



# 9 National Housing Strategy for an Ageing Society – Housing Information and Advice

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 and Department of Health (DH).

## The place of housing information and advice in the strategy

In his foreword to the strategy, Prime Minister Gordon Brown states: “And we will provide a new national information service to make sure that all older people have access to good housing advice.”

This commitment is seen as an essential component of delivering “a better deal for older people today”.

A package of new funding totalling £35 million will strengthen both national and local delivery of housing information and advice for older people, reinforcing an expansion of handyperson services and an enhanced role for home improvement agencies.

## What is a housing information and advice service?

It is a comprehensive body of information about locally available housing and housing related services for older people, provided by skilled advisors committed to giving control to clients through helping them explore all the options relevant to their needs and aspirations.

It provides an integrated approach to advising on housing, care and financial issues, including:

- Staying put or moving home
- Specialist & supported housing options
- Financing home repairs and improvements
- Home care and support services
- A proactive approach to future needs
- Addressing the needs of people from BME backgrounds, people with physical or learning disabilities, people with mental health problems and other particular groups, and
- Engaging with older people’s aspirations as well as their needs.

## The strategy’s key aims for housing information and advice services

It envisages that the support outlined above will be provided by:

- A single, simple and accessible route to independent information and advice delivered by a network of trusted national and local providers
- A web-based and telephone service progressively linked to all relevant services to guide people from the general to the very specific
- A service which will develop across other sectors of social care and financial support, progressively developing links to the pension and benefits services
- Strengthening of local information, advice and support
- Moving towards proactive information and advice
- Removing financial barriers to the take-up of options such as home improvements and adaptations by improving equity release and loan products
- Proactive engagement with older people at key life transition points
- Targeted support and advocacy for people at risk of crises, and
- Available to all including self-funders through to excluded and hard-to-reach groups.

## What you can be thinking about now:

Local commissioners and information and advice providers should be thinking about how to integrate existing services, draw on the new national FirstStop Advice service, and commission new services where necessary.

## Local Authorities and PCTs should consider:

- How best to co-ordinate, support and focus existing housing advice services in their area to address all older people’s housing /care /support needs and aspirations

- How to maximize the accessibility of housing advice services in their area through face-to-face, telephone, mobile phone and online delivery channels
- How their services could be extended in the future to cover social care, health and benefits and links to all services for older people
- How best to work with local advice services and FirstStop Advice to reach excluded older people and minorities, and develop proactive ways of reaching people at risk, and
- What benefits FirstStop Advice could bring to local service delivery in terms of expertise, information resources, technology, economies of scale, reach, branding and awareness.

What additional strands of information and advice are needed in their area:

- What more they could do to provide information about and facilitate access to loans and equity release, as well as grants, to enable older people to meet their housing needs and aspirations, and
- How their preferred service delivery model can be sustained over time.

### **Home Improvement Agencies, Age Concern organisations and other local agencies should consider:**

What contribution they could make to comprehensive and universal local 'housing options' services, linked to continuing delivery of their traditional housing and housing related care/support services. These services include repairs, improvements and handyperson services, hospital discharge schemes, falls prevention programmes, telecare provision, etc.

Providing advocacy services for the most vulnerable groups.

### **National information and advice providers should consider:**

How their specific expertise and resources could be made available to a wider audience through the proposed new national FirstStop Advice framework partnership.

All providers of services for older people in the private, voluntary or public sectors should:

### **Useful sources of information and good practice:**

#### **FirstStop Advice**

FirstStop Advice is an independent, free service providing information and advice about care and housing in later life

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

#### **Link-Age Plus projects**

Supported by the DWP to build an evidence base and economic case for joined-up services for older people and promote good practice.

[http://www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity\\_age/linkage/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity_age/linkage/)

#### **Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPPs)**

Supported by the DH to test and evaluate innovative approaches to providing person-centred and integrated care for older people and encouraging investment in preventative approaches which promote health, well being and independence for older people.

<http://www.changeagentteam.org.uk/index.cfm?pid=596>

#### **'Housing Options' advice pilots**

Promoted by Care & Repair England under the project name *Should I stay or should I go?* to develop, support and monitor the outcomes of local services in a range of host settings.

<http://www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/sisosig/index.html>

#### **Future HIA project**

Supported by CLG to examine the options for the future delivery of Home Improvement Agency services

<http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com/default.aspx?id=574>

#### **Finance for home repairs & improvements**

CLG publication *Loan Finance to improve housing conditions for vulnerable owner occupiers*

(<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/loanfinance>)

#### **Other Sheets in this series:**

Sheet 1: An overview of the National Strategy

Sheet 2: Lifetime Homes: housing design

Sheet 3: Lifetime Neighbourhoods

Sheet 4: Housing, Health and Care

Sheet 5: Specialist Housing: extra care and sheltered housing

Sheet 6: Disabled Facilities Grant

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