



Older People, Housing, Health, Social Care: Policy Overview

Ageing

A national strategy on ageing, *Opportunity Age*, was published in 2005 setting the overall framework for all government departments in order to take a coherent approach to the ageing of the population. The overarching theme of *Opportunity Age* was the concept of active ageing, whereby older people are fully engaged with and included in mainstream life and are an integral and valued part of the population. http://www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity_age/

Housing

The strategic framework, '*Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing*' is soon (Summer 07) to be replaced by a new '*Housing Strategy for an Ageing Society*' but the key principles of enabling independence and supporting informed choice are likely to remain.

With regard to the wider housing and health agenda, the new way of assessing the fitness of a property through the '*Housing, Health and Safety Rating Scheme*' is rooted in health impact measurement. There is clearly potential here for targeted improvement of housing in ways that are directly linked to health priorities.

With regard to delivery of adaptations, significant changes to the main source of help, Disabled Facilities Grants, are in the pipeline. These were outlined in a consultation paper published in February 2007 with some immediate changes also announced.

One of the main specialist older people's housing developments of the last decade has been extra-care housing. This is housing for older people that aims to provide flexible 24 hour care in supported housing whilst at the same time enabling independent living as far as possible.

Health

Enabling independence, treating older people with dignity and respect, prevention, tackling inequalities, improved hospital discharge and providing care at or closer to home are some of the key themes running through a range of health related policy documents.

The National Service Framework for Older People (Dept of Health, 2001) set out the vision for how older people should be treated by the NHS and set out a timetable for change. With regard to housing and health, the targets for reduction in falls were particularly relevant. Subsequent publications have charted progress and set future challenges.

The Government white paper, *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say. A new direction for community services* (Dept of Health, 2006), heralded radical reform for the sector. It emphasised the importance of shifting resources into prevention, joint health and social care commissioning and tackling health inequalities, promising care at or closer to home.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/Modernisation/OurHealthOurCareOurSay/fs/en>

Many of the themes followed on from '*Choosing Health*' (DH, 2004), which also emphasised prevention of health problems and the importance of tackling health inequalities.

(<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Policyandguidance/Organisationpolicy/Modernisation/Choosinghealth/index.htm>)

The NHS in England: operating framework for 2007-08 sets out health and service priorities for the year ahead, next steps in reform, and financial objectives. It stresses the need for PCTs to work with Local Authorities to improve health and well-being, reduce inequalities and achieve a shift towards prevention.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_063267

At the time of going to press, a consultation paper on *The Commissioning Framework for Health and Well-being* had been launched. Reinforcing many of the proposals in the earlier white papers, it is far-reaching in its implications for health and local government.

The Operating Framework for the NHS sets out priorities and targets. For 07-08, '*Reducing health inequalities and promoting health and well-being*' is one of the four priorities that the Dept of Health has set for the NHS. The Framework stresses the need for PCTs to work with Local Authorities to achieve this priority alongside the shift towards prevention.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_063267

Social Care

At the heart of social care policy for adults is the aim of enabling a greater number of older people to remain living independently in their own homes.

Many of the documents noted in the Health section above are equally applicable to future social care, with the emphasis on prevention and low level services to support independence.

A key issue for social care and health has been transfer of care between hospital and home/care home. There have been specific initiatives to improve processes and reduce delays to hospital discharge through improved joint working between health and social care.

More broadly, the Wanless review, '*Securing Good Social Care for Older People*' published by the Kings Fund in 2006, posed fundamental questions about the future of social care for older people, particularly with regard to funding by the state vs the individual.

[www.kingsfund.org.uk/health topics/wanless social.html](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/health/topics/wanless_social.html)

Disability

The most relevant government document is '*Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*', published by the Prime Ministers Strategy Unit in 2005. The report identified several key areas where action was needed to deliver the vision for equality for disabled people by 2025, including early years, family support, transition to adulthood, employment and independent living. Whilst not specifically addressing disability in older age, many of the key principles are relevant to older people eg. individual budgets. www.strategy.gov.uk/output/Page5046.asp

Local Government

A key mechanism for the planning of local services is through Local Area Agreements. LAAs bring together housing, health, social care and other key agencies to find better ways of

working. One of the four themes that LAAs have to address is '*Healthier Communities and Older People*' and within this '*tackling health inequalities*' is a specific requirement.

A further driver to local cross sector delivery is the recent Local Government White Paper. This emphasises new approaches to care through joint planning by Health sector and Local Government partnerships. www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999

The *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill*, which follows on from the Local Government White Paper, will place a legal duty of partnership on LAs, PCTs and other service providers obliging them to co-operate. A CSIP briefing note provides a helpful summary of the changes ahead and potential implications. www.icn.csip.org.uk/nl/?l=28_1_1_1

Proviso

These are wide ranging and rapidly developing policy areas. The above is intended to provide a quick glance reference and is not a comprehensive statement of all key policies. Further details about policy drivers can also be found in LIN newsletters www.cat.csip.org.uk/housing and the HOPDEV reports: 'Delivering housing for an ageing population: Informing housing strategies and planning policies' and 'Older people's housing strategies: Key policy drivers' hopdev.housingcare.org

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