

Services to older

Elderly Accommodation Counsel is a national charity, information on all forms of accommodation for older to help enquirers choose and finance accommodation

Information and advice service

Our core service covers:

- Staying at home, and accessing support or care to improve life there
- Moving to more suitable accommodation - including sheltered & retirement housing, close care and assisted living environments
- Moving to a care home ● Paying for the chosen option

Our team of four Advisors are available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, to work with older people, their families or their advisors to explore options and provide detailed information.

ADVICE LINE Tel 020 7820 1343

Email enquiries@e-a-c.demon.co.uk

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Partnerships in service delivery

EAC delivers its service to older people in partnership with two main kinds of agencies:

LOCAL AGENCIES

A majority of EAC's service users have first made contact with a local agency, which then refers them to us. For example about 40% of callers are 'signposted' by *Age Concern Organisations*, a smaller number by other local voluntary groups.

Whilst we welcome the confidence this shows in us, there is evidence that many older people find the telephone difficult. They would prefer to discuss their circumstances and get information about their options in a face-to-face setting. This particularly applies to older people with disabilities, poor hearing or whose first language is not English. Moreover, some local agencies

can reach frailer older people by visiting them in their own homes. And many enquirers need advocacy or practical support to help them achieve their aspirations.

We recognise the limitations of what our telephone-based service can provide, and our aim therefore is to work with local agencies - either to help them develop expertise in housing options, or to support them in their work with individual clients. Our plans for 2002-03 envisage developing both these models with agencies around the country - including those helped into being by *Care & Repair England* (see front page), minority community groups and agencies we meet through our joint Transition Project (see page 9) and of course, local *Age Concern Organisations*.

We focus our service around people's living environment because the sense of 'home' is so important to most people.

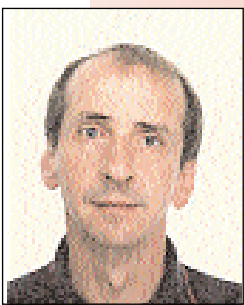
As people age, the importance of 'home', their need for some support or care, and the ways in which that support or care can be delivered, become intertwined and need to be addressed together.

We also adopt a value judgement - that only the individual can establish the balance that's right for them between independence and continuity, and adapting to changing circumstances. It's understandable that family, friends or caring professionals might suggest changes in pursuit of 'quality of life', but what makes for quality is a private and often changeable matter. It can include aspects not always apparent to younger well-wishers - or with which they disagree.

But if or when an older person decides to review their options, there are a host of practical considerations which a sympathetic advisor can propose. Difficulty with stairs may be solved by a stair-lift, or construction of a downstairs bathroom. Worries about security could be eased by installing an emergency call system. Family support may be more readily available if a spare bedroom is available for overnight stays. Professional home care may be cheaper where many older people live close together - for example in a sheltered or retirement housing complex. Daily risks to frailer people can be reduced by a move into a residential care home - though, for some, at the price of some loss of independence. A move to cheaper, more adaptable or more secure housing might help avoid an enforced move into a more institutional setting later on.

EAC works with older people, and often their families and carers, at whatever stage in decision-making they find themselves. Our mission is to engage with older people's hopes, preferences and circumstances by providing information, making suggestions and sharing experiences, in order to assist them in making their own decisions.

And in doing so, we draw on the expertise of many other agencies whose work complements our own, working together with the goal of delivering good quality advice and information that meet the needs older people define in the way older people want.



John Galvin
EAC Director

people in partnership with others

founded in 1985 to provide detailed people. It offers guidance and advice most suited to their needs.



Specialist knowledge

Whilst proud of the breadth of its service, EAC's Advice Team has also developed a number of specialisms in response to issues presented by our clients - often helped or encouraged by funders or housing and care service providers. Three examples are:

Choice despite frailty

In parallel with the research work which produced the Care Options methodology (see page 8), in 1999 we embarked on a 3 year programme, supported by The Rank Foundation, to improve and expand our service to the most frail older people. These are people who need a high level of care, and for whom expressing preferences

and making choices can appear an impossible luxury. One in five of our clients now falls into this category.

Leasehold Retirement Housing

EAC took an early interest in this still-small sector of the supported housing market. During 1995 we began detailed research to map provision, and forged links with both developers and managers. We continue to keep abreast of new developments as well as issues of importance to prospective purchasers, such as service charges and standards of management

Equity Release

We have developed an understanding of both pitfalls and opportunities presented by Equity Release products, and in alliance with the not-for-profit Home Improvement Trust, aim to introduce clients to equity release and, if asked, signpost them to appropriate specialist agencies.

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SPECIALIST AGENCIES

We also work with agencies whose focus is wholly or partly with older people, but from a different perspective to our own. They may be concerned with:

- specific health problems (for example, the *Alzheimers Society* or *Stroke Association*); or
- social and personal matters (Contact *the Elderly, Action on Elder Abuse*); or
- a specific client group (*SSAFA, Retail Trust*); or
- a specific aspect of care or housing (*Nursing Home Fees*

Agency, Grace Consulting, Home Improvement Trust).

They may be able to supplement our information and advice with:

- advocacy, as with *Counsel and Care*; or
- financial advice (*Independent Financial Advisors*).

They may also communicate with older people through different channels, as with:

- publishers and website operators *Bettercaring Ltd, Care Choices Ltd* and *Proquest Information & Learning*.



With all of these we aim to share and pool information, and generally work together to simplify the experience for our respective clients.



Margaret Wallace
Services Manager

Meeting all needs & values

As a first and important step towards trying to ensure that all our services address the needs and values of minority communities and individuals, EAC has devised a programme of work with Ethnic Focus.

This draws on their considerable experience, and new focus group and survey work amongst ethnic minorities, to inform the design and implementation of each of EAC's current work programmes, to help ensure that they deliver as effectively as possible to all older people.

We fully expect this ongoing experience to shape the content of our services, the way we deliver and promote them, and the partnerships we develop in the future.

