



Housing Learning and Improvement Network

South West Housing Learning and Improvement Network

Putting Older People First in the South West: A Market Assessment

Executive Summary

January 2010

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1 Introduction

In August 2009 The South West Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN), working in partnership with the Government Office of the South West, South West Councils, and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) to carry out a market survey of health, care and housing support to develop an understanding of current activity and identify examples of good practice that could be shared across the region.

2 Why Was the Market Assessment Needed?

In recent years, both local and national government has increasingly come to recognise the importance and implications of the growth in the population aged over 65.

Current national policy supports two twin themes. Firstly to increase the supply of accommodation available for older people through regulation (in terms of the development of new building to lifetime homes standards); while maximising the housing options across tenure and property types for older people to support independent living and access to appropriate services where needed, for example, through support for the development of extra care housing.¹

The second plank of policy through social care – and increasingly through health – is to develop the government’s personalisation agenda. Supported by an inter-departmental protocol, this aims to transform social care in particular, through giving older people greater choice and control over services and funding.²

The forthcoming White Paper on the future of care builds on the recent Green Paper “Shaping the Future of Care and Support Together”³. The latter set out a vision for a new care and support system. It highlighted the challenges faced by the current system and the need for radical reform, to develop a National Care Service that is fair, simple and affordable for everyone. Its proposals included:

- Prevention services - the right support to stay independent and well for as long as possible and to delay care needs getting worse.

¹ Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society, 2008, London, DCLG

² Putting People First – A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care, 2007, HMG and Transforming Social Care Local Authority Circular (DH) 2008(1)

³ Shaping the Future of Care Together, 2009, London, Department of Health

- Joined-up services - all the services will work together smoothly.
- Information and advice - the care system will be easy to understand and navigate.
- Personalised care and support - services will be based on personal circumstances and need.

Recent national initiatives and guidance, including the 'Total Place' pilot projects, and the 'Use of Resources' Guide⁴ for local authorities reiterate the importance placed on more effective integrated care and support for older people.

Related to this national agenda in the South-West specifically, the SW Housing Learning and Improvement Network's (LIN) report "Putting Older People First in the South West"⁵ identified a range of urgent issues facing the region over the next 15-20 years:

- A major growth in the numbers and proportion of older people within the region.
- A corresponding decrease in the proportion of middle-aged people, and potential providers of care, in the population.
- Gaps in service provision for older people and an ageing, in some instances inappropriate, sheltered housing stock.
- Rural isolation and increasing costs of providing services in rural areas.
- A lack of strategic planning (Don't Stop Me Now (Audit Commission, 2008) found that South West local authorities were the least prepared in England for the ageing population).

The purpose of the survey was to explore how commissioners and providers were responding to this challenging agenda, and how regional support might best be targeted to help them in the future.

3 How Was It Conducted?

There were eight surveys produced, each tailored to its particular audience, as follows:

- Commissioners: Adult Social Care, Strategic Housing, Supporting People , Health and Local Authority Planners.
- Providers: Housing, Housing related support and Care.

The surveys were distributed electronically by a number of agencies as relevant to particular audiences. There were a total of 64 completed surveys returned, of which 39 were from commissioners and 25 were from providers.

4 What did it find?

Details of the responses are available in the main report, but in summary the key findings were:

⁴ Use of Resources in Adult Social Care, 2009, Department of Health

⁵ Putting Older People First, 2008, DH Housing LIN

- There does appear to have been progress made in developing evidenced-based commissioning strategies for housing services for older people, but work is still underway on these in a number of authorities.
- There appears to be limited understanding of the private market and what it could contribute in delivering these strategies. In addition, there is a mixed picture about the level to which existing sheltered housing is being reviewed and taken into account in developing new services.
- There remains the need to raise the profile of older people housing issues amongst key stakeholders to ensure they are consistently represented in key strategic documents and taken into account in service development. A particular issue appears to be the profile housing has as a preventative tool which could impact on demand for health and social care services.
- The development of services for older people in the community is “patchy”, and there is limited evidence of commissioners and providers developing innovative integrated approaches to service delivery.
- There are concerns from both commissioners and providers about the impact the personalisation agenda will have on the market and the viability of their businesses.
- Finally, there is clearly a high level of concern about the impact the current economic climate and future spending cuts will have on services, particularly those perceived to be on the fringes of provision or seeking to mainstream, such as assistive technology.

5 What Regional Support is Needed?

The surveys asked respondents what support they would find useful from the SW Housing LIN and other regional bodies to help them deliver the agenda set out in “Putting Older People First in the South West”. An enthusiastic response included:

- Requests for access to further web-based information, good practice and toolkits.
- Both commissioners and providers placed value on meeting colleagues face to face and engaging in structured opportunities to learn from each other. There were a wide variety of suggestions in how this could be achieved including networking, events, action learning sets, peer support, and mentoring.
- Linked into the concerns expressed about future funding there was felt to be need for the older person’s housing agenda to be given a higher priority in the distribution of resources by councils.
- There was an identified need for improvements in communication in specific areas. Commissioners feel that they need help in managing the market and communicating national and local priorities to their providers. In turn providers often wanted to engage with the commissioners’ agenda more than they were invited or permitted to be, and wanted the value that they can add to be recognised and utilised.

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