

Health, Housing, Social Care and Ageing: **The Golden Link**

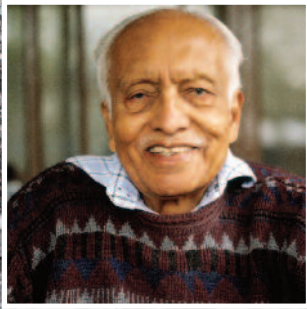
Housing and Ageing

The combination of two radical changes, increased life expectancy and the shift from renting to home ownership amongst lower income groups, is creating a growing social issue; the affordability of home repairs and adaptations in older age amongst poorer home owners.

The rise in low income home ownership has corresponded with decreasing state expenditure on private sector housing repairs and regeneration,⁽¹⁾ culminating in the cessation of all specific national funding from April 2011.

- 90% of people over state pension age live in general housing
- 75% of older people are home owners; low income home owners now outnumber low income tenants
- People over 75 yrs, primarily home owners, are the age group most likely to live in poor housing with 1 million living in non-decent homes





Health and Care

Housing conditions have a causal link to a wide range of common chronic health conditions, including respiratory illnesses, stroke, heart disease and depression, as well as impacting on risk of injury and accidents, particularly falls amongst older people.

Consequently, poor or unsuitable housing increases the incidence of hospital admissions and GP visits as well as creating additional pressures on social care services, such as residential care.

- *The NHS spends an estimated £600 million treating people every year because of poor housing* ⁽²⁾
- *40% of the NHS budget is spent on caring for people over 65 yrs with two thirds of acute hospital beds are occupied by people over 65* ⁽³⁾
- *By 2025 almost 1.5 million people aged 75 or over will be unable to manage at least one mobility/ daily living activity on their own* ⁽⁴⁾

Health and social care policies have, for both fiscal and ethical reasons, increasingly focussed on enabling older people to live independently – the aspiration of the majority of people in later life. The primary focus of housing policy has been on stock numbers and first time buyers.

Failure to make the connection between population ageing, health, social care and housing policy and practice is not only costly, but has potentially dire consequences for individual older people.

Making the Connection

- *National government should promote an overarching, cross departmental vision of healthier, independent living for older people, including reviewing the national approach to private sector housing disrepair and home adaptations.*
- *Public Health and Well Being Boards should be charged with co-ordinating joint action to reduce housing related health problems as part of their remit to address the wider social determinants of health. This would include facilitating the joint planning and commissioning by health, social care and housing of initiatives such as 'home repairs and adaptations on prescription' to reduce the risk of falls, speed up hospital discharge, reduce readmissions and improve the self management of a range of chronic health conditions.*
- *Housing related falls prevention, home adaptations, practical housing related support and re-ablement were identified as being amongst the 10 highest impact changes with regard to prevention measures in older people's services.⁽⁵⁾ Given the cost benefits, these should be a high priority for delivery at times of financial constraints.*

References

(1) Care & Repair England (2010) *A Perfect Storm: An ageing population, low income home ownership, and decay of older housing* www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/pdf/a_perfect_storm_nov_10.pdf (2) M Davison et al (2010) *The real cost of poor housing* BRE www.brebookshop.com/details.jsp?id=325401 (3) APPG (Housing & Care) (2011) *Living Well at Home Inquiry* www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/resource/?cid=8167 (4) Care & Repair England (2009) *Time to Adapt: Home adaptations for older people - The increase in need and future of state provision* www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/timetoadapt.htm (5) University of Birmingham (2010) *The billion dollar question: embedding prevention in older people's services – 10 high impact changes* <http://www.hsmc.bham.ac.uk/publications/policy-papers/policy-paper-eight.pdf>

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