



# Link-Age Consultation: Response from Care & Repair England

## 1. About the Respondent

1.1. Care & Repair England is a national charitable organisation established in 1986 to improve the housing and living conditions of older and disabled people. Its aim is to innovate, develop, promote and support housing policies and initiatives which enable older and disabled people to live independently in their homes for as long as they wish.

1.2. It provides general information and signposting for older and disabled people who are facing problems with the repair, maintenance and adaptation of their homes. As a second tier and policy organisation, it has developed a group of pilot housing options advice services for older people as part of its '*Should I Stay or Should I Go?*' initiative.

1.3. The Director serves on the ODPM/ DH Housing and Older People Development Group (HOPDEV) and is a member of the sub group on housing advice. The organisation is also a member of the Housing Advice Consortium.

## 2. Overview

2.1. We welcome the general statement in 1.4 that there is a need to move away from a dependency model of older people, acknowledging their diversity and the importance of active engagement and whole systems working.

2.2. Recognition of the importance of home for older people (1.8) and the centrality of this with regard to maintaining independence is also welcomed.

2.3. Whilst supporting the concept of central government setting broad objectives and minimum standards and leaving the detail of delivery to local authorities, we believe that enforceable targets are essential to ensure that all LAs act effectively, thereby reducing post-code lottery in service provision.

## 3. Chapter 1

3.1. **P.16, para 1.14** – We have some misgiving about achieving the right balance between promoting well being and independence and tackling need when it arises. This point links to the current DH debate about adult social care and the forthcoming Green Paper. Our view is that by focusing on "*the minority with acute needs*" (1.1, objective 2) there is a danger of a crisis management approach to services for older people. We would suggest that equal weight be given to early, small scale, preventative intervention- "*that little bit of help*". There are a few beacons of LA good practice here eg. Liverpool, but they are a minority and further encouragement is needed.

## 4. Chapter 2: Joining Up Services

4.1. We welcome the progress noted with regard to the Single Assessment Process joining up the NHS and SS.

4.2. However, we note that Single Assessment was also supposed to address assessment of housing needs. We see little evidence that this has been adequately achieved to date.

4.3. This is an area which could be progressed by the joint teams. For example, much of the information collected in order to make a financial assessment re: benefits would also be needed as part of an assessment by the housing authority to ascertain entitlement to a disabled facilities grant. ***We therefore suggest that this housing information and assessment be incorporated into the brief for joint teams.***

4.4. The availability of other housing related help eg. small repairs and minor adaptations will usually be either means tested or dependent upon receipt of particular benefits. ***We therefore also suggest that to avoid duplication of financial assessment these service areas are also incorporated into the brief of the joint teams.***

4.5. **P.18: Working with the Voluntary Sector.** We welcome the DWP initiative on verification: benefits related documentation by voluntary organisations and the intention to expand this. However, our slight concern is that this is limited to organisations which have the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark. This could unnecessarily exclude equally valuable advice services which hold other quality marks (eg. the network of 230 home improvement agencies have their own system). ***We therefore suggest that advice services which meet other quality mark schemes are included in the verification initiative.***

### Summary

***We suggest that it is important to bring in housing related services people into the “joined up” model as proposed sooner rather than later.***

## 5. Chapter 3 Response Summary

5.1. Incentives for LAs will go some way to achieving joined up services, but there also need to be penalties for LAs who fail to implement good practice – a stick as well as a carrot approach.

5.2. If older people are to be meaningfully engaged in the shaping of services it does need to be acknowledged that this has to be properly resourced and information exchanged on effective methodologies. Promotion of this through the Better Government for Older People network could be one way to achieve this spread of information.

## 6. Chapter 4

6.1. The trigger points model is an interesting one. However, whilst useful, our reservation is that this may result in planning of services that are reactive rather than proactive. For example, falls are a major killer of older people. Current thinking on this front

calls for falls initiatives that prevent falls eg. through home safety checks, installation of minor adaptations, checking for multiple medication, suggestions for exercise programmes to maintain muscle tone. This could be offered to say all over 70s routinely eg. via joint team visitors, hence be a pro-active service rather than being offered only after a person has had a fall and been hospitalised (a re-active service).

6.2. This said, the trigger points identified are ones which accord with our experience of people seeking help from local “*housing options*” pilot services. A major health problem or bereavement are key triggers to older people considering moving home. Falling behind with payment of rent / housing benefit, given the problems that spiralling arrears can cause, is a further trigger point which could be added to the model and action integrated into the work of the joint teams.

6.3. Our main comment with regard to table on p31-36 is the absence of any mention of such triggers resulting in the person contacting local housing providers or advisers. We believe that this additional contact should be added into the model.

6.4. Housing considerations need to be integrated into every stage or trigger identified, from pre-retirement planning onwards.

6.5. Consideration about moving home is very closely connected with financial information and advice. ***We therefore strongly recommend that incorporation of better housing options information, advice and help should be incorporated into this model as a matter of priority.***

## **Summary**

***As stated early on in the consultation document, housing can be the cornerstone to older people remaining independent and we therefore suggest that this dimension of improved access to and information and advice about housing options be incorporated into the Link-Age model as a matter of priority.***

## **Submitted by**

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