Older people’s housing: key policy issues
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Overview

• Background facts and figures
• Reform of private renting
• Downsizing debate and housing wealth
• Retirement housing – social and private sector
• Decent homes
• Accessible housing
• Consensus on way forward – MHCLG select committee recommendations
• Support for the Housing and Ageing Alliance
Demographic factors

- Around **13 million** people have limiting long term illness, impairment or disability.

- Housing for older people with dementia – **850,000** – projected to increase over **1 million by 2025** and **2 million by 2051**.

- **Over a third** (38%) of older households were **lone households**. Nearly half (47%) of those aged 75-84 and 61% of those aged 85 or older were lone households.

- The Local Government Association (LGA) forecasts that older households will make up around **60% of projected household growth** between 2008 and 2033.
Overview of older people housing

- Greatest number of older people in housing needs are owner occupiers

Only 7% of homes have the 4 basic features of visitability

Improvement to mainstream housing will have more impact

Adaptation of existing stock a priority?

Older households should have higher priority

Source: Care and Repair England
Housing and older people

Private retirement housing often given a greater profile

This could be reduced by relatively modest spending on repairs and adaptations

Over 2 million older households living in non-decent housing in England

We’ve seen a decline in handy person schemes despite popularity and low cost

Source: Care and Repair England
What do older people want?

- Evidence is contradictory

- Care and Repair survey – 82% of those 55yrs and over said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current home and 78% wanted to continue to live there as they got older.

- DEMOS estimate over 3 million 65+ interested in buying a retirement property (and able to do so) BUT just a 25% interested in specialist retirement housing.

- What on offer? Is it affordable?

- Age friendly environment and local services – not just bricks and mortar

- Older people more likely to move in a crisis – which can limit their choices

- Conversely move too soon can mean living in retirement housing that no longer meets your needs

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The number of households in the sector rose by 25% between 2010-11 and 2017-18, from 3.6 million to 4.5 million households.

Age UK estimates three-quarter of a million older renters (60+) in England.

Almost half of them have a disability and/or longstanding illness and one in three older renters lives in poverty after the rent is paid.

The proportion of older renters has doubled in the last fifteen years, with the proportion of middle-aged renters trebling.

Non-decent properties can be found in 25% of the sector in England.

Almost a quarter of a million older renters, nearly three in ten, do not live in decent housing.

Over half (59%) of landlords are aged 55 years or older. A third (33%) of landlords are retired.
Reform of private renting

• Current Government consultation on the **abolition of assured shorthold tenancies** - no fault evictions.

• Government argue that strengthening current grounds for possession and speeding up the courts will make **no fault evictions unnecessary**.

• **Retaliatory eviction** in a major factor in a failure to address extremely poor conditions in parts of the sector.

• Examples of the impact on vulnerable older tenants set out in our report ‘**Ageing in squalor and distress**’.

• Working with Shelter for reform – arguing the need for more social housing including supported housing.

• Optimistic that there will be change – but strong **opposition from landlord groups** to ending ‘no fault evictions’.

• Key concern is removing **barriers to older and disabled people** gaining access to adaptations.

In 2017, build to rent - purpose built rental homes - £2.4 bn investment **forecast to grow to by further 180%** over the next six years.
Downsizing debate and housing wealth

• housing wealth owned by older people - £1.28 trillion but more than 21 per cent of older people over 55 have no housing wealth at all

• Potentially high levels of home equity – but unevenly distributed – North – South divide – although high values in cities such as Manchester

• House prices and distribution of equity shapes local housing options available to older people

• Homes needs to be sufficiently valuable to make equity release worthwhile – for many rightsizing a much better option

• Intergenerational inequality – but also wealth passed on via inheritance – although at a later stage

• Retirement housing providers tend to focus on London and the South East – where more older can afford a leasehold property – focus on how to cut cost elsewhere via economies of scale
Retirement housing – what is it?

- ‘Retirement housing’ tends to mean age-exclusive (usually private, often luxury) housing
- ‘Supported housing’ means housing-with-support or care, most of which is social rented
How much specialist retirement housing is there?

- Over 500,000 specialist housing units (England) (around 5% of all housing occupied by older people) – most older people live in mainstream housing.

- Of these around 124,000 are in the private leasehold sector and the majority in the social rented sector.

- Around 478,000 offer housing support and 56,000 offer care (although housing support can facilitate access to care).

- Private sector - DEMOS estimate need 30,000 more leasehold retirement properties each year to meet current demand for specialist retirement housing (others estimate 15,000 – 25,000 a year).

- DEMOS estimate over 3 million 65+ interested in buying a retirement property (and able to do so) - but of these just a quarter interested in specialist retirement housing.

- Estimated shortfall of 400,000 units by 2035 (using broad definition). But only building around 7,200 units a year.

- But debate over how far mainstream housing should facilitate the delivery of care and support at home – thereby reducing demand for specialist housing.

- But even with a dramatic increase in specialist retirement housing it would still be a relatively small percentage of all housing occupied by older people.
What are some of the main issues for the social rented sector?

- Very long running debate about the [contribution of housing benefit](#) and separation of housing funding from support funding
- The need for [stable revenue funding](#) to allow investment in new schemes
- What should be [core services](#) and what should be paid for by residents?
- The [loss of scheme managers or wardens](#) – how much are they an essential component of sheltered scheme? Move towards ‘floating support’ but this has also seen cutback.
- Shouldn’t older people with similar needs in mainstream forms of housing get similar support? [idea of ‘ageing in place’](#).
- [Variation in standards](#) – no national overview because seen as a matter for local authorities and housing associations – resistance to regulation – seen as a burdensome and unnecessary
- Tension between funding pressure on providers for [flexible schemes](#) that can be reconfigured depending on conditions and the [expectations](#) of residents for stable and fixed services.
What are the main issues for leasehold retirement housing

- Lack of **clarity and definition** about different types of scheme – how to market to younger older – getting good independent advice
- Hidden **charges and fees** – poor regulations and complex contracts – older people may struggle with services charges
- **Powerful lobby** with a dominant voice on older people housing
- Seen to have **huge potential** because of levels of home equity held by many older people (unevenly distributed)
- Reluctance of local authorities to give **planning permission** for schemes
- Debate over whether **financial incentives** to increase demand for schemes – remove stamp duty and cut contributions to planning gain.
- Older people can become trapped in unsuitable housing and may **struggle to sell**
- Resale value a big issue for the protection of equity – **leaving an inheritance** (EAC likely to release a report on this soon)
Decent homes

- Over 2 million older people (60+) live in non-decent properties in England
- Non-decent housing costs the NHS £1.4bn a year
- A third of all non-decent owner-occupied homes in England are in the North - highest concentrations in the North West.
- Northern Housing Consortium recently highlighted huge disparities in help with repairs, refurbishment, condition of the housing stock

Recommendations include:

- Decent Homes – accessibility standards
- Integrate home improvements into local health and care strategies
- Local authorities should offer Housing, Health and Wellbeing Grants - loans and other assistance
- Collaboration between Care and Repair England, Centre for Ageing Better and Northern Housing consortium on repairs

Next steps

Collaboration between Care and Repair England
Part M4 C2 – similar to original lifetime homes standard - support by Habinteg
Lifetime homes

- **Some progress** – added as an optional standard – as well as wheelchair accessible housing
- MHCLG committee **reviewing the regulations** – Habinteg Housing Association involved in technical discussions.
- Review of **British Standards** on Accessible Homes
- Local authority plans challenged by the Home Builders Federation – blocked on the basis of **financial viability**
- Key argument around **cost of the standards** – homebuilder involved in new research looking at the cost
- Failure to look at long term **social cost** of poorly designed, cramped and inaccessible housing
- Seems to be signs of some interest in taking thing forward – next logical step is **universal application**
- **Coalition for Accessible Homes** – key housing organisations work with the Centre for Ageing Better – determined to achieve reform
What do older people want? Age friendly housing design

Looks of work on making housing more appeal and relevant to older people

- Attractive design that is **flexible and adaptable**
- **Less space but sufficient space** – friends, family and grandchildren
- **storage space** and **parking space**
- **Bungalows** still very popular
- Good location, **nice views**, green spaces
- Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission
MHCLG select committee – reflecting a positive consensus

- **National Housing Strategy for Older People** – balance approach
- **Housing advice** service with national coverage – linking up housing – care – financial options
- Greater investment in **Home Improvement Agencies** (HIAs) handy person services – small repairs
- All new homes to be built to the Category 2 (**lifetime homes standard**)
- Reform leasehold retirement housing to give confidence in specialist retirement housing
- Practical help to **downsize** - access to shared ownership or shared equality
- **National Planning Policy Framework** – stronger approach to housing for older people.
- Make it easier to build **specialist retirement housing** (e.g. extra care housing)
Influencing – positive opportunities

- Opportunity for significant reform of the private rented sector
- Further reform of leasehold housing offering much greater consumer protection.
- Review of the building regulations could result in the universal application of lifetime homes
- Ongoing negotiation about funding and standards for sheltered housing
- Some momentum around restoring repair grants linked to improving health and well-being.
- Increase awareness of the vital role of home improvement agencies and adaptation grants (DFG)
- Growing consensus on the need to build more social housing – despite continued focus on homeownership
- Some progress on planning reform – Government guidance on older people’s housing
Housing and Ageing Alliance Manifesto

• ‘Enable older people to live independently and well wherever they choose, remaining in control of their homes and lives.’

• ‘Create age-friendly homes, neighbourhoods and services that enable people to live healthy, fulfilling lives, involved with families, friends & neighbours and contributing to their communities in later life.’

• ‘Create integrated housing, health & care policies all aiming to enable people to live safely & well at home as they age.’
For further information

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