

Shelter

Housing and support
for older people
A good practice guide



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Foreword

Older people make up a large and ever-increasing section of the population. As people age, their needs change, as do their wishes and aspirations. This has significant implications for the sort of living environment and housing that needs to be available for this group.

Ageing is a process that can also include worsening health, greater dependency and bereavement. In order to accommodate these changes and still enjoy a reasonable quality of life, older people need housing and support that is adaptable, and that takes account of both their physical and emotional needs.

Although many older people, particularly those who are poor or vulnerable, are still living in substandard conditions, some housing providers are developing imaginative and effective ways of providing appropriate housing and support. Many of these schemes have been developed with, and actively continue to consult, older people themselves.

This guide gives a brief overview of the issues around housing for older people, and suggests ways of ensuring that their specific needs are met. It is an example of how Shelter supports local authorities and organisations by providing policy ideas, examples of good practice, and campaigns to support local initiatives.

This guide aims to be clear, practical, and easy to use. We hope you find it a valuable resource.



Adam Sampson

Chief Executive, Shelter

Introduction

This guide is an overview of the provision of housing and support services for older people. It looks at older people's housing options, and the choices they have to adapt their homes in line with their circumstances, or move to more suitable accommodation. It also examines older people's homelessness, approaches to working with older service users, and advice provision. The ideas and solutions it offers are based on good practice from various organisations that recognise the different backgrounds and living environments of older people in England. It is aimed at organisations that provide services and care for older people – this includes housing departments, social services, NHS staff, housing associations, and independent advice agencies. If you are in the process of, or are particularly interested in, implementing a housing scheme for older people, the sections entitled Staying at home and Moving on pages 11 and 20 will be the most relevant.

Good practice in older people's housing is about allowing the service users themselves as much choice as possible in where and how they live. Most older people choose to stay in their current home, though they may need assistance to maintain independence. Others will need practical advice about their housing options, and access to accommodation that reflects their needs.

Older people are clearly not a homogenous group. They may share status as being elders, but this masks differences in income, class, and ethnic grouping, as well as in gender, sexuality, and support needs. Older people also live in both rural and urban settings, with correspondingly different problems and opportunities. Along with an increasing demand for housing

related services is increasing recognition that these services must be flexible and innovative enough to meet the diverse range of needs among older people. The planning of services, coordinated at local authority level, also requires extensive consultation with older people themselves.

Ensuring that older people live in suitable housing has wider social benefits than the contentment of the clients themselves. A major cause of hospital admissions among older people is housing related. Poorly heated and insulated homes exacerbate respiratory and heart problems, and trips and falls caused by unsuitable, poorly adapted housing often results in visits to casualty and longer stays in hospitals or care homes. If the need for warm, safe, and secure homes is met, then not only will the quality of life be dramatically improved for many older people, but it will also free up resources for others.

Planning services and joint working

'We were overwhelmed by the help we received from nurses, social services and the voluntary sector – the kettle was never off'

Shelter interviewee, relative of an older person who was seriously ill

Link Age Plus: The Sure Start model for older people

'A Sure Start to later life'¹ sets out the Government's proposed methods for addressing social exclusion among older people. It advocates adopting the Sure Start model that has been used to tackle exclusion among young parents. Adapted for older people, this approach emphasises:

- choice and service user involvement
- the provision of local centres that offer integrated services
- an improvement in the quality of life for older people through increased or improved health and social care
- the need to address isolation, and for older people to participate more in activities that involve wider society
- the clear expectation that service providers across the public and voluntary sectors will work together to achieve the above aims.

The Government is encouraging the Sure Start approach to providing services through its Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPPS). These projects will act as pilots for the Sure Start model using Department of Health funding and will go under the banner of Link Age Plus.

Many of the good practice examples included in this guide have anticipated Link Age Plus, and therefore fall into line with the Government's proposals for good practice in older people's housing. In the future, it seems likely that service providers will be expected to extend their range of services and enter into closer working partnerships with complimentary agencies, sharing data and carrying out joint assessments.

Strategies

Each local authority will have a housing strategy that details how they address issues in their area. This will include sub-strategies on providing for older people and homeless people. It is good practice for anyone who works with older people, whether in a local authority, housing association or an independent advice agency, to have copies of these documents. When compiling new strategies, local authorities are advised to consult with external agencies. External agencies can contribute towards the consultation process by commenting on draft strategies.

The Mayfair Centre, Church Stretton, Shropshire

The Mayfair Centre is an example of how the Sure Start model operates. Managed mainly by volunteers, it is a one-stop shop that offers education and active ageing classes, a telephone befriending service, Citizens Advice sessions, and an on-site café. In addition, the Maysi project is based at the centre. This is a joint initiative from social services, the NHS and other agencies that aims to shorten hospital stays and free-up beds by supporting older people to live independently. The Mayfair Centre also includes a 60-place day centre.

1. Social Exclusion Unit, *A Sure Start to later life: ending inequalities for older people*, ODPM, 2006.

Manchester Older People's Network

Manchester Older People's Network enables older people in the city to have a say in the decision-making processes that influence their lives. For the local authority and other agencies, it is a valuable way of consulting with an important social group, enabling them to plan services more effectively and ensuring that they take the needs of older people into consideration. The Network prioritises the issues that are concerned with poverty and social isolation.

Membership is open to all groups that work with older people, as well as individual older people themselves. Steering group meetings are held every six weeks to discuss and coordinate the Network's activities. They in turn work with the local authority planning system, social services, and the local NHS.

The work of the Network is supported by Manchester Alliance for Community Care (MACC) and the Community Empowerment Fund.

Consultation processes are often posted on local authority websites. Alternatively, you can contact your local authority directly to find out which department is responsible for its older person's strategy.

'Preparing older people's strategies'², details the process of producing local housing strategies for older people. It states that any effective strategy needs to:

- refer to other Government strategies and plans (eg NHS National Service Frameworks) that impact on older people
- map or detail current demand for, and provision of, services
- involve effective consultation with older people themselves, via methods such as questionnaires and focus groups.

Identifying service provision will involve accessing different sources of information and talking to other relevant agencies. Consultations will need to be clearly representative of the whole community, and agencies will need to ensure that they have established wide-ranging links to facilitate this.

Some cities have produced a cross-disciplinary older person's strategy to address social exclusion and improve quality of life. These strategies are wide-ranging and typically cover housing, crime and the fear of crime, transport, health, social care, education, and cultural life. These enable agencies to identify common areas of concern and common goals that should foster joint working. Examples can be found on Manchester City Council and the Mayor of London's websites.³

In some areas, older people's consultation forums or networks exist, and these can be a valuable source of ideas and opinion for those involved in service provision.

Joint working

Coordination and integration of the different agencies and services that work with older people can bring substantial benefits to all concerned. Joint protocols and assessments, delivered by a suitably trained workforce, can help to bring about quicker and more satisfying solutions for older people and maximise resources and efficiency. If housing officers are

2. ODPM, Department of Health and Housing Corporation, *Preparing older people's strategies*, 2003.

3. www.manchester.gov.uk/health/older/strategy/ and www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/older_people/docs/olderpeoplestrat.pdf

able to work closely with occupational therapists, social workers, and primary health care staff then they can make a range of housing options more easily available to older people. This might range from making adaptations in the home to a move to more suitable accommodation. As well as promoting service user choice, joint working should also reduce hospital admissions and enable quicker hospital discharge to suitable accommodation.

Sedgefield Adult Community Partnership

The aim of the partnership is to integrate the work of the district local authority, social services, and health service to improve service delivery and focus on the prevention of illness, provision of care and health promotion. Services are delivered by five integrated teams that are based within local population areas. Staff include: a jointly appointed Community Partnership Manager, district nurses, social workers, and housing and business support officers. There are also links with occupational therapists.

A more integrated approach, including joint assessments, offers a wide variety of benefits to service users and the agencies involved, including:

- enabling Disabled Facilities Grants to be spent more efficiently
- making the most of adapted accommodation
- preventing homelessness
- addressing issues of home maintenance and security
- making overlapping issues much easier to address, and therefore creating the capacity to offer integrated solutions
- ensuring that efforts to adapt properties to minimise falls and address energy efficiency are more effective
- helping to identify and install telecare and telemedicine equipment and ensuring that people are discharged from hospital into suitable accommodation (for more information on telecare and telemedicine see page 18).

Importantly, local people were consulted and involved in the delivery model and change process. The integrated approach was attractive to service users as it offered a single point of contact, a single assessment process, and a locally based service. The Sedgefield service is also embedded in the plans and strategies of the agencies involved.

Advice and assistance

Providing service users with relevant information, advice, and assistance is essential if they are to make informed choices regarding their housing.

The majority of older people choose to stay in their own homes rather than move into sheltered or retirement housing. However, a survey of those who had moved to appropriate sheltered accommodation showed a major improvement in their quality of life: 40 per cent reported an improvement in health and nearly 80 per cent felt less anxious and worried.⁴

Evidence suggests that there are a number of older people who are unable to make informed decisions about housing and who remain in their home when they would be better served by a move to more suitable accommodation. Similarly, without access to reliable advice and assistance about sources of funding for adaptations and maintenance for their existing home, some older people may miss out on an improvement to their quality of life.

Anyone seeking to set up appropriate provision for older people needs access

to a range of information, including a directory of useful websites.

Making advice accessible

Local authorities, home improvement agencies, health services, and other agencies should be producing leaflets and other literature in an accessible form – this should include audio-tapes and large print materials for people with sensory impairment. Leaflets should also be provided in all relevant languages and an interpreter service should be made available. When signposting or referring older people to advice services, it is important to take their specific needs into consideration, for example:

- arranging a home visit if mobility is an issue
- recommending a phone service that uses minicom if the service users is hearing impaired
- arranging for the services of a translator.

Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) pack

The pack was produced by a consortium of agencies known as HOPDEV (The Housing and Older People Development Group), which includes Help the Aged, HACT and the Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC). This pack contains information on housing options and has a directory of housing advice and information for older people. In addition, it includes a straightforward questionnaire that is intended to help participants critically assess their home environment and circumstances. By answering a series of questions (mostly tick boxes), they are encouraged to assess the suitability of their current accommodation and then discuss the issues raised with an adviser. There are a variety of outcomes, from deciding to move to identifying simple changes around the home to improve quality of life. Action on these issues can then be taken with the help of an appropriate agency (perhaps through a referral). Copies of this pack are available from Help the Aged (see useful contacts, page 32) and a web-based version is available from the EAC website (www.housingcare.org).

4. Social Exclusion Unit, *A Sure Start to later life: ending inequalities for older people*, ODPM, 2006.

With the increased emphasis on joined-up service provision, it is likely that non-housing professionals involved with older people, such as health workers, will be increasingly expected to signpost and refer older people to housing services and even do initial assessments

of housing need themselves. Some housing service providers are able to train staff from other disciplines (see Bristol Care and Repair, page 15).

Developing services for black and minority ethnic communities: a good practice guide

This guide was produced by Foundations, the national coordinating body for home improvement agencies, with the aim of developing more inclusive services. It is relevant to any agency providing advice. Among its recommendations are:

- surveying the local community to establish the need or services among minority groups
- employing workers who speak the relevant languages
- making use of a translation service such as Language Line, specially when confidentiality is an issue
- training staff to be culturally aware to ensure sensitivities and sensibilities are recognised
- partnership working with the local authority, housing associations, Commission for Racial Equality and others to make use of their expertise, knowledge and resources
- publicising services at local community events
- encouraging representatives of the local community to be part of any management committee or steering group.

The guide is available as a free download from www-foundations.uk.com

Housing Options

Housing Options offer an advice service for older people living in unsuitable accommodation. The service is overseen by Care and Repair (see page 14). It is recognised that a barrier to older people leaving unsuitable accommodation (particularly that which is in a poor state of repair) is a lack of appropriate advice and even a fear of moving. Housing Options offer in-depth and impartial advice to older people, fully investigating their housing needs and options. Advisers are able to provide a package of assistance and, when appropriate, can find alternative accommodation, and help a person sell their home and make the move (see also Bristol Care and Repair on page 15).

Staying at home

'I've lived in this house all my married life, why would I want to move now?'

Shelter interviewee

Older people predominantly choose to stay in their own home. For many, this decision will be straightforward, but for some, as their support needs change, it may mean:

- adapting the property (eg facilitating wheelchair access)
- providing services in the home (eg meals on wheels).
- help with maintaining the property
- improving energy efficiency to lower heating costs
- involving the local authority to assess need and provide or commission services accordingly.

Grants and assistance

Appendix 1 (on page 27) outlines the duties of local authorities to help with the provision of adaptations and services such as meals on wheels. As part of a care assessment, social services should send an occupational therapist to a person's home to assess their need for adaptations. The assessment may recommend a referral to a home improvement agency or similar (for more information on Home improvement agencies see page 14).

There is a wide range of grants and assistance available to older people seeking home adaptations and other such support. A service user will need timely and accurate advice and assistance to help them access the range of help available. Service providers, including health and social care, need to be able to make preliminary assessments of an individual's needs and then make an effective referral.

Agencies should provide their staff with some basic training in this field (see Bristol Care and Repair and Newark and Sherwood Affordable Warmth Strategies on pages 15 and 17, respectively).

'A Sure Start to later life'⁵ advocates a 'one-stop shop' method of service delivery that should help to overcome any confusion created by the range of different services and grants on offer. Many home improvement agencies and similar organisations already offer this kind of help, and it seems likely their roles will develop further.

Housing support

'We felt as though no-one cared anymore, we didn't know what to do. Your service helped a great deal with officialdom.'

Service user, Shelter's older persons housing support service (SOPHSS)

Housing support may be of benefit to older people who have:

- been homeless
- spent time in temporary accommodation
- been in hospital
- had rent or mortgage arrears
- encountered antisocial behaviour (whether as victim or alleged perpetrator)
- experienced other difficulties such as bereavement or deterioration in health.

Housing support takes a variety of forms and works best when it can be flexible, adapting to the specific and changing needs of the service user.

5. Social Exclusion Unit, *A Sure Start to later life: ending inequalities for older people*, ODPM, 2006.

Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing is support provided in a specific location that usually involves a resident scheme manager or warden. Usually, the service user moves to the scheme, and it is anticipated that support of one form or another will be ongoing. Extra care (or very sheltered) housing is a more intensive form of support. Provided

in self-contained units, it offers a level of care between sheltered accommodation and a nursing home. For more on sheltered and extra care housing, see page 21.

Floating support

Floating support is provided in the recipient's home. Again, it can be ongoing, but is often intended to be for a limited

Shelter's Older Persons Housing Support Service (SOPHSS), Sheffield

The SOPHSS is a floating housing support service for people aged 60 and over living in south-west Sheffield. It helps both tenants and owner-occupiers. Approximately 40 per cent of service users self-refer, but the SOPHSS takes referrals from any source, including social services, housing providers, and health services.

At SOPHSS, the service revolves entirely around service users' needs. To promote continuity and a better working relationship, initial assessments and ongoing support are carried out by the same employee, who will also go on to close the case.

The emphasis of SOPHSS's work is to promote independence. Service users are encouraged to take control over their finances and engage with other agencies such as adult services at the social services department. Its success is largely attributable to the relationship of trust and empowerment between service users and employees. A set of priorities is agreed by both these parties, in a process led by the user.

Some service users may be having difficulties managing their finances, or dealing with bereavement or relationship breakdown, or they may be trying to cope with deteriorating health (eg reduced mobility). Dealing effectively with these circumstances requires not only a trusting relationship, but also understanding and patience on behalf of the employee. Individuals who can no longer perform certain tasks, or who find they are carrying out tasks for the first time, need assistance to negotiate complex bureaucracies and develop new and sustainable ways of dealing with problems.

The problems faced by some individuals may mean that agencies, such as social services, have found them difficult to engage with and vice versa. Often, this is a result of misconceptions by either party, so it can mean that some people are more trusting of voluntary sector agencies such as SOPHSS.

SOPHSS employs a DIY Skills Adviser who assists service users to carry out small maintenance jobs, fits adaptations and helps with decorating to make their home more comfortable and safe. The service also works with the local home improvement agency if more involved work is required.

SOPHSS is funded through Supporting People and provides support to up to 125 people at any one time.

period with an emphasis on developing the service user's independence through practical tasks. It does not include personal care (eg health care). To be effective, the service needs to be delivered as quickly as possible after a referral to prevent deterioration in the service user's circumstances.

Support workers

Support workers typically provide help and advice in addressing financial problems, claiming benefits, accessing other relevant services (eg health care), and developing social networks. They can also be advocates and give a degree of emotional support. There is an emphasis on developing a relationship with the service

Leeds Irish Health and Homes (LIHH)

LIHH offers practical and emotional support to the local Irish community who have had, or are experiencing, housing and health problems. LIHH are not age specific, but finds it is often the older members of the community who require the most support.

Leeds has a substantial Irish community that is disproportionately represented among users of soup runs, day centres, and other services for homeless and badly-housed people. Also, the high number of manual workers migrating to the UK in the 1950-80s has meant that many members of the Irish community are older and unable to work due to disabilities and health problems caused or exacerbated by manual work.

LIHH sub-lets accommodation provided by registered social landlords (RSLs), and offers their tenants a floating support service. They also have six places for over 55s in a shared home where intensive housing support is provided. Employees liaise with other agencies such as health authorities, social services, benefits agencies, and utilities.

It also provides an outreach service that includes floating housing support services to non-LIHH tenants. It addresses social isolation among older Irish people by encouraging them to develop cultural contacts within the community and accompanying them to group meetings to encourage social interaction. LIHH runs an over 55s club and a women's group. It also encourages user participation through a tenants' group.

Between April 2003 and late 2005, LIHH provided tenancies to over 110 people. About a third of these had been street homeless. Many people self-refer, but LIHH also takes referrals from friends and family, and other agencies such as social services.

Long-term homeless older people, particularly those from black or ethnic minority groups, are often difficult to engage with. LIHH's success is a direct result of its caring ethos and ability to work within a culturally specific setting. Its use of staff with an intuitive understanding of the cultural heritage of its service users mean it is uniquely placed to do remedial and preventative work by gaining trust, establishing a rapport, and making sure needs are met.

LIHH employs 18 staff and is funded mainly through Supporting People, but also receives money from local health services and social services, and a grant from the Irish Government.

user that enables them to make informed choices about how they live. In addition, the employee needs to develop good working relationships with other agencies that are involved in providing support for their client.

For example, workers may assist someone to set up direct debits to help them manage their finances. However, for this to be appropriate and sustainable, it requires the user to have confidence in the process. They must trust that the correct amount of money will leave an account on the appropriate day, and know how to monitor and manage their bank account accordingly. Carrying out tasks with service users may require a slow and patient approach from the support worker. This will help the client feel they have full control of their bank accounts.

Ideally, support will be gradually withdrawn as skills are developed. However, for some older people, it may become clear that their health is deteriorating or that they are unable to develop the necessary skills. In this instance it may be appropriate to refer them to another, more suitable service that can provide indefinite support.

Adaptations and maintenance

'I've had a downstairs shower put in, and a stairlift. I've got a ramp at the front and a handrail...It's pretty good... it helps keep me doing what I want.'

Shelter interviewee, older disabled person and council tenant

Home adaptations, such as handrails, wheelchair access and stairlifts, promote independence and help to support people who have opted to stay in their own homes. They also reduce the likelihood of falls and other accidents, and therefore prevent hospital and care home admissions.

Many older people also live in properties that are in a poor state of repair, which affects their health and quality of life.

Home Improvement Agencies, Care and Repair and Staying Put schemes

These are locally based, not-for-profit organisations that facilitate or carry out building work for older people and other vulnerable groups. The service these local organisations can offer will depend upon their size and resources; many of these agencies carry out smaller tasks themselves, but they can also arrange and oversee work done by independent builders. The builders used are vetted and are used to working with older people, thus promoting peace of mind. Home improvement agencies (HIA) also help with claiming grant assistance, and often work with the Home Improvement Trust to release equity to pay for larger jobs. Before carrying out or supervising work HIAs may carry out free property surveys.

Many HIAs and other similar agencies are developing wider roles such as advice provision. They are also initiating closer working partnerships with other associated agencies such as health services, social services, and housing departments. With the development of Link Age Plus and a drive towards more joined-up services, it seems likely that these services and partnerships will continue to develop.

When it is not possible to get help from a HIA, Care and Repair or Staying Put scheme, it may be possible to contact a reputable builder through the TrustMark scheme. This is a Government-backed scheme that registers builders and guarantees a level of service to reassure clients. Contact details are

listed on page 32.

Equity release for home owners

Many older people living in their own homes are asset-rich but cash-poor, that is, they have a small amount of savings, but have a lot of equity in their property. In recent years, the Government has tried to encourage people to use this equity to fund home improvements and adaptations work, and has reduced the amount of grant money available.

There are a variety of equity release

schemes that can offer a lump sum or income in return for re-mortgaging all or part of the home; alternatively, an interest-only loan can be taken out. In each case, part or all of the value of the home will be forfeited when the person moves or dies and the property is sold. Understandably, there is some reluctance from many older people to mortgage part or all of their property, but for some it may be the only, or most suitable, way of ensuring that necessary adaptations and maintenance work is carried out. In addition, some lenders will guarantee that the home will not

Bristol Care and Repair

Bristol Care and Repair operates a wide range of services to help people live safely and independently in their homes. It works in partnership with a variety of other agencies, including the local authority, primary care trusts, local building contractors, and other voluntary sector organisations, and as a consequence is able to draw upon a range of skills and resources.

Bristol Care and Repair offers caseworker advice and support on home maintenance and installing adaptations. It helps service users apply for grants, and can facilitate low-interest loans through its partnership with the Wessex Reinvestment Trust.

A handyperson service can carry out small essential repairs, make adaptations and fit security devices such as locks and keysafes. When major repairs or adaptations are needed, a technical officer will provide a survey and work with approved builders and contractors to ensure work is completed to acceptable standards. This is carried out in conjunction with an advice caseworker who can also arrange finance for the work.

Caseworkers prioritise referrals for those who are ready to be discharged from hospital. Providing adaptations and repairs to this group will help to free-up much needed beds and reduce the likelihood of future hospital admissions.

Bristol Care and Repair's partnership with local health services has enabled it to train over 1,000 front-line health staff through its 'Health Homes Assessment Training'. This encourages health staff to assess service users' needs around home maintenance and adaptations and then refer them to appropriate agencies. The training highlights the effects of poor housing on health and what can be done to improve living conditions. It pays particular attention to independent living, installing adaptations, and preventing falls and accidents. The training is now available nationally through Care and Repair's website (see page 32).

Bristol Care and Repair is one of the pilot Housing Options projects (see page 10).

be repossessed while the borrower is still living in the property.

It is vital that older people get independent advice before remortgaging their home or taking out a secured loan. A number of voluntary organisations offer advice on equity release as well as other housing options; these include Care and Repair, Age Concern and the Home Improvement Trust (contact details on page 32). These agencies will often work together to provide a complete service – freeing up cash and arranging for necessary work to be carried out.

Energy efficiency

'I worry about the heating charges going through the roof'

Shelter interviewee, private tenant, aged 70

There are a number of ways to address the issue of fuel poverty and high heating costs for older people. These include:

- increasing income through benefit payments
- reducing bills by changing suppliers and taking advantage of discount schemes
- providing advice on energy conservation
- improving energy efficiency through better insulation and more efficient appliances.

Advisers, social workers, and housing officers need to be aware of the various local and national sources of advice and material and financial help. There are considerable savings in time and money for health and care services in preventing cold-related illness among older people.⁶

Tackling fuel poverty and ensuring costs for older people are manageable starts with being able to identify households who require assistance. Local authorities can compile a database on housing in their area that compares data on housing tenure (showing if houses are privately owned or rented), the age of a property (older houses tend to be more expensive to heat), age of occupants, and benefit take-up. Looking across the different data should identify the most vulnerable households.

Awareness of the help available can be raised through leafleting, press articles, and work with relevant agencies. In addition, staff working for the variety of different agencies that are likely to come into contact with older people (eg health services and social services) need to be trained in identifying vulnerable households and knowing how to make effective referrals to HIAs and other relevant agencies.

These are investigated further in Appendix 2.

Home security

'... the area's gone downhill since I moved in 20 years ago. It's a lot noisier, music going on all times of the night and day, too much shouting and arguing.'

Shelter interviewee, older disabled person and council tenant

Though older people are no more likely to be a victim of crime than other social groups, the fear of crime and the impact of crime on them may be greater.⁷ This can lead to a feeling of insecurity, which can make residents reluctant to leave the house, therefore increasing social isolation. This situation can also make residents consider moving house. Fitting security measures such as window locks, door chains, door spy holes and alarms

6. *Tackling fuel poverty: a Beacon Council toolkit for local authorities*, produced jointly by Beacon Council, EAGA, Improvement and Development Agency and NEA. Available from: www.nea.org.uk/downloads/publications/beacon_toolkit.pdf

7. Social Exclusion Unit, *A Sure Start to later life: ending inequalities for older people*, ODPM, 2006.

Newark and Sherwood District Council Affordable Warmth Strategy

Newark and Sherwood District Council has a predominantly rural population of 100,000. The authority has a long history of tackling fuel poverty and has developed an affordable warmth strategy that has led to it becoming a beacon authority.

Key elements in the authority's strategy to improve energy efficiency, lower costs, and reduce fuel poverty include:

- a database on the energy efficiency of homes in the borough
- targeted publicity to reach rural inhabitants, including use of an 'energy bus' mobile display, leafleting, and displays in village halls
- training in energy efficiency and affordable warmth issues for housing staff, elected officials, and tenant activists
- training for front-line staff from social services, the NHS, the voluntary sector and other local authority staff to implement a household referral network to ensure that vulnerable people are identified and effectively referred to the authority.

To maximise efficiency, Newark and Sherwood District Council has involved a number of partner agencies including housing, social services, and health authorities to help provide funding. This has helped to ensure that the strategy is well grounded with clear social, environmental and economic aims, and also maximises the number of referrals from vulnerable households.

Its strategy also includes the installation of alarm systems in vulnerable older people's homes. These alert a call centre for help when the temperature in the person's home falls below 12 degrees celcius (when the occupant is at greater risk of health problems associated with the cold).

The council is also part of the local 'Improving health, home and income' scheme. This is run in conjunction with the CAB, local NHS, housing providers and fire and police services. This initiative addresses the key issues that face over 60s in their homes in a more holistic fashion: one referral can arrange advice and information on energy efficiency, benefits, security, and fire safety. Through further referrals, older people may be able to secure a range of help, from free, fitted energy efficient light bulbs to gardening services.

can not only prevent crime but can also improve people's confidence and allow them to continue living in their own home.

The agencies below provide assistance with home security. Contact details are provided on page 32.

Help the Aged

Help the Aged runs 35 local 'HandyVans'

that fit security and safety devices such as window locks, door chains, and smoke detectors. These are free of charge if the older person has disposable assets of under £25,000.

Help the Aged also runs a Bogus Caller scheme. This enables older people to add a button to their Senior Line telecare system (see page 18 for more

information about telecare) that will alert the control centre and give assistance when unexpected callers arrive.

Age Concern

Many local Age Concern branches offer home safety checks. A trained adviser examines home safety and security, then recommends and helps to install suitable modifications.

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs)

Local home improvement agencies can help with advice and fitting of security measures. Many HIAs will do a security survey of the property before making recommendations on the work required. They may be able to do this work at reduced cost.

Crime prevention officers

Each police force has a crime prevention officer that will visit an older person's home and offer advice and assistance on home and personal security. Victim Support will also offer help and advice.

Telecare

Through promoting independence and helping to avoid hospital admissions, telecare can enable older people to remain in their homes. Telecare uses the resident's phone line to create a home alarm system that provides residents with access to a call centre that can either offer advice, contact a relative or friend, or alert medical services to an emergency. Telecare also provides a wireless pendant alarm that can be triggered when the person is unable to reach the phone. Users pay a subscription charge (typically about £2 per week) that may be met through benefits for those on a low income.

With the development of information and communication technology, the telecare service is being widened to include home-sensors that can monitor many different aspects of a person's life, eg when someone has a fall, or if there is a fire.

Telemedicine monitors a person's vital signs remotely, alerting staff to certain illnesses and changes in conditions. It may be used in providing emergency help and in diagnosis.

The Department of Health is funding telecare through its Preventative Technology Grant. It has identified telecare as an important tool for reducing the number of hospital admissions and length of hospital stays among older people. For more information about telecare, contact the Telecare Services Association – contact details listed on page 32.

Some local authorities are also piloting service delivery through interactive digital television. 'DigiTV' can enable people to access information provided by their council through a digital TV channel and then communicate and feed back to the council (eg submit applications for services).

Befriending and Time Banks

Many older people say that feelings of isolation significantly impact on their quality of life. This can be addressed through a befriending service – a volunteer will visit or contact the person they are partnered with on a regular basis and may go on to encourage them to take part in social activities.

Time Banks operate across the whole of the UK and provide opportunities for people to trade their time and skills for the time and skills of others. In this way, older people are able to be active in the community, providing much needed time and expertise, and in return get services that can further promote their independence. For example, if someone teaches English to one person and banks the time, they can draw on this 'capital' to have their lawn mowed by someone else.

Time of Your Life, Brent

Brent is a multi-cultural inner London borough. A high proportion of its population is from a wide variety of black and minority ethnic groups. This befriending service seeks to combat isolation among older people, but also provides opportunities for people from different ethnic groups to meet, helping to bring communities together.

The service matches people of a similar age and with similar interests from different ethnic backgrounds. Volunteers will call and/or visit their friend, providing social opportunities and promoting greater understanding between cultures.

Time of Your Life was able to use local media – newspapers, TV and radio (including community stations) – to publicise its launch. Follow up work is being done via various local community and faith groups.

The scheme is being funded by the Department of Health, the Dunhill Medical Trust, and Brent council as part of its piloting of the Partnerships for Older People Projects (see page 6). Time of Your Life delivers the scheme in association with the local Age Concern branch and the Mission Dine Club for older and disabled people.

Moving

'... a bungalow would be ideal... shops close by would be good'

Shelter interviewee, older person and council tenant

Many older people are able to stay in their homes, but for some, moving to more suitable accommodation that is better suited to their needs would improve their quality of life.

Advice

A common barrier to moving is a lack of good quality, accessible advice from a source that older people find trustworthy. Good advice will look thoroughly at all housing options to allow service users to make an informed choice. It may also help older people to arrange adaptations and maintenance by securing grants and freeing up equity in the property. Housing advice is covered in more depth in Chapter 2.

Housing registers and allocations

Locating a suitable property in the right area can be a problem for older people. Despite there being a general shortage of accessible and adapted properties, a significant proportion of this accommodation is occupied by people who are not older or disabled.

Social landlords usually let properties through a choice-based lettings system – people on the housing register are allocated points depending on their

personal circumstances and then bid for properties as they become available. If adapted properties are in the general housing pool, someone with a lot of points can be let an adapted property, despite not requiring the adaptations.

To avoid this situation, it is good practice for social housing providers to pool their adapted properties to create a separate register for people who need adapted and/or accessible housing. They can then make adapted/accessible properties available for people that have already registered before they are made more widely available. As these registers can operate across different local authority areas, there can be a larger pool of tenants and properties. Landlords can then allocate housing more efficiently to the best-suited tenant based upon their specific needs and the features of the property.

A register can also:

- help local authorities to identify the level of need for specific types of properties within their borough
- inform local authority planning procedures
- contribute towards the production of housing strategies
- support the local authority when meeting its obligations under disability equality legislation

Accessahome

This is an on-line service run by Ability Housing, a housing association that specialises in providing accommodation for disabled people. It operates across a number of local authorities in Hampshire, Berkshire, and West Sussex, matching people to properties rented by social landlords (councils and housing associations). There are similar plans to develop a London-wide register, joining up registers that already exist in some boroughs.

- ensure expensive adaptations are re-used
- make sure that Disabled Facilities Grants reach a wider number of people.

For those wishing to buy an adapted or suitable property, there are a number of on-line estate agents that will match buyers to vendors (eg www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk). These have the advantage of being able to search UK-wide for suitable properties.

It is also good practice for local authorities to have a register of sheltered accommodation on their websites that is searchable by area and accommodation type. This is particularly useful as it is

now possible for someone to go on to the housing register in any local authority area, not just the area they currently live in.

As many of these registers are internet based, access may be a problem. It may be necessary to assist some older people who are not experienced internet users.

Sheltered accommodation

Sheltered housing has a long tradition in the UK, but as the characteristics of older people have changed, so have expectations of housing conditions in later life. Some of the older sheltered housing stock is perceived as being poorly designed, out of date, and overly institutional – for example, many older

Glasgow Centre for Independent Living (GCIL) Accessible Housing Solutions

This is a housing information, advice, and advocacy service based within the Centre for Independent Living in Glasgow (CILiG). The CILiG itself is a democratically accountable and user-led organisation that draws the majority of its staff and directors from disabled people in the local community.

GCIL Accessible Housing Solutions has a database of potential tenants and adapted housing. Housing providers can search for suitable properties on behalf of applicants, or applicants can search for properties themselves.

Users can specify not only the size and location of the property they need, but also the level of adaptation and/or accessibility. They can then make changes to their register entry as required, and track any application they may make for properties. Family, friends or agencies can register prospective tenants, enabling those who are not regular internet users to access the system. Users can also choose to be kept informed of developments by email, post, or SMS text message.

Landlords benefit as they can instantly download a nomination for a vacant property – helping to reduce the number of voids, and limit the amount of time a property is empty, reducing the likelihood of vandalism. For housing providers and planners, the register is also a much-needed source of information on adapted properties.

As the project develops, it is envisaged that housing providers from outside of Glasgow will become increasingly involved, and the area covered will expand.

The register's funders include Glasgow City Council, the Scottish Executive, and Scottish Homes.

people are reluctant to live in bedsits or share bathroom facilities. Some schemes have become geographically isolated and have poor public transport links. In addition, the move towards owner occupation has meant that many people are more reluctant to move house or change tenure as they age (eg changing from owning to renting their home). Consequently, even in areas of high demand for social housing, some

sheltered accommodation is hard to let and there may be empty properties.

Extra-care sheltered housing

Some local authorities and housing associations are renovating or redeveloping their sheltered housing so it is more in keeping with the expectations and needs of service users. Often, this means that sheltered accommodation is redeveloped

Sonali Gardens extra-care housing scheme, Tower Hamlets, London

Tower Hamlets is an inner London borough with a high proportion of black and minority ethnic inhabitants (about 60 per cent compared to the UK average of 9 per cent), many of whom are of Bangladeshi heritage.

Sonali Gardens is a purpose-built extra-care scheme with 30 one bedroom and 10 two bedroom homes, plus a day centre for use by residents and non-residents alike. It is operated by EPIC Trust, a division of Circle Anglia housing group. The scheme has all of the features of modern extra-care housing, with pre-adapted accommodation featuring walk-in showers, hoists and telemonitoring-enabled rooms, as well as care staff and an on-site manager.

Sonali Gardens differs from other extra-care homes by catering specifically, though not exclusively, for the local Bangladeshi community, who are underrepresented among current service users. Space in the building is arranged around the need for separate areas for men and women at certain times, and there is a prayer room. An extensive menu, culturally appropriate for the residents, is provided, and Bengali satellite TV channels and other media are available. Decoration and furnishings also reflect the heritage of its target group. Most of the staff speak languages used by the community, as well as English, and receive training to ensure that they are better able to meet the needs of residents.

EPIC Trust recognised a level of resistance to the idea of extra-care housing within the Bangladeshi community, where care for older people is usually provided within a family setting. At Sonali Gardens, care is flexible and takes into consideration the wishes of tenants and their families for care to be shared between the scheme and family members. As many of the tenants' families work in local restaurants, which close late, the scheme makes it possible for them to visit and provide additional care at times that suit them. Day-to-day care is adapted to suit the religious or cultural needs of the users, eg adjusting the time of visits during Ramadan.

Sonali Gardens is a part of the local community, and alternative use of the day centre at evenings and weekends is encouraged. This helps promote and market the service to a larger audience.

as extra-care (or very sheltered) housing.

Extra-care housing is increasingly popular, and is seen by the Government as a way of improving the quality of life for older people who have higher support needs. Accommodation is in self-contained units that enable residents to have their own front door. This model provides a level of care between that provided in sheltered accommodation and a nursing home. Nursing homes are unpopular with older people, but extra-care housing enables them to receive quite intensive support, including medical care, but retain a level of independence. There is also flexibility – as care needs change, so the level of support provided can be adjusted.

Despite these advantages, extra-care housing for sale and mixed tenure has attracted a disproportionate number of complaints to the housing Ombudsman. This seems to be as a result of the complexity of providing housing, accommodation services and personal care in one place, but from different service providers.⁸

Retirement homes

Retirement homes are privately rented or privately owned properties that have much in common with sheltered and extra-care housing. Shared ownership is a particularly popular option with this kind of accommodation. Many people who have previously owned their own homes do not want to change to renting, but the capital raised from the sale of their original home will not cover extra-care costs and the price of buying a retirement home outright.

Scheme managers/wardens

Many sheltered housing providers have moved towards a more professional role

for the scheme manager/warden. This has meant more regularised working hours, with out-of-hours support from call centres and mobile wardens (making use of telecare technology – see page 18). Staff also receive more training and have a more formalised working relationship with colleagues and service users. This change of role has been shown to have benefits for service providers in terms of recruitment and retention of staff.

A professional management service may also meet Supporting People aims more effectively. It may also be able to address the increased expectation that housing providers will work closely with other agencies to provide a more joined-up service for older people.

Mobile warden services have also been developed in some local authorities. These enable a floating support service to be provided to people who live independently in local authority housing (see Housing support on page 11).

Retirement villages

Retirement villages are communities of older people, and typically comprise of 100 or more purpose-built residential units; this makes communal facilities such as shops, restaurants, pubs, classrooms, and gyms economically viable. The villages are usually privately built and accommodation is owner occupied or part-owned, though some mixed tenure developments are being built by social landlords. These developments appeal to older people who are seeking a safe and secure home for life: the self-contained accommodation is pre-adapted to take into consideration changing need, and there are care staff and usually a care home on site.

8. *Mixedtenure in extra care housing*, LIN Technical Brief No. 3, 2005. Available at: www.changeagentteam.org.uk/_library/docs/Housing/TechnicalBriefs/Technical_brief_03.pdf

However, in contrast to extra-care housing, it is often a condition of retirement villages that new residents have relatively low support needs when they first move to the village.

Retirement villages provide more housing choice and combat the isolation some older people experience; in addition, quality of life is improved by creating opportunities to take part in extra activities such as education and exercise classes. They also enable services for older people to be provided more efficiently at a single location, and on-site facilities can reduce hospital admissions and the use of external medical services.

Crucially, retirement villages are perceived primarily as a place to live rather than a care setting. In addition, residents often feel they offer security: older people can plan for the future in the expectation that they can continue to live in the village even if their care needs change. Care homes and intermediate on-site care facilities reduce stress and anxiety for residents who have greater care needs, or who have been discharged from hospital, as they are able to remain within their community during this time.

Lifetime homes standard

There is now a greater emphasis on new housing developments meeting lifetime homes standards. Essentially, this means properties should be pre-adapted to the changing needs of occupants as they age, for example, the inclusion of a downstairs toilet, doorways wide enough to allow wheelchair access, and enough space to easily fit a stairlift. This will reduce the need for specialist or sheltered accommodation in the future,

allowing people to remain in their homes and help maintain mixed communities.

Homeless older people

Many older homeless people have a history of insecure housing and rough sleeping; a large number of these will also have issues around substance abuse and/or mental health. This group are often difficult to engage with and they may be reluctant to use mainstream services except at times of crisis. Lack of engagement with services can result in an escalation of health needs and, in some cases, chronic illness. Premature ageing and early death are common – workers in this field argue that some rough sleepers in their 40s should be considered old; certainly it is conventional to view a rough sleeper aged 55 as an older person and provide services accordingly.

Older street homeless people usually require specialist services, particularly in terms of resettlement. Providing suitable, supported accommodation for people owed a duty under homelessness law can be particularly problematic (see Appendix 1). Some local authorities have used sheltered housing for this purpose, however, for this to be successful it requires

the scheme manager (or warden) to have the skills, knowledge, and resources to support people with complex needs. In addition, other residents may find it difficult to live alongside someone with issues around substance misuse or antisocial behaviour. For older homeless people to be resettled successfully, it makes sense to have a period of assessment in suitable temporary accommodation. If the assessment requires it, specialist housing support in mainstream housing or in suitable specialist accommodation should also be provided (see Housing support, page 11).

Some hostels have identified medium- to long-term residents aged 50 and over who are capable of living independently. Agencies need to offer appropriate services to make sure this group are resettled effectively, therefore freeing up much-needed hostel space. Supporting People funds a variety of housing support services for the resettlement of older homeless people.

Robertson Street Project, London

Thames Reach Bondway (TRB) is a London-based voluntary sector organisation that supports rough sleepers through their transition into permanent accommodation. The Robertson Street Project specifically addresses the needs of older rough sleepers. This group are particularly difficult to engage with because of an entrenched lifestyle developed over long periods of homelessness.

The Robertson Street Project offers 24-hour support in purpose-built housing for 42 mixed-gender residents over the age of 55. Each resident has their own room with a key and can keep their own hours. There are also communal facilities, including a garden, and meals are provided. Residents will be supported into move-on accommodation if they wish, but the project aims to be a home for life.

TRB adopt a service-user centred approach that works to promote dignity, independence, and the best possible quality of life for its residents. This is achieved by assessing service users' needs, and future planning under core themes: the improvement of health generally; harm minimisation; involving the resident in meaningful occupation; establishing lasting social networks; and appropriate resettlement.

Residents are not forced to stop drinking, though each resident has a key worker who will support them in making positive choices about their future. The scheme aims to stabilise ill-health, reduce the effects of heavy drinking or antisocial behaviour, and explore options for social activity.

Residents are encouraged to take an active part in the development of policies and services. There are regular meetings where they can make suggestions or air their grievances, and there is a separate complaints procedure and suggestions box. Occasionally staff will seek residents' opinions on an individual basis or discuss matters in a group setting.

The Robertson Street Project takes referrals from all TRB projects, as well as other agencies working with former rough sleepers. Applicants need to be at least 55 years of age and be able to demonstrate that they have been an entrenched rough sleeper and have a range of support needs, including challenging behaviour, heavy drinking, mental and physical health issues, and the frailty of old age. There is usually a waiting list of several months.

The project is largely funded through Housing Benefit payments and Supporting People.

Homelessness prevention

Timely and effective advice and assistance is recognised as a way of preventing homelessness, but many older people facing homelessness do not seek help. Research shows that half of older people facing homelessness seek advice from friends, relatives, and support workers rather than from specialist agencies.⁹

Local authorities need to ensure that older people can access suitable advice on housing and homelessness. Specialist agencies can train advisers at other organisations to be more sensitive to the needs of older people. For instance, homeless people's units within the local authority need to ensure that they are welcoming and attentive to older people's needs, and health workers need to recognise signs of financial problems, eg unopened letters and bills.

Eviction as a result of rent arrears is a common cause of homelessness, but early

intervention can help stop this. Mainstream social housing providers may need to look at how their systems for dealing with rent arrears operate. Someone who has recently undergone a change of circumstances, perhaps as a result of a bereavement or relationship breakdown, may need monitoring to ensure that arrears do not accumulate. If they have built up, then a full assessment of their circumstances will need to be made with appropriate referrals, perhaps to a tenancy support service.

About one-third of older people presenting as homeless to local authorities have been homeless before. Ensuring that effective housing support is in place may prevent repeat homelessness.

9. Crane M, Warnes A, Fu R, *Three nation comparative study of the causes of homelessness among older people: findings from England*, Sheffield Institute for Studies on Ageing, 2004.

Appendix 1

The legal framework and sources of Government support

Local authority homelessness test

Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, a person has a right to some help and assistance from the local authority in the event of her or him becoming homeless, or being threatened with homelessness. An applicant can expect to be provided with temporary and suitable accommodation only if s/he:

- is eligible for assistance (eg is a UK or Irish citizen or has an established right to stay in the UK long term)
- is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days
- is in priority need, and
- is not found to be intentionally homeless.

If they do not have a local connection to the area (eg is normally resident in an area), the application may be referred to another local authority where they do have a local connection.

Although local authorities must not have a fixed age beyond which people are automatically considered to be in priority need, many people over the age of 60 are likely to be considered priority need.¹⁰ Those who may not be eligible or are intentionally homeless may be able to get help from social services through community care and other legislation (see below).

Older people who find that their home does not meet their needs or is in a poor state of repair may argue that it is not reasonable for them to remain in their

home and that they therefore have a right to be treated as though they were homeless.¹¹ However, depending on the severity of the problem, it may be resolved more quickly through repair and/or providing adaptations than through making a homelessness application. (see Staying Put Schemes, page 14).

It can also be argued that it is not reasonable for someone to remain in a property if it is not affordable; this might be because rent or mortgage payments are too high.¹² Again, they should be treated as if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness if they approach the local authority.

Similarly, it is also not reasonable to expect a person to stay in the home if they are experiencing violence or harassment, either from someone they live with (eg a spouse or child), or from someone outside of the home.¹³

Community care, adaptations and other services

An older person or their carer can request a community care assessment from the social services department.¹⁴ This is an assessment of a person's needs¹⁵ that will often result in the production of a care plan detailing the services they are entitled to.

If the older person is disabled, then they have an entitlement to services from the local authority through their care plan. This can include:

- practical help, such as a home help, including assistance with general maintenance and running of the home
- personal care

10. Para 10.15 English Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DCLG, July 2006. www.dclg.gov.uk

11. Para 8.18 and 8.27 English Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DCLG, July 2006. www.dclg.gov.uk

12. Para 8.29 English Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DCLG, July 2006. www.dclg.gov.uk

13. Para 8.19 English Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DCLG, July 2006. www.dclg.gov.uk

14. s.47 National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

15. Here, 'needs' is taken to mean 'the requirements of individuals to enable them to achieve, maintain or restore an acceptable level of social independence or quality of life, as defined by the particular care agency or authority'. *Care management and assessment: a practitioner's guide*, HMSO, 1991.

- recreational facilities in the home
- recreational and educational facilities outside the home, such as outings
- help with travelling, such as assistance with travelling costs as well as provision of a blue badge
- adaptations such as ramps, lifts, or special equipment
- holidays
- meals at day centres and meals on wheels or similar services
- telephone or any other specialist communication equipment.¹⁶

The local authority can provide these and additional services to all older people if it chooses.

Local authorities can make a charge for services as determined by National Assistance Act 1948 guidance. Welfare benefits may be used to meet some of the costs. These include Disability Living Allowance (payable up to age 65, or over provided it was applied for before age 65), Attendance Allowance (payable from age 65) and Carer's Allowance (payable to carers unable to work because of their caring duties). A number of the organisations included in the Useful organisations section on page 32 will be able to advise further. The Disability Rights Handbook (published by the Disability Alliance) and the Child Poverty Action Group's 'Welfare Benefits and Tax Credit Handbook' are useful reference books.

Since April 2003, Supporting People has been meeting the cost of housing-related support services for both tenants and owner-occupiers. Supporting People funds support services to enable people to continue to live in their own home.

It also provides help for homeless or institutionalised people who are setting up home, and pays for scheme managers and wardens in sheltered accommodation. To receive services from agencies through Supporting People, individuals are often referred to appropriate schemes via a social worker, but many schemes will accept referrals from a variety of sources including an older person themselves or their family.

Under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, disabled people have a right to help from the local authority when making adaptations to their home. To fulfil this requirement, the local authority provides mandatory grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to enable disabled people to live in properties adapted to their needs. The property can be of any age and there is no limit on the cost of the works for which a grant is provided but the grant will be capped at £25,000 (England) and £30,000 (Wales)¹⁷. Grants are payable regardless of who owns the property, and people who live in caravans, some houseboats and mobile homes are also eligible. If the disabled person moves, the grant does not have to be repaid.

Social services should be contacted in the first instance, and the local authority will usually arrange a visit from an occupational therapist to assess what adaptations are required. The work must be necessary and appropriate to the disabled person's needs.

Adaptations for which grants are available include:

- access in and out of the house
- making the house safe
- access and mobility within the living room, bathroom, bedroom, and kitchen

16. s.2(1) Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

17. regs 2 and 3 Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Repairs Assistance (Maximum Amounts) Order, 1996.

- adaptation of heating and lighting controls
- improvements to the heating system
- enabling the disabled person to help a person who is dependent on their care (eg children).¹⁷

Owner-occupiers and tenants will have to undergo a means test to assess the amount that they will have to contribute to the cost of the work.¹⁸ If the applicant is receiving Income Support then they will not usually pay anything. Landlords may be asked to make a contribution based upon the increased rental value of the property as a result of the work.¹⁹

Though the local authority has a duty to provide grants for adaptations, it may also offer a discretionary grant to meet some or all of the remaining costs of the work if the mandatory grant does not cover all of the costs.

Other assistance that may be available to adapt homes and make them more secure are detailed in *Staying at home*, on page 11.

A number of agencies can offer advice and help to an older person making a grant application. These include DIAL (Disability Information and Advice Line services), Help the Aged, Age Concern, CAB, etc (see *Useful organisations* on page 32). Home improvement agencies and Care and Repair services will usually help an older person apply for a grant as part of their service (see *Adaptations and maintenance*, page 14).

18. s.23(1) Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

19. s.30 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Appendix 2

Energy efficiency and fuel poverty

The different strategies and schemes that help to address fuel poverty and high heating costs for older people are outlined below. Initiatives that are targeted at, or include, older people require cross-agency working, particularly as there are so many different schemes and grant-making bodies. Perhaps the most important action is the initial referral to a local agency, which can advise further or facilitate the work (eg home improvement agencies). Those in a caring role should strive to identify potential fuel and heating problems and then investigate any more appropriate alternatives, or refer on to a relevant agency.

Increasing income

Winter Fuel Payments are available to anyone over the age of 60. Those over the age of 80 receive an additional payment. Cold Weather Payments are also made during longer spells of cold weather to enable people over the age of 60 and certain disabled people meet increased fuel costs at these times.

Other benefits may help to boost an older person's income.²⁰ Citizens Advice Bureaux, Help the Aged and Age Concern can help maximise income by doing benefit checks and can help with making claims.

Changing fuel suppliers

Energywatch (www.energywatch.org.uk) is an independent energy supply watchdog that provides information on changing suppliers of gas and electricity to lower costs. Discounts can also be obtained by receiving both gas and electricity from the same supplier, and by paying bills by direct debit.

So-called budgeting aids, such as card meters, can be more expensive than paying conventionally. Additionally, there is also the danger that someone who becomes temporarily unable to leave the home may not be able to re-charge their card, leading to increased charges and a possible temporary loss of supply. Where possible, it may be cheaper and safer for older people to pay bills by direct debit.

Advice

Using energy more efficiently lowers costs and enables homes to be heated to a higher temperature. There are a number of different agencies and initiatives offering advice and support to lower bills and increase efficiency:

- The Energy Saving Trust (EST) is a Government initiative charged with promoting energy efficiency. Their website (www.est.org.uk) provides details of the grants available to insulate homes and purchase energy-efficient devices. The EST also backs the 52 Energy Efficiency Advice Centres, which are locally-based services that can advise on energy conservation methods, grants, etc.
- The Energy Efficiency Commitment is a Government initiative (see below) requiring gas and electricity suppliers to encourage or enable domestic customers to take up energy efficiency measures. It should offer advice and free or cut price products that conserve energy (eg energy saving light bulbs, and loft insulation).
- Home improvement agencies (HIAs) offer help and advice on property maintenance and energy conservation to older and disabled people

20. *Abrief guide to benefits for older people*, Age Concern, 2004. Available at www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/Documents/benefitsChart2004.pdf

(see page 14). It may be possible for a HIA to carry out work for free or at a reduced cost as a result of grant payments.

- National Energy Action (NEA) is a charity that campaigns for affordable warmth. It offers advice and produces a range of publications (www.nea.org.uk).
- Citizens Advice, Age Concern and Help the Aged provide advice on benefits and heating matters to older people, and the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) provides practical help to housebound and older people.
- Warm Front (see below) applicants receive energy efficiency advice as part of the scheme.

Improving insulation and energy-efficient appliances

Improving insulation will save older people money on their heating bills and in many cases allow them to raise and maintain room temperatures more easily. Though there are some relatively low-cost measures that can be taken (eg hot water cylinder insulation, using energy efficient light bulbs, and draught proofing), others such as installing double-glazing, cavity wall and loft insulation, or a new boiler can be expensive.

Warm Front Grants are available to private tenants and home owners and are targeted at those most vulnerable to cold-related ill health, including older households, disabled people, and those with long-term illnesses. The scheme provides grants for packages of insulation and heating improvements, including central heating. Households are eligible if they receive

a qualifying income or disability-related benefit. Warm Front Grants of up to £1,500 are available for qualifying householders with a child under 16, and Warm Front Plus grants of up to £2,500 are available for householders aged 60 or over.

Anyone receiving Pension Credit and whose home does not already have central heating can have it installed free of charge. Other pensioners will receive a grant of £300 toward the cost of central heating installation.

Energy Efficiency Commitment programmes are overseen by Ofgem (Office of Gas and Electricity Markets) and are funded by gas and electricity supply companies. The Government has set these companies energy efficiency targets, which they must meet by encouraging households to save energy through a variety of means, including free or low cost energy-efficient appliances (eg light bulbs) and providing free or low cost insulation (eg for cavity walls and lofts). In addition, there are often local authority grant schemes for adaptations and home maintenance that include energy efficiency measures.

Useful organisations

Age Concern

Campaign to promote the interests and well-being of older people. It also offers practical advice and assistance through local offices, a national advice helpline (0800 00 99 66), and factsheets available from its website.

www.ace.org.uk

Care and Repair

Supports and develops initiatives to enable older people to live independently for as long as possible. Care and Repair are locally based, not-for-profit organisations that offer a range of services, including advice and assistance and a handyperson service. Its national website is a repository of good practice.

www.careandrepair-england.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Provides free, independent, and confidential advice to help people resolve their legal, money, and other problems. It does this through a network of local advice centres and via the internet.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Coalition on Older Homelessness

This is a Homeless Link project funded by Help the Aged, which works to raise awareness of issues around older homelessness and to improve services for older homeless people.

www.olderhomelessness.org.uk

The Department for Communities and Local Government (previously the ODPM)

The DCLG is the Government department that addresses issues including housing and communities. Its website contains a library of good practice.

www.dclg.gov.uk

Department of Health

The DoH website includes relevant publications, such as the National Service Frameworks.

www.dh.gov.uk/publications

Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL)

Locally based information and advice services that provide information and advice to disabled people and others on all aspects of living with a disability.

www.dialuk.info

01302 310 123

Elderly Accommodation Counsel

The EAC helps older people make informed choices about meeting their housing and care needs. Its website offers lots of advice and assistance to those considering their housing options. It includes information on deciding whether a move is appropriate, and has an accommodation finder. It produces software for those advising older people on housing options, and also operates an advice line on 020 7820 1343.

www.housingcare.org

The Energy Saving Trust (EST)

Part of the EST's role is to provide the general public with help and advice on energy efficiency, including grant availability.

www.est.org.uk/myhome

0845 727 7200 (calls charged at local rate)

Energywatch

The independent gas and electricity watchdog that, among other things, helps consumers to change energy suppliers to lower bills.

www.energywatch.org.uk

0845 906 0708 (calls charged at local rate)

Health and Social Care Change Agent Team

Provides advice and support on a wide range of issues that affect older people, including health, social care, and housing. It operates the Housing, Learning and Information Network (LIN), which publishes good practice examples on housing for older and vulnerable people.

www.changeagentteam.org.uk

Help the Aged

Addresses issues of poverty, isolation, and neglect that affect older people. It offers local and national services that can be accessed via its website.

www.helptheaged.org.uk

020 7278 1114

Home Improvement Agencies/Foundations

Foundations is the national coordinating body for the network of local home improvement agencies (HIAs). HIAs offer practical help and assistance to enable older and vulnerable people to maintain their homes in a suitable condition.

www.foundations.uk.com

Home Improvement Trust

This is a not-for-profit organisation that arranges low-cost cash advances to older people to enable them to live independently and prevent poor health.

www.improvementtrust.fsbusiness.co.uk

0115 934 9511

Home Office

The Home Office operates a crime reduction website that includes detailed information on home security.

www.crimereduction.gov.uk/faq

HOMES

Housing association and council tenants who wish to move house or move to a different area may be helped by a number of different schemes that can be accessed via the HOMES website. Within London, Seaside and Country HOMES may be able to arrange a move for older tenants to housing in coastal and rural areas. NB: in the near future, the HOMES service will be superseded by moveUK. Details of the changes will be made available on the moveUK website (www.moveuk.com) when the service is launched.

www.homes.org.uk

0845 606 6161 (calls charged at local rate)

Housing Corporation

This body regulates and provides information on housing associations in England.

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

0845 230 7000 (calls charged at local rate)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The JRF is a research and development charity that seeks to better understand the causes of social difficulty and explore ways of overcoming them. It has an extensive collection of free-to-access information on its website that covers a wide variety of relevant topics.

www.jrf.org.uk

National Energy Action

NEA develops and promotes energy efficiency services to tackle the heating and insulation problems of low-income households.

www.nea.org.uk

0191 261 5677

Shelter

Shelter helps homeless and badly-housed people through our Housing Aid Centres and practical projects, and via our free housing advice helpline, the internet and email.

www.shelter.org.uk

0845 458 4590 (calls charged at local rate)

The Telecare Services Association

The representative body for the telecare industry within the UK. It can help individuals access telecare services and also works to establish good practice.

www.asap-uk.org

Time Banks UK

This umbrella group oversees the timebank movement in the UK.

www.timebanks.co.uk

0845 456 1668 (calls charged at local rate)

TrustMark

A scheme supported by the Government to help the public find trustworthy tradespeople.

www.trustmark.org.uk

Victim Support

Victim Support is an independent charity that helps people cope with the effects of crime, providing free and confidential support and information

www.victimsupport.org

0845 30 30 900 (calls charged at local rate)

Warm Front

A Government body providing grants to improve energy efficiency. It especially targets older, disabled, and low income groups.

www.homeheathelpine.org

0800 33 66 99

Bad housing wrecks lives

Registered charity number 263710
SEP06GPG138

We are the fourth richest country in the world, and yet millions of people in Britain wake up every day in housing that is run-down, overcrowded or dangerous. Many others have lost their home altogether. Bad housing robs us of security, health, and a fair chance in life.

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or visit www.shelter.org.uk

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