

Housing Matters Bulletin

For Older People's Forums and Action Groups in England
August 2011



Social Care Funding Reform

The mismatch between the care in later life that people expect and what they actually receive has been a contentious issue for many years. Use of housing equity to pay for residential care has been particularly unpopular.

The Commission set up by the coalition government to review the funding of adult social care recently set out its ideas in '*Fairer Care Funding*'.

The proposals include sharing costs between the state and the individual, spreading risk, reducing uncertainty and fairer use of assets.

The potential price tag of £2b pa to introduce the new system has resulted in a 'cautious' response by government, but legislation (initially a White Paper) has been promised in early 2012. The full reports and detailed data are available [here](#)

Care & Repair England has produced a short summary available [here](#)



Idea for Action

Set up a discussion meeting to consider the pros and cons of the proposals in more detail then request a meeting with local MPs. They will have the chance to influence the plans and legislation.



Planning: Radical Changes Ahead

In the biggest change to the planning system in more than 60 years, the government has reduced over 1,000 pages of planning legislation and guidance to a proposed 52 page *National Planning Policy Framework*.

The stated intention is to speed up and simplify the granting of planning permission and encourage economic growth. There would be a presumption in favour of granting permission for any 'sustainable development'.

Developers have welcomed the proposals, whilst organisations such as the National Trust are strongly opposed. The president of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) said "*Economic growth is generally set to trump the aspirations of local communities expressed in local and neighbourhood plans*".

With regard to the detail, unlike an earlier draft, building homes for older people is mentioned, alongside inclusive design and planning for health. There is a Consultation on the draft open until 17th October 11.



Find out more

You can read the full draft National Planning Policy Framework [here](#)
RTPI website: [here](#)



Ideas Exchange

✓ *Future East*, the East of England Forum on Ageing recently ran a housing conference, '*No Place Like Home*'. Older people, councillors and council officers met together to develop housing and planning ideas that would make life better for older people. The report about the event is available [here](#) (listed '*East of England-Future East*')



Public Health - Putting older people onto the agenda

Whilst legislation to change the NHS has slowed due to public opposition, reform of Public Health is well underway. Directors of Public Health have been transferred to County and Unitary Councils and most authorities have set up Public Health & Well-being Boards.

A new report from Dept of Health, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Update and Way Forward*, sets out progress & the steps to full implementation of the public health reform.

The good news is that unlike earlier reports, there is specific mention of the Boards being responsible for addressing the wider determinants of health (eg. housing and neighbourhoods). In addition, Boards will have to address two issues which particularly affect older people *i) accidental injury prevention* and *ii) local initiatives to reduce excess deaths as a result of seasonal mortality*. See full report [here](#)



Ideas for Action

***Find out who is on your Public Health and Well-being Board
Ask for a meeting with the Board and/
or Director of Public Health to discuss
older people's issues.***



Older People 'Living Well at Home': Parliamentary Inquiry calls for improvements

Most of the debates about older people and housing focus on sheltered housing, extra care and residential care, even though 90% of older people live in mainstream housing and value 'that bit of help' to retain their independence in their own home.

A recent '*Living Well at Home*' Inquiry, led by Lord Best of the All Party Parliamentary Group (Housing and Care), has a welcome focus ordinary housing. It notes how a suitable place to live can mean independence for longer; prevent the need for residential care; reduce requirements for care at home; result in fewer accidents and hospital admissions; and allow people to leave hospital earlier, with less risk of immediate readmission.

The Inquiry report considers the obstacles to obtaining assistance with basic home repairs, adaptations or domiciliary help, and it makes recommendations about changes needed overcome these difficulties.

The group will now promote their findings to government, but local OPAGs and Forums might wish to take up some of the recommendations with their local councils and MPs.

Report available [here](#)



Voluntary Sector: 2,000 Shut Services

More than 2,000 charities are closing services and cutting staff due to council funding reductions. Information was gathered from 265 freedom-of-information responses from local councils across England. See [details](#)



Money Matters

Relieve for Paper Cheques

The clearance system for cheques will not be phased out by 2018, as originally proposed, and will now continue for 'as long as customers need them'. This decision has been particularly influenced by older people, who are expected to continue to be the main users of cheques. The cheque guarantee card system ended on 30th June 11. [link](#)

Fuel Poverty Soars

Newly released government figures show a large rise in fuel poverty, with 5.5 million (one in five) households in the UK now needing to spend more than 10% of their income on household energy.

These are 2009 figures, so with the 2010 gas and electricity price rises, plus further increases of up to 19% announced by two major suppliers and others expected to follow suit, campaigners estimate that the real figure this winter will be closer to 6.4 million households. [link](#)



Changes to Blue Badge Parking Scheme

The government has announced reforms of the "blue badge" scheme, including transferring eligibility assessment from GPs to 'independent mobility assessors'. Councils are also now able to charge up to £10 for successful applications.

The simplest way to apply for a blue badge is via the DirectGov website; typing in your postcode gives a direct link to your local council's application process. [DirectGov](#)



Sheltered Tenants: More Housing Benefit Reforms

The Dept for Work and Pensions (DWP) is planning to change the way that it calculates housing benefit for people who are living in social and voluntary sector supported housing. Proposals include linking the amount payable to the locally fixed housing allowance and reviewing service charges. Consultation open until 9th October 11. [link](#)



Ask SARA

This is a comprehensive source of information about the products, ideas and information that can make daily living easier. Run by the independent charity, the Disabled Living Foundation, it covers an extensive range topics including bathrooms, dressing, food preparation and health care to name but a few. www.allaboutequipment.org.uk

FirstStop - not Stopping

FirstStop, the independent national housing and care advice helpline and web-based information resource for older people, is to be funded by government for at least a further two years, and possibly four, albeit at a reducing rate each year.

FirstStop is keen to encourage older people's groups to play a greater role in campaigns to spread the word about their services, and can provide booklets, leaflets and workshop materials. www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk



Ideas Exchange

✓ Contact Care & Repair England to find out more about local housing workshops for older volunteers and advisers. info@careandrepair-england.org.uk



World Health Organisation Hosts First Age-Friendly Cities Conference

Co-hosted by the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities, the Ageing Well Network Ireland and the International Federation on Ageing, this conference (Sept 11) will bring together leaders from across the world interested in, or already championing, an age-friendly city or community. [Details](#) .



Stannah: Think Again Fund Opportunity

This fund encourages older people to 'Think Again' about their unfulfilled dreams and each month enables a winner with a life long dream the opportunity to make it happen. [Details here](#)



Taking it Further: Housing Data Sources

English Housing Survey

The English Housing Survey, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government, collects information about people's housing circumstances and the condition of housing in England. [Link](#) There is an annual report plus quarterly updates. The latest report reveals that;

- *home ownership continues to decrease, now 67% of households, whilst private renting is still rising, (16%), just below social renting (17%)*
- *20% (4.2m) of households live in homes with substantial disrepair, with older people in private homes the most likely occupants*

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

The ONS publishes the most comprehensive, detailed data, reports and information about the UK economy and society.

The ONS is currently developing a new website which will be launched at the end of August 2011. It says that the new site will be quicker and easier to navigate, with improved accessibility for users with sight or other impairments. www.ons.gov.uk



News about Housing Related Action by Older People's Groups and Forums

The Housing Action area of the Care & Repair England website includes links to information, reports and events published by Older People's Action Groups and Forums across England.

Recent additions include news from Leeds, Future East, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, Manchester and Lewisham. Link to page [here](#)

For a list of ideas click [here](#)

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