly when contemporary standards cannot be met through refurbishment. In such cases, new build sheltered housing can provide homes that meet the needs of an ageing population from the outset. The Inquiry Panel heard evidence which showcased a new generation of sheltered housing that is attractive, aspirational, and has the potential to encourage 'right-sizing'.

The drivers of redevelopment/new build

The decision by housing providers to demolish and replace sheltered housing is determined by many of the same factors as those driving the decision to regenerate.

However, the extent to which a scheme can be brought up to contemporary standards, such as contemporary space standards and the HAPPI design principles through refurbishment work can influence the decision to rebuild. Inquiry Panel member, David McMahon from Ryder Architecture shared that demolishing and rebuilding can create modern, purpose-built sheltered housing that better meets the needs and expectations of residents from the outset, as shown by Grace House in London (see case study on p.31).

The anticipated costs of refurbishment are a key influence for many housing providers. In some cases, particularly with the capital funding constraints, it may be more cost-effective to demolish and rebuild sheltered housing than to undertake extensive refurbishment. This was evident from the submission from CAF Bank who stated that Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) can play a particular influencing role as some buildings cannot be upgraded sufficiently to comply with MEES requirements. Therefore, the costs of addressing structural deficiencies, upgrading infrastructure, and modernising facilities in outdated housing stock may exceed the cost of new construction, especially when factoring in long-term maintenance and operational expenses.

The LGA informed the Panel that another factor driving redevelopment is the opportunity to optimise land use and unlock the potential of underutilised sites. Demolishing and rebuilding can create higher-density housing developments, mixed-use projects, or alternative land uses that better align with community needs.

Inquiry Panel member Samantha Rowland from BNP Paribas Real Estate stated that *"there is scope to explore the opportunity to attract capital investment in sheltered housing, both for existing stock and new build but they need to be shown a way into the sector. The demographics and Environmental, Social and Governmental (ESG) credentials speak for themselves for all parties, investors, operators, and residents"*.

The challenges for housing providers seeking to redevelop or build new

Many of the challenges facing housing providers when redeveloping and building new sheltered housing echo those experienced when regenerating existing sheltered housing.

A key challenge is securing sufficient funding. The evidence to the Inquiry demonstrated that the cost of redevelopment/new build is expensive and limits the amount of new builds providers can deliver. The announcement from Homes England in 2023 that funding from the AHP could be used for regeneration projects means that social housing providers potentially will be able to use

this source of capital funding for regeneration and redevelopment of sheltered housing. Homes England's announcement of its intent to permit the use of capital funding from the AHP for regeneration is welcome and supports the recommendations from this APPG.

Navigating complex regulatory requirements and planning processes presents a significant barrier. Compliance with planning requirements and addressing environmental considerations can prolong project timelines, increase costs, and introduce uncertainty into the redevelopment process. Additionally, community opposition, historic preservation requirements, and land use restrictions may further complicate efforts to proceed with redevelopment initiatives.

The logistical challenges can be daunting. Notting Hill Genesis (NHG) shared their reluctance to demolish and rebuild outdated buildings due to significant barriers such as planning constraints, relocating older residents, legal covenants, and financial implications. In NHG's past experience, attempting such projects has resulted in organisational strain and burnout. Written evidence from the National Care Forum (NCF) highlighted that their membership does not often suggest re-build as a viable option and are more likely to simply exit the market.

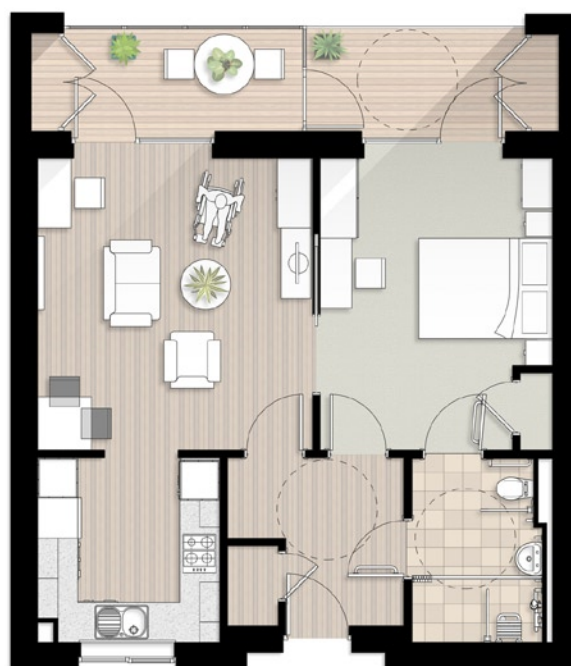
The NCF also shared that restrictions on demolishing older buildings with associated heritage considerations can create a barrier to redevelopment. Some listed buildings may be completely unfit for purpose as housing suited to older people by modern standards. Yet they may also be impossible to demolish, due to their status. This poses significant financial challenges to providers of sheltered housing in such settings and leaves buildings at risk of being left empty or falling into disrepair.

Design considerations for contemporary sheltered housing

The panel heard from PRP a firm of architects with extensive experience in designing housing suited to older persons, that the HAPPI principles are as relevant to sheltered housing as they are to extra care housing. PRP recommend using their 'Design Principles for Extra Care Housing'⁹ factsheet published by the Housing LIN as a guide for designing new build sheltered housing. PRP suggest for a 1-bedroom flat 55m² is the minimum area necessary. See Appendix 3 for the revised HAPPI principles in relation to sheltered housing.

Recommendation 3

As far as practically possible, the re-design of sheltered housing should be consistent with HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation)¹⁰ design principles; should align with today's energy efficiency standards, address decarbonisation commitments, be technology-enabled, and provide 'care-ready' homes. (See Appendix 3)



One-bed flat floorplan
Image Credit: PRP

9 PRP (2020) Design Principles for Extra Care Housing (3rd edition). Available at: https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Factsheets/Design-Principles-For-Extra-Care-Housing-3rdEdition.pdf

10 Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) (2008). Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/HAPPI/>

The appetite for redevelopment/new build

The Inquiry Panel heard evidence that there is an appetite and willingness amongst housing providers to create a new generation of sheltered housing that provides aspirational housing options for people in later life and this can involve:

- Redevelopment, i.e. demolishing and rebuilding a scheme on the same site.
- New build, i.e. building a new scheme on a new/different site.

Examples of these approaches presented to the Inquiry Panel are shown below.

Redevelopment on the site of previous sheltered housing

Case study: Westthorpe Gardens Regeneration, Barnet, London (Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing)

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) are redeveloping a 1960s low rise flatted 'general needs' scheme as part of the regeneration of an existing housing estate in Barnet, London. The scheme was considered as the buildings required significant investment to bring it up to contemporary standards, had no communal facilities and was in an area with very little contemporary sheltered housing for residents needing more appropriate housing. The rebuild consisted of general needs, shared ownership and dedicated sheltered scheme consisting of 44 contemporary apartments with communal facilities featuring high quality outdoor space and a low carbon heat network.

The new sheltered scheme has been built on the western part of the estate to enable the decant / rehousing of residents from existing buildings. All residents have a Right to Return.

Revenue generated from the net rent did not support the total scheme costs, thus requiring grant subsidy and MTVH capital contribution.

Total Scheme Cost

Total cost: £17,613,044

Build cost: £14,536,996

Land cost: £526,700

On cost: £2,549,278

Funding Sources

Net rent: £6,637,834

GLA grant: £3,220,000

MTVH resources: £7,719,210



Image Credit: Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing

Case study: Holly Court, Weymouth, Dorset (Anchor)

Holly Court in Weymouth, Dorset was a 3-storey residential block, constructed in 1973 comprising 35 flats, of which 31 were bedsits/studios, 3 were 1-bedroom, 1 had 2-bedrooms. The existing accommodation was small and poor quality, the 31 studios had floor areas below 35m². Energy Performance was also poor; EPC ratings are 86% 'E', 11% 'D', 3% 'C'. Required works included the replacement of all windows, the passenger lift, and all bathrooms.

Following significant damage from Storm Eunice in 2022, Anchor is now in the process of redeveloping the scheme. The new development will have 37 high quality aspirational social units increasing the average footprint of each home by 30%. It will be designed to meet HAPPI design principles including providing each home with its own private balcony or terrace (the existing building had no private outside space). There will also be a reduction of 83% CO2 emissions with an average EPC level of 90B resulting in a minimum saving of £400pa in resident



Image Credit: Anchor

energy in-use cost. The proposal will provide an overall enhanced Biodiversity Net Gain.

Residents have been at the heart of decision-making process with two consultation events including a design workshop. All residents that were forced to move following the storm damage have the right to return to the new development once completed.

Case study: Grace House, St John's Wood, London (Central & Cecil, a subsidiary of the Aster Group)

Central & Cecil (C&C) is a not-for-profit housing provider which offers housing and care for over 55s in outstanding locations across London.

Following a detailed co design process with residents, C&C announced a plan to demolish Dora House and construct a new and improved scheme on the site. Built in the late 1960s, Dora House was a 204-home scheme including a large number of studios. It provided a home for residents for over 45 years, but it no longer met the needs or standards of accommodation that C&C residents deserve and was coming to the end of its useful life.

The new 'Grace House' development provides 170 stylish and affordable new units in an attractive location at the heart of St John's Wood. The homes are a mixture of one bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, larger than the mainly studio apartments in the old property, 'Dora House'. Residents were involved working with Ryder Architecture through all stages from 2014, and it was a resident competition that led to the new name 'Grace House'.

The overall cost of the project was £55m. The scheme was funded through a joint venture with the private developer Regal London who developed the northern portion of the site as for sale private residential facilitating the development of the southern position and Grace House as predominantly affordable housing. Both developments on the site were constructed and delivered by Regal's construction arm (see p.12 for an image).

New build (new sites)

Case study: Appleby Blue, Bermondsey, Southwark, London (United St Saviours Almshouses)

Appleby Blue, in Bermondsey, Southwark is an innovative social housing development from United St Saviour's Charity (UStSC) that reimagines the almshouse concept for contemporary, inner-city living.

Appleby Blue occupies a site previously occupied by a care home, which had fallen into disrepair and was no longer fit for purpose. It is the off-site social housing provision funded by a private residential development 'Triptych', developed by JTRE in neighbouring Bankside. The development has been made possible through a partnership between the freeholders London Borough of Southwark, and UStSC, who lease it and will manage it in perpetuity.

The development was completed in May 2023, and provides 57 homes for a total of 63 residents aged 65 or over in Southwark. Designed by Stirling Prize-winning architects, Witherford Watson Mann, the building provides a blueprint for future adult social housing projects for older persons.

The building is designed to connect residents through its porous nature and welcoming floorplan, cultivating a strong sense of community and reducing loneliness. The Appleby Blue community kitchen sits at the heart of the building, with UStSC running culinary-based community projects with local organisations to foster intergenerational connectivity in Southwark and provide important upskilling opportunities for young people in the borough.

35% of the energy required to run Appleby Blue almshouse in Bermondsey is generated on site from photovoltaics on the roof. The building is passively ventilated, with common areas equipped with an automated system of opening vents.

Total cost: £25.1 million



Image Credit: Philip Vile

Case study: New 'Community Living', Cardiff (Cardiff City Council)

Cardiff City Council is developing new homes for older persons in the city, consisting of 11 new 'Community Living' schemes providing 574 apartments by March 2028.

Two of these developments will involve the regeneration of existing sheltered housing to provide new 'care ready' housing for people in later life.

Channel View will see the redevelopment of an existing sheltered scheme on the Channel View Estate to provide a multi-use development, including 81 one and two bed homes provided as 'Community Living'. Estimated completion November 2025.

Maelfa is intended to provide an additional 41 one and two bed homes to an existing sheltered housing scheme along with roof terrace. Estimated completion February 2025.

The new homes will be designed to RNIB Platinum standards and comply with the HAPPI principles. They will also incorporate renewable technologies and smart energy management systems to significantly reduce the energy demand on the grid, as well as helping to tackle fuel poverty by significantly reducing energy bills.



Image Credit: Cardiff City Council

Resident involvement and displacement/'decanting'

Addressing community concerns and garnering support for regeneration projects can be challenging, particularly when residents are understandably apprehensive about potential disruption, displacement, or changes to their living environment.

Written evidence from the South East Forum on Ageing stated that any changes proposed to individual schemes should only occur with proper consultation and, as far as practically possible the desires and wishes of existing residents should be properly considered and addressed.

The logistical challenges associated with 'decanting' sheltered housing residents during regeneration/redevelopment projects present significant

challenges for providers. Coordinating temporary accommodation, managing relocation logistics, and minimising disruption to residents' lives requires careful planning and coordination. Decanting residents during renovation projects can also have significant financial implications, including council tax penalties, void losses, and additional relocation costs.

Recommendation 23

Providers should work with Councils, other landlords and charitable enterprises where appropriate to assist any necessary displacement/'decanting' of existing residents during building works.

A contemporary service model

Evidence to the Inquiry Panel suggested that regenerating outdated sheltered housing isn't solely about the bricks and mortar; the service model, i.e. the service provided to residents of sheltered housing, also needs to reflect the changing needs and expectations of current and future residents.

Standards and guidance

The Inquiry Panel noted significant variation in the service model within sheltered housing provided by both the social and private sector. Evidence from the Chartered Institute for Housing indicated that an absence of specific guidance has resulted in service model standards that are sector or housing provider led, with no national common set of standards. Some examples of the existing guidelines and 'informal' standards that providers follow include:

- Supported Housing: National Statement of Expectations¹¹
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) seven principles of excellence¹²
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act and consumer standards¹³
- Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act¹⁴
- Homes England Affordable Homes Programme capital guidance¹⁵
- EROSH's Independent Living Standards¹⁶

11 UK Government (2020) Guidance Supported housing: national statement of expectations. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-national-statement-of-expectations/supported-housing-national-statement-of-expectations>

12 Social Care Institute for Excellence. Principles for Excellence in Housing with care and support. Available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/housing/role-of-housing/promising-practice/excellence/>

13 Regulator of Social Housing (April 1st 2024) Regulatory standards for landlords. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords>



Image Credit: Anchor

Recommendation 24

As part of their renovation and improvement programmes, social housing providers should address the energy performance of their sheltered housing and scope to attract grant from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Inquiry Panel member Paul Teverson from McCarthy Stone stated that social and private housing providers are seeking stronger and clearer overarching guidance in relation to service model standards in sheltered housing and how the service should be resourced.

14 House of Commons (2023) Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/26/enacted>

15 Homes England (2024) Available at: Capital Funding Guide: Specialist Homes. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/capital-funding-guide/3-specialist-homes-for-older-disabled-and-vulnerable-people>

16 EROSH. Independent Living Standards. Available at: <https://erosh.co.uk/independent-living/>

Existing and future customers' expectations

Evidence to the Inquiry Panel identified that the profile, needs, and aspirations of current and future customers is changing. People are seeking attractively designed, accessible homes that support them to live independently in later life. Where sheltered housing buildings and the associated service model don't match up to this it can result in void properties, taking longer to let or sell.

It was reported that in the social sector, the profile of sheltered housing residents is becoming increasingly diverse. i.e. social housing providers have an increasing challenge to manage the needs of residents where there may be both a significant age difference (55-65 years vs 75-85+ years) and significant variation in needs (e.g. support with mental health and drug/alcohol related needs or homelessness alongside age-related care and support needs). Whilst in the private sector, the Inquiry heard evidence that people are moving to 'retirement' housing later in life, with the average age of residents often being closer to 80-85 years. This raises the question, who is sheltered housing for?

This is supported by research conducted by Shakespeare Martineau.¹⁷ They concluded:

'With so many different stakeholders involved in the later living market, and so much untapped potential, the failure to agree on a unified term for the sector, or on the age group to whom this type of accommodation should be marketed, is holding the industry back.'

The Inquiry also heard evidence from family members about the challenges and delays re-selling leasehold 'sheltered/retirement' housing and having to continue to pay for service charges whilst waiting for the property to be sold. This arrangement is likely to discourage purchasing 'sheltered/retirement' housing. The Inquiry Panel consider a potential solution is a 'buy-back' policy where the provider purchases the property at the same rate it was bought for and greater flexibility switching from market sale to rent.

17 Shakespeare Martineau (2019) Shining a Spotlight on the Hidden Housing Market. Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Shining-a-Spotlight-on-the-Hidden-Housing-Market/>

A contemporary service model

Evidence from the LGA indicates that contemporary sheltered housing service models should be carefully crafted to balance the benefits of non-resident staff with an on-site presence along with the integration of technology to enhance resident contact, experience and support social interaction.

The evidence to the Panel highlighted that over the past 10-15 years, sheltered housing has experienced a reduction in staff provision provided by social landlords linked to a reduction in revenue funding for 'support' from local authorities. However, Inquiry evidence highlighted the significant value in the availability of staff for residents. This is supported by Anchor's research¹⁸ which shows that 66% of over 55s consider *"being able to maintain an independent lifestyle but having support available when needed"* as the main reason to consider sheltered housing. The evidence presented does not suggest a return to live-in wardens, but there is a consensus that non-resident staff with an on-site presence should be available. Staff roles should, focus on facilitating social activities and providing support where needed, and fulfilling housing management functions.

Inquiry Panel member Kathryn Fox-Rogers from Johnnie Johnson Housing shared that technology that complements staff support should be a core part of sheltered housing. But she is concerned that many sheltered housing providers are not ready for the digital switchover, which has now been extended by Openreach from December 2025 to January 2027. The Panel learnt that technology in sheltered housing should be consistent with the TAPPI (Technology for an Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation)¹⁹ principles developed by the Housing LIN, the Technology Enabled Care Services Association (TSA), and the Dunhill Medical Trust.

18 Anchor (2022) Fragmented UK: Reconnecting people by creating communities where people love living in later life. Available at: <https://www.anchor.org.uk/media/press-room/fragmented-uk>

19 Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (TAPPI).(2024): Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/tappi/>

Increasingly, Wi-Fi in communal areas and residents' homes is considered a crucial element of sheltered housing and a 'must have' amongst current and future residents. However, what is also key is organisational commitment to support the digital skills needs of residents.

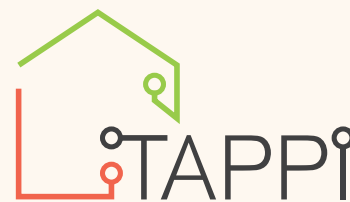
Evidence from Intergenerational England highlighted that embedding intergenerational approaches into service models in sheltered housing can help to foster inclusive and vibrant communities that benefit residents of all ages.

Recommendation 25

A service model in sheltered housing should cater for a diverse range of older people and be carefully crafted to balance the benefits of non-resident staff with an on-site presence along with the integration of technology to enhance resident contact, experience and support social interaction.

Recommendation 26

Providers should follow the "TAPPI" (Technology for an Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) principles when considering technologies to support independence to ensure that decision are grounded in co-production and connectivity are considered from the outset.



Recommendation 27

Providers should commit to supporting the digital skills of residents to avoid digital exclusion, particularly in the light of the digital switchover, which has been extended from December 2025 to January 2027.

Case study: Retirement Living service at Housing 21

Housing 21 is one of the largest not-for-profit specialist providers of Retirement Living and Extra Care for older people of modest means. Housing 21's Retirement Living service model combines staff presence and technology to support independence. Each scheme has a dedicated Local Housing Manager (LHM), known as a 'Court Manager', alongside a digital system provided by Appello.

LHMs provide building and housing management services, additional support when needed, and facilitate opportunities for resident activities. They also engage with the wider local community and shaping future decisions for their scheme environment. The Appello telecare system offers a range of wellbeing services including video/voice calling between residents and employees as well as video door entry for added security, alongside faster call connection times. Internet access is available in most communal areas, and Housing 21 is trialling other methods to support digital inclusion.

In 2020, Housing 21 launched the 'Helping Hands Scheme', offering residents a one-off grant of up to £300 for when something unexpected arises affecting their financial wellbeing. Employees receive specialist training to act as 'Tenancy Gurus', helping residents sustain a healthy tenancy and preventing issues like rent and service charge arrears, before they arise. Since April 2023, Housing 21 has paid out over £273,455 and 1215 grants. Additionally, their Community Wellbeing Fund provides up to £750 towards projects identified by residents' groups that bring a Retirement Living community together. Projects supported from August 2023 - March 2024 resulted in total grants of £17,196.

Case study: Technology and TAPPI with Bield Housing & Care, Scotland

Bield Housing & Care one of the largest providers of housing and support services for older people in Scotland, operates the Bield Response 24 (BR24) digital alarm monitoring service which operates 24/7,365 days a year. Both Bield Housing & Care and BR24 have been involved in several projects exploring how technology can support people in Retirement Housing.

From 2020 to 2023, Bield participated in the Inspire project, testing the impact of 'Proactive Telecare' through weekly calls. BR24 revealed a 75% decrease in ambulance calls and a 68% reduction in A&E visits over a three-month period due to early intervention and preventative support methods.

In 2023 Bield received funding from the Dunhill Medical Trust to become a TAPPI test-bed. TAPPI enabled Bield to work with tenants to test different devices, apps and systems across a variety of housing settings. Tenants were given shared responsibility, alongside staff, to co-produce digital services supporting independent living. This led to Anthropos, a Connected Care Platform that enables intelligent remote monitoring, being selected as their technology-enabled-care project partner.

The impact of both pieces of work is a long-lasting commitment to coproduction and proactive digital technologies to support residents live independently.



Image Credit: Bield Housing & Care

Case study: Sheltered Housing Service at Portsmouth City Council

Portsmouth City Council are a local authority that have retained their sheltered housing stock and currently have 36 schemes. In response to the diversity of residents needs they have designed their service model accordingly.

Each scheme is provided with a Scheme Manager that is available Monday – Friday during office hours. However, several schemes have been identified as requiring increased staff presence, and provide support assistants alongside a scheme manager.

Case study: Pegasus Homes

Pegasus Homes communities provide high quality retirement housing for sale and rent. ‘Lifehosts’ handle day-to-day tasks, they bring people together for social events and make sure everyone feels included. Pegasus Homes are also supported by Tunstall technology to support independence.



Image Credit: Bield Housing & Care

Terminology and branding

Evidence presented to the Inquiry Panel indicated that the term ‘sheltered’ housing is increasingly outdated, off-putting to some potential residents, and no longer reflects the contemporary reality of this type of housing for older people. There is a need for new ‘sheltered’ housing terminology that promotes living independently as well as the vibrant communal aspects and social opportunities available within these housing schemes.

‘The term sheltered housing makes it seem like an old people’s home’ – Mick Rose, Housing 21 Resident and Inquiry Panel member

The evidence provided to the Inquiry shows that some social and private housing providers have already re-branded and replaced ‘sheltered’ housing with alternative terminology that is intended to be more ‘age-positive’ and better reflects what is on offer. There is also an increased focus on marketing the positive benefits that living in sheltered housing can have as well as framing a move as an aspirational ‘lifestyle’ choice. However, it was also noted that a lack of consistent terminology can create confusion for potential residents and their families.

Recommendation 5

Agreement should be sought with representatives of residents and providers to develop and promote new terminology for sheltered housing.



Image Credit: Housing 21

Table 2. Terminology used to describe ‘sheltered’ housing by a range of housing providers

| Housing provider | Terminology used |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Anchor | Retirement properties |
| Bield Housing Association | Retirement Housing |
| Cardiff City Council | Community Living |
| Clarion Housing Group | LiveSmart Schemes |
| Greenhill Housing Association | Independent Living |
| Guinness | Retirement Housing |
| Housing 21 | Retirement Living |
| Johnnie Johnson Housing | Independent Living Homes |
| Leeds City Council | Retirement LIFE (Living In a Friendly Environment) |
| Pegasus Homes | Pegasus Communities. Schemes branded with the development’s name. |
| McCarthy Stone | Retirement Living |
| Norwich Housing Society | Independent Living with Housing Related Support |
| The Riverside Group | Retirement Living |
| Sanctuary England | Housing for Older People |
| United St Saviours Charity | ‘Scheme name’ almshouse |

Meeting a diverse range of needs in sheltered housing

The Inquiry Panel heard that many mainstream providers of sheltered housing are not meeting the needs of a diverse range of older people, including ethnic minority communities and people that identify as LGBTQ+. When regenerating outdated schemes, there is a special opportunity to consider needs that may have been neglected in the past. There are transferrable lessons from recent new build schemes which can inform any upgrading of existing projects.

Recommendation 4

Regenerated sheltered housing should be tailored to meet the needs of a diverse range of older people, including people living with dementia, people from ethnic minority communities and people that identify as LGBTQ+.

The Inquiry also heard evidence that the majority of mainstream providers of older people's accommodation are not meeting the cultural needs of ethnic minority communities to help them 'age-well'. According to the 2021 Census, 93.6% of the population aged 65 years and over living in England and Wales identified in the White ethnic group, 3.8% identified in the Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh ethnic group, and 1.4% in the Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, or African ethnic group. The remaining 1.2% of people aged 65 years and over identified in the Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and Other ethnic groups.²⁰

Manningham Housing Association, established to meet the housing needs of the South Asian community in Bradford, informed the Inquiry that the old assumption that people from ethnic minority communities look after their older parents / grandparents at home is an oversimplification. Extended families should not be expected to take on the sole responsibility for their relatives as they themselves grapple with the demands of contemporary modern life.

What it means to 'age-well' in ethnic minority communities has changed. Manningham shared that there is no real choice for older people for 'right-size' homes that meets their cultural and/or religious needs – to 'culturally right-size'. Research by the Housing LIN exploring the housing needs and preferences of ethnic minority communities in later life²¹ supported this evidence, indicating that existing sheltered housing often isn't attractive to people from ethnic minority communities. Older people from ethnic minority communities have increasing housing and care/support needs but lack the choice to 'culturally right-size' into smaller, more manageable homes, including sheltered housing.

The evidence from the Housing LIN's research with older people from ethnic minorities in Kirklees indicates that a culturally competent sheltered housing should:

- Provide a staffing team that, as much as possible, reflects the ethnic diversity of the local population.
- Provide a staffing team that includes people who have experience of, or specific cultural and/or religious backgrounds themselves, that is similar to residents/potential residents.
- Connect to and be located near cultural and/or religious amenities.
- Consider cultural and/or religious diets.
- Ensure language and terminology used is culturally and/or religiously competent and reflects the housing and services offer.
- Ensure paid for care and support services are culturally and/or religiously competent.
- Celebrate cultural/religious celebrations.
- Provide culturally appropriate social activities.

21 Housing LIN (2022) Older People from Ethnic Minorities in Kirklees: Housing Needs and Preferences Study for Kirklees Council. Available at: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Older-People-from-Ethnic-Minorities-in-Kirklees-Housing-Needs-and-Preferences-Study/>

20 Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

Case study: Rupali Court, Birmingham (Housing 21)

In 2021, Housing 21 launched their 'cohousing strategy' with the aim of providing ten cohousing schemes, in the West Midlands. People on low income and from marginalised communities are often excluded from cohousing communities, however Housing 21's plan is specifically to develop cohousing in areas of multiple deprivation, where 'at least 30% of the population are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Rupali Court in Birmingham is providing cohousing for the diverse community of Lozells including a group of mainly Bangladeshi women with Bengali as their main language who have been involved in the shape the design of the scheme with support from Legacy West Midlands and Triangle Architects.

'Rupali Court' which means 'silver' in Bengali and 'most beautiful' in Indian, reflects the positive connotations that silver has for older people in the Bengali community, alongside the character and spirit the completed scheme will encompass.

Following feedback from prospective residents, Rupali Court will feature a large communal lounge and kitchen, enabling residents to cook and share meals. These spaces will serve as a hub for residents, promoting interaction, collaboration and a strong sense of community, helping to tackle social isolation.

The scheme will also benefit from a multi-faith room and landscaped garden that will include an allotment for residents to grow their own produce and support the wider community's passion for sustainable living. Whilst this is not a refurbishment, it provides some learning for when considering the needs of ethnic minority communities.

Case study: Cherry Tree House, Leeds (Leeds Jewish Housing Association)

Leeds Jewish Housing Association have developed a mixed-use site within the heart of the Jewish Community. The housing component comprises Cherry Tree House, a purpose-built 51 unit sheltered scheme for over 55s and Hillside, a 34-unit apartment block for which anyone is eligible. The site also includes a community centre providing culturally sensitive services such as synagogue on site, café and restaurant and arts and culture.

The sheltered apartments are connected to 130 existing properties to form the Marcia and Andrew Brown Retirement Village of 181 apartments for older people with secure access to the Ziff Community Centre.



Image Credit: Leeds Jewish Housing Association

Evidence to the Inquiry indicated that sheltered housing also needs to respond to the needs of people from the LGBTQ+ community and as such it should:

- Provide communities and services that accept a person's sexuality and identity.
- Support the importance of social networks and family of choice later in life, especially for forms of support and care.
- Providing care and support that is LGBTQ+ affirmative.

Case study: Tonic@Bankhouse, Vauxhall, London (One Housing a subsidiary of The Riverside Group)

Tonic@Bankhouse is the UK's first LGBTQ+ affirming retirement community. LGBTQ+ affirming means that the approach to services and support is not just "LGBT+-friendly" but affirming of the lives, histories, needs and desires of LGBTQ+ people.

Bankhouse consists of 84 apartments, 59 for affordable rent and 25 for shared ownership, across 14 floors. The Riverside Group owns and manages all of the affordable rented apartments at Bankhouse, and 6 shared ownership apartments. Tonic has 19 apartments to sell on a shared ownership basis, Tonic will always own at least 25% to hold as a community asset.

Whilst this isn't a refurbished sheltered housing example - Bankhouse is a new development with 24-hour on-site staff and optional care packages from Care Outlook - it demonstrates how the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals have been considered in the development of the site and services.

Amenities on-site include communal gardens, library, a community lounge, a restaurant and bar, an overnight guest suite, a laundry room, floating garden, roof terrace and bike storage. All areas of the building are fully accessible to wheelchair users.



Image Credit: The Riverside Group

Funding the service model

A core component in housing provided exclusively for older people is the provision of some extra support. This is distinct from extra care and specialist facilities. Some of the costs of housing management support can be covered by charges for ‘intensive’ management, as part of the service charges.

However, provision for support services which are not eligible for Housing Benefit present financial problems for providers following the demise of the former Supporting People programme. There is now no dedicated revenue funding stream to meet the legitimate costs of providing support to older residents; the absence of this funding is compromising the core purpose of sheltered housing.

DHSC budgets benefit from the support services within sheltered housing, both in lower costs to the NHS and reduced care costs borne by local

Recommendation 10

MHCLG should work with the Treasury and DHSC to identify and secure revenue funding that can be used by local authorities and/or providers of sheltered housing to meet the revenue costs of providing support to residents of sheltered housing.

Recommendation 18

Despite financial pressures, local authorities with social care responsibilities should make available revenue support to residents of sheltered housing, which is covered by recommendation 10, above.

authorities. Coordination is needed between government departments to address the revenue support funding gap now emerging for more and more sheltered housing providers.



Image Credit: North Tyneside Council

Conclusion

The evidence presented during the Inquiry highlighted the positive impact of living in sheltered housing for residents. It is clear that sheltered housing is a valuable asset that the social and private housing sectors need to protect and treasure. But, the current state of existing sheltered housing is concerning, as many homes are well past their sell-by date and require significant investment.

Housing associations and registered providers face financial pressures, making it challenging to invest in updating older housing. Some providers feel forced to sell off homes for older people, exacerbating the shortage of suitable accommodation.

However, there are good examples of providers tackling outdated sheltered housing, including major refurbishment, demolition, replacement, or repurposing for other needs.

Ultimately, the report appeals to the government, Homes England and the GLA, as well as the UK's devolved administrations/nations, to recognise the importance of sustaining the contribution being made by sheltered housing for later living. It also urges social housing providers to understand the value of their role in improving health and wellbeing, supporting companionship, and enhancing independence and dignity for older people. The aim is not only to grow this sector but also to improve and update the precious asset we already have.

“With technology advances, modern retrofitting techniques, use of new materials, as well as older people’s housing preferences changing too, the timing is right to generate a contemporary sheltered housing offer that takes the ‘sheltered’ out of ‘sheltered housing’ and provides an attractive housing choice in later life for future generations instead.”

Jeremy Porteus
Housing LIN and Inquiry Panel Member

Appendices

Appendix 1: The APPG Inquiry Panel Members and witnesses

APPG on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry Members: Parliamentarians who participated in the Inquiry:

- Peter Aldous MP (co-Chair)
- Baroness Kay Andrews
- Baroness Liz Barker
- Lord Richard Best (co-Chair)
- Ruth Cadbury MP
- Lord Ben Stoneham
- Baron George Young

The APPG was also be supported by a panel of specialists:

- Kathryn Fox-Rogers, Chief Operating Officer, Johnnie Johnson Housing
- Hugh Owen, Director of Strategy and Public Affairs, The Riverside Group
- David McMahon, Director, Ryder Architecture
- Jeremy Porteus, Chief Executive, Housing Learning and Improvement Network
- Abdul A Ravat, Head of Development & Relationships, Abbeyfield Living Society
- Neil Revely, Chair, ADASS Housing Policy Network and Adviser, Partners in Care and Health (LGA)
- Mick Rose, Resident, Housing 21
- Samantha Rowland, Head of Health Care and Senior Living, BNP Paribas Real Estate
- Paul Tennant, Chief Executive, Abbeyfield Living Society
- Paul Teverson, Director of Communications, McCarthy Stone

The APPG heard evidence from the following witnesses:

- Kayleigh Archbold, Operations Manager Supported Housing and Domestic Abuse, Torus
- Lee Bloomfield, Chief Executive, Manningham Housing Association
- Sarah Davis, Senior Policy Adviser, Chartered Institute for Housing
- Dr Lynne Douglas, Chief Executive, Bield Housing Association
- Juliet Duke, Service Manager, Older People – Extra Care, Leeds City Council
- Clare Cameron, Director Architecture, Later Living & Care, PRP
- Carol Coull, Project Officer, Wrexham County Borough Council
- Suki Jandu, Executive Director - Housing Services, Anchor
- Guy Palmer, Director of Regeneration, Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
- Steven Peach, Director of Housing and Customer Experience, Greenhill Housing Association
- Steph Ramsden, Head of Acquisitions and Partnerships, Housing 21
- Tracey Roberts, Project Officer, Wrexham County Borough Council
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services, Leeds City Council
- Paula Underwood, Group Head of Support Network, Torus
- Emma Webster, ESG and Corporate Affairs Director, Pegasus Homes

The APPG would also like to sincerely thank the following for their contributions to the APPG discussions:

- Mark Browne, Department of Health and Social Care
- Andrew Dimmock, Head of Supported Housing, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government
- Miranda Foster, Head – Technical Hub, Homes England
- Adam Gravely, Policy Officer, National Housing Federation
- Shahi Islam, Director – Affordable Housing, Homes England
- Darrell Smith, Senior Policy Adviser, Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

The APPG would like to personally thank those Abbeyfield Societies that acted as sponsors of this Inquiry and the launch event, specifically:

- Paul Tennant, Chief Executive, Abbeyfield Living Society (headline sponsor)
- Abdul A Ravat, Head of Development and Relationships, Abbeyfield Living Society
- Philip Birkinshaw, Chief Executive, Abbeyfield The Dales
- Vanessa Booker-Card, Chief Executive, Abbeyfield Wessex
- Nolan Taylor, Chief Executive, Abbeyfield South Downs
- Catherine Jacques, Head of Communications, Abbeyfield Living Society



Image Credit: Gateway Housing Association

The Secretariat to the Inquiry was provided by the Housing Learning & Improvement Network by Lois Beech, Consultancy and Partnerships Manager and Ian Copeman Business Director.

And our appreciation and sincere thanks go to John Galvin, Chief Executive, Elderly Accommodation Counsel for providing the quantitative data on the size of the sheltered housing stock.

Abbeyfield
Living Society

Abbeyfield
The Dales
Making time for older people

Abbeyfield
South Downs
Making time for older people

Abbeyfield
Wessex

Appendix 2: Individuals and organisations providing written evidence

- Almshouse Resilient Communities (ARC) For the Future project researchers
- ARK Consultancy
- Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Bank
- Chartered Institute for Housing
- Cornwall Council
- Housing 21
- Hull City Council
- Independent responses from Gill Perceval, David Lynn, Cathy Redman and Chris Mainstone
- Intergenerational England
- Johnnie Johnson Housing
- Karbon Homes
- Langley Marish United Charities
- Leeds City Council
- Local Government Association
- MuirCroft Housing Association
- National Care Forum
- National Housing Federation
- Norwich Housing Society
- Notting Hill Genesis
- Portsmouth City Council
- Power Roof
- PRP
- The Riverside Group
- South East England Forum on Ageing
- The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- United St Saviours Charity

Appendix 3: HAPPI Design Principles and sheltered housing refurbishment considerations

Over fifteen years ago, the very first HAPPI report, ‘Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation’ (HAPPI 1), identified ten key design features when designing contemporary, new, age-friendly homes. With this APPG Inquiry on Regeneration of Outdated Sheltered Housing, they have been adapted by to reflect considerations for refurbishing existing developments. We are grateful to the details supplied by PRP architects in their evidence and the view of Panel Members, as highlight in *italics* below:



Image Credit: Philip Vile

| The ten HAPPI Principles (2008) | Meeting the HAPPI Principles in sheltered housing (2024) |
|---|--|
| 1. Generous internal space standards with potential for three habitable rooms and designed for flexible layouts | 1. <i>Ensure that existing apartments are suitably sized to enable occasional wheelchair access and flexible layouts. Consider adding large bay windows, amalgamating apartments or removing non-loadbearing walls where internal space standards are unsuitable or restrictive. Providing central storage or a central laundry on-site could assist with storage requirements</i> |
| 2. Plenty of natural light in the home and circulation spaces | 2. <i>Assess the amount of daylight to existing homes and shared spaces. Consider replacing windows with larger windows with lower cills, adding roof lights to top floor rooms or patio doors to ground floor spaces</i> |
| 3. Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats | 3. <i>Assess the corridors to see if there are ways to bring in additional natural light and ventilation via roof lights, stairwells, atrium or larger windows. Consider the potential of adding balconies, terraces and patio doors so that all residents have access to private amenity space</i> |
| 4. Adaptability and ‘care aware’ design which is ready for emerging telecare and telehealthcare technologies | 4. <i>Assess the potential for aids, adaptations and improvements to be added so that the apartments can be ‘care-ready’. Ensure that the refurbishment will achieve ‘barrier-free’ design throughout including lift access, level thresholds and walls which are strong enough for mobility aids. Investigate the provision of Wi-Fi and data so that telecare and community equipment can be readily installed</i> |
| 5. Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoid an ‘institutional feel’ | 5. <i>Assess the circulation areas to see if there are opportunities to improve the connection to the wider context via larger windows and views out. Remove net curtains which obscure connection with the outside. Consider redecorating circulation so that they are non-institutional with attractive signage, lighting and furniture. Introduce seating within the circulation spaces to encourage social interaction</i> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>6. Shared facilities and community ‘hubs’ where these are lacking in the neighbourhood</p> | <p>6. <i>Assess the communal spaces within the existing building and local community and ensure that the refurbishment includes purposeful shared spaces which encourage residents to meet and enable a range of activities. Consider a welcoming multi-function room that can be used by the wider neighbourhood as a community hub. Include a guest room for visiting friends and families</i></p> |
| <p>7. Plants, trees, and the natural environment</p> | <p>7. <i>In giving thought to the public realm, consider design measures which ensure that the homes engage positively with the street. Consider boundary treatment, window sizes and dressings and maybe locating a multi-use space so that it is outward facing and open to the wider community. The natural environment should be revisited and nurtured through new trees and hedges and the preservation and celebration of mature planting. Wildlife habitats as well as colour, shade and shelter should be included</i></p> |
| <p>8. High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating</p> | <p>8. <i>Appoint specialists to assess the potential for improving energy-efficiency, insulation and ventilation. Carry out an evaluation of air quality and overheating so that replacement windows can be purpose designed and solar shading, blinds or awnings can be considered. Green roofs can be considered for flat roofs to slow down surface water run-off and encourage biodiversity</i></p> |
| <p>9. Extra storage for belongings and bicycles</p> | <p>9. <i>Assess the amount of storage available outside the homes for cycles and mobility aids and consider adding external stores within the landscape. If storage within existing homes is lacking, consider central storage for residents’ use</i></p> |
| <p>10. Shared external areas such as ‘home zones’ that give priority to pedestrians</p> | <p>10. <i>Assess the external spaces and consider if more can be done to give priority to pedestrians rather than cars with due regard to the kinds of navigation difficulties that some visually impaired people may experience. Surface treatment, lighting and signage can assist with wayfinding and safety</i></p> |

More information on HAPPI, including case studies on new purpose-built homes for older people that have been influenced by the HAPPI design principles, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/HAPPI/

Appendix 4: The Charter for Disposal of Supported Housing and Accommodation for Older People

The APPG on Housing and Care for Older People have developed this Charter – a Code of Conduct – which is intended to spell out the behaviour to be expected of registered providers. It is hoped all social housing providers when considering disposal of social housing will adopt the Charter principles and the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman will endorse it.

The Charter for Disposal of Supported Housing and Accommodation for Older People

1. We will only dispose of existing supported housing or accommodation for older people (other than tenanted property transferred to another social landlord) in accordance with a strategy agreed by our Board, covering both disposals and reinvestment.
2. Where disposing of supported housing or accommodation for older people, we will prioritise the use of the proceeds (including recycled capital grant funds) to provide suitable replacement housing to meet evidenced need, or to reinvest in existing specialist/older people's housing to prevent further losses of social housing.
3. We will always fully consult with existing residents before selling, demolishing, converting or upgrading their accommodation.
4. We will ensure that if any existing resident has to leave their current social housing, temporarily or permanently, they will be offered replacement social housing of a suitable standard and will use our reasonable endeavours to ensure it is in a suitable location. Where appropriate we will put in place move-on support and provide home loss and disturbance payments.
5. When offering a property for sale, we will ensure that other registered providers or registered charities are given the opportunity to make an offer to purchase.
6. In all cases we will ensure that any disposal is informed by a clear strategy with a detailed appraisal of the options in consultation with appropriate external stakeholders.
7. Where a resident is receiving personal care or support, we will engage with their registered care provider about the continuity of care and support, and the commissioning authority.
8. Prior to disposal - and no later than when notifying the Regulator of Social Housing - we will inform the relevant local authority of our intentions, providing details of location and proposed timetable.

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This APPG Inquiry is supported and sponsored by The Abbeyfield Society.

Established in 1956, The Abbeyfield Society is a charity that provides sheltered housing, independent living and residential care to older people across the UK. It creates communities that keep people connected in later life, fostering a sense of security, warmth and belonging and allowing residents to thrive in the company of others whilst retaining their independence.

This foundation of companionship was one of the motivations for setting up Abbeyfield nearly 70 years ago and remains at the core of what the organisation stands for today.

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The Housing LIN (Learning & Improvement Network) is the secretariat to this APPG on Housing and Care for Older People Inquiry.

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network that brings together policy makers and practitioners to champion better quality housing, health and care services for an ageing population and support sector improvement. To access a range of other resources on sheltered housing curated by the Housing LIN, visit:

www.housinglin.org.uk/ShelteredHousing

Copies of this report can be downloaded from the dedicated APPG Inquiry webpage on the Housing LIN at:

www.housinglin.org.uk/Re-HAPPI

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