



2 National Housing Strategy for an Ageing Society – Lifetime Homes: housing design

The National Strategy on Housing for an Ageing Society, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods*, is a cross-government strategy published jointly by Communities and Local Government (CLG), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health (DH).

Developing Lifetime Homes

Over the years ordinary homes have generally been planned, designed and built without consideration of the needs that may arise over time. For example, narrow steps and doorways that will not accommodate a baby buggy or a wheelchair and first floor bathrooms, present everyday challenges to many people. Approximately 1.4 million people currently require specially-adapted housing to meet their needs and this is set to grow as the numbers living into old age increase. There is therefore a need to start designing and building housing that is easily adapted.

Key messages:

- Need to build flexible housing for the future, in particular, homes that which are more easily adapted and this can be achieved through Lifetime Homes
- All public sector housing must meet Lifetime Homes standards by 2011
- Lifetime Homes standards will be made a mandatory part of the Code for Sustainable Homes to encourage take up in new build projects in the private sector. The government expects all new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes by 2013
- Better planning to reflect the needs of older people and people with disabilities and
- The Annual Housing Design Awards scheme will include a new category of inclusive design – including interiors, adaptations and the wider environment.

What are Lifetime Homes standards?

Lifetime Homes standards are a set of features that make housing more functional and future-proof. There are 16 key requirements and specific features. These include:

- Level or gently sloping approach to property
- Wide doorways to allow wheelchair access
- Living rooms at entrance level
- Entrance level toilet and
- Low level window sills and electric sockets.

More information on Lifetime Homes standards can be found on the following website:
www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

The Government will be undertaking a number of pieces of work to clarify the standards through a Building Regulation Advisory Committee working group and will provide information and advice to the private sector, particularly for developers with limited resource.

Implementing the standards

CLG estimates that compliance with the standards will result in additional costs of £547 per new home. Some developers will wish to retain existing designs because of the impact on supply chains and construction.

Lifetime Homes standards will be mandatory in the code for Sustainable Homes at level 6 from 2008, level 4 from 2010 and level 3 from 2013. This will have the effect of ensuring that all new public sector housing meets the standards by 2011.

Private sector developers can choose which level of the Code they use, but the Government will be encouraging them to reach Lifetime Homes by 2013.

It is hoped that the *Lifetime Homes standards* will encourage inclusive design both of the home environment and the equipment used within homes in the mainstream. The principles for judging if an environment is inclusive are that it must:

- Be as easy to use by as many people as possible
- Offer people the freedom to choose how they access and use it
- Embrace diversity and difference
- Be safe, and
- Be of high quality.

CLG will be raising awareness through the following:

- Continued funding for the Academy of Sustainable Communities (ASC) to promote good practice in the built environment professions
- Annual Housing Design Awards to showcase inclusive design, and
- Establishing a national awards scheme for new products, interiors and environments.

The specialist housing association, Habinteg, will be the main driving force behind this agenda including providing advice to the Government.

What you can be thinking about now

By meeting Lifetime Homes standards, architects, developers and builders can ensure all of Part M of the Building Regulations (the regulations that govern accessibility for all residential dwellings) and the Housing Corporation's current Scheme Development standards are met. (In December 2008, the Housing Corporation was replaced by the Homes and Communities Agency).

The Chartered Institute for Housing and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation undertook a comparative study, which found that the additional costs for compliance with Lifetime Homes ranged from £165 to £545 per dwelling. They found that ensuring all spaces are used

effectively can bring about some outstanding innovations in design.

Lastly, access statements are now required for planning applications and Lifetime Homes Designs can help with this.

Other useful Housing LIN publications:

Design Principles for Extra Care Housing Factsheet No. 6 (updated version)

<http://networks.csip.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Housing/Topics/browse/HousingExtraCare/Commissioning/Design/?parent=1009&child=1629>

RTPI Good Practice Note 8: Extra Care Housing – development planning, control and management (joint publication with Housing LIN)
http://networks.csip.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Reports/GPN8.pdf

Useful links to other relevant organisations:

Communities and Local Government (CLG)
www.communities.gov.uk

www.jrf.org.uk

www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

www.habinteg.org.uk

Homes and Communities Agency
www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

Royal Town Planning Institute:
<http://www.rtpi.org.uk>

World Health Organisation
www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities

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