

# **Quality and choice for older people's housing: a strategic framework: summary**

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## **Foreword**

Older people are no different to younger people in wanting choice over where and how they live their lives, and access to good quality, responsive services to enable them to live life to the full. So why do we need a document such as this that considers the needs of older people in particular? Part of the reason is to say just that. Our policies to improve housing quality and choice and modernise public services are as relevant to improving the quality of life of older people as they are for others in society.

But just making such a statement is not enough. We need to establish a context within which older people's views and concerns about their housing and services can be heard and acknowledged, and to provide a focus for addressing the particular needs of older people. Through the ongoing development and improvement of this strategic framework we are seeking to explore the key housing issues affecting all older people and to ensure that policies and actions are in place to address them. This includes meeting the specific concerns of older people from black and minority ethnic communities, older people with dementia, and other groups with specific needs and requirements.

In this endeavour we are working closely with a wide range of organisations in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. There is much activity outside Government that is seeking appropriate solutions, and we want to harness and co-ordinate this work with our own. We can achieve far more for older people through a partnership approach than we could alone.

Local authorities have a key role to play here in taking the lead locally. We want to see authorities addressing the objectives and issues identified in this strategic framework in their Community Strategies, Housing Strategies, Best Value reviews, care and support service planning, local transport plans, community safety strategies and the range of other relevant strategic planning, service commissioning and service delivery mechanisms.

The strategic framework is also relevant to the work of the NHS partnering local government, on health improvement and health promotion, joint planning and investment for health and social care services, Long Term Care Charters and in co-ordinating the planning and delivery of services in the community.

Much is happening at a local level already, but an important reason for publishing this strategic framework and setting up an Implementation Group to take the framework forward is to encourage and enable local authorities, with the NHS and other local partners, to take stock and identify any gaps or weaknesses in their local strategies and action.

This strategic framework should also help organisations providing and developing housing and services to ensure that their activities are responsive to older people and are formulated within the overall direction of local authorities strategies and plans.

Flexibility is the key to this. There is a rich diversity amongst our older population and a one size fits all approach is no longer valid. Our aim is to set out a vision and put in place actions that will continue the process of innovation and development so that older people are offered higher quality and more choice over their housing and services wherever they live.

**Chris Mullin**

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**Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions**

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**Minister of State for Health**

## **Introduction**

Housing issues are at the heart of the Government's agenda with the publication of the Housing Green Paper in April 2000. To quote from the Green Paper; "Too many [people] are in poor accommodation" "Too many [people] have no choice and control over where they live." Thus quality and choice are the focus for modernising and reform.

A number of clear demographic and social trends are shaping the nature of demand for housing, support, health and care services for older people over the next decades:

- *the number of older people aged over 60 is on the increase;*
- *the number of frail older people is on the increase;*
- *older people who are owner-occupiers are on the increase;*
- *over half the older population are women;*
- *older people from black and minority ethnic groups are rising a group often marginalised from mainstream policies;*
- *the expectations and aspirations of older people are likely to rise over time.*

We recognise that older people should have more say in the development of solutions. The Cabinet Office-led **Better Government for Older People** initiative, in its report **All Our Futures**, shows how consulting and listening to older people can make a step change to public services. The Prime Minister, in introducing the Government report **Life Begins at 50**, states "We want everyone young and old to play their full part in society... It is the old fashioned attitudes of society as a whole which are now seen by many older people as one of the biggest remaining barriers to them fulfilling their potential and living their life to the full." The NHS Plan, published in July 2000, recognises the concerns about age discrimination with one of the objectives of the National Service Framework for Older People (NSF), aiming to eliminate policies in the NHS and in social care based on age alone.

A new partnership between Government, local authorities, service providers and users, Supporting People, is also under development to help vulnerable people live independently in the community by providing a wide range of housing related support services. Older people living in sheltered accommodation, those who receive support from home improvement agencies, homeless people and people with special needs are included in the Supporting People programme, which starts in April 2003.

A number of issues and concerns that were raised at recent Listening Events for older people under the auspices of the Inter Ministerial Group for Older People, and through the Better Government for Older People programme, require consideration by Government. Major messages picked up in relation to housing and support include:

- new homes design should take the needs of older people into account, including those from minority ethnic communities;

- increased insulation, help with heating and other energy saving measures are needed in older peoples homes;
- more home security improvements and local home safety advice services, practical help services around the home and garden and better transport facilities;
- more independent living opportunities and better quality provision of sheltered housing;
- less waiting time for adaptations and equipment and moving home; and
- more flexibility and choice in housing, care and support options and clearer information and advice on what is available.

### **The Wider Government Agenda**

The Governments overall housing policy objective is to offer everyone the opportunity to have a decent, affordable and appropriate home and so promote social cohesion, well being and self-dependence. As older people become frailer, particular housing issues arise as the physical and location characteristics of their living situation, coupled with the interface with care and support services, become more important.

For housing policy specifically, there is a major role to play in ensuring that older people are able to realise their potential. Effective housing, allied to the right care, support and wider services, such as good transport and community safety, can be the springboard that enables older people to remain involved and live their lives to the full. Conversely, poor housing can be a fetter for older people, contributing to immobility and social exclusion, ill health and depression.

The focus of social care and health policy has shifted towards promoting independence and in providing care close to home as opposed to institutional solutions. The Government now attaches a great deal of importance to involving people in developing solutions, which enhance choice, diversity and inclusion. The NHS Plan signifies that policies should enable older people to enjoy their longevity as healthy active years. It focuses on flexible services that enable older people to receive care close to home recognising that most older people want to stay in their own homes, living independently for as long as they can. Thus housing, primary care, community health services and social services, together, need to provide effective support.

Two major objectives to maintain the momentum for appropriate housing for older people are:

- first to ensure older people are able to secure and sustain their independence in a home appropriate to their circumstances; and
- secondly to support older people to make active and informed choices about their accommodation by providing access to appropriate services and accommodation by providing access to, and advice on suitable services and options.

In terms of progressing policy and practice related to these objectives, it is important that initiatives form part of organisations mainstream approach. This applies to strategic bodies such as Government and local authorities, as well as service providers. Our approach is integrated, holistic, inclusive, involving and preventative.

## **The Five Key Areas**

There are physical housing problems to tackle, and public investment has a continuing role to play in further improving the housing conditions of older people. The Government announced in July 2000 additional investment of £2.5 billion over the next three years to improve the nations existing housing and to build new homes.

The main priority for new policy development for older people lies in the following five key areas:

- **Diversity and Choice** ensuring the provision of services which are responsive to all older peoples needs and preferences.
- **Information and Advice** ensuring that information and advice is accessible both to professionals and older people themselves on the variety of housing and support options available.
- **Flexible Service Provision** assisting local authorities and service providers to review housing and service models to improve flexibility.
- **Quality** emphasising the importance of quality of housing and support services, both in terms of ensuring homes are warm and safe and in monitoring the services provided.
- **Joint Working** improving the integration of services delivered at the local level by housing, social services and health authorities.

Consideration of the issues for older people across these key areas is crucial given the proposals in the Housing Green Paper to enhance local councils strategic role in housing. Local councils remain central to the delivery of housing policy. As strategic housing bodies, they need to consider the requirements of people living in different tenures, including owner-occupiers, those renting privately and those in social housing.

## **HIP guidance for 2001/02**

The Housing Investment Programme (HIP) guidance for April 2001/02 will specifically draw attention to the importance of considering the needs of older people when drawing up local authority housing strategies.

The next sections consider current concerns, the response from Government, where change is needed to meet these concerns and the action Government plans to take.

## **Section 1 - Diversity and Choice**

### **Current concerns and Government action**

If older people are to secure and sustain their independence at home, it is essential that they have a range of appropriate accommodation and care choices in the private and public sectors.

The housing solutions and limited choice that were acceptable to previous generations of older people do not necessarily meet the expectations of current and future generations. Older people, quite rightly, have rising aspirations and expect increased choice and standards. Many older people now own their own homes and many are able to exercise greater choice in housing come retirement. This might include staying at home with appropriate repairs and adaptations, to moving to sheltered and supported housing and residential or nursing care. The ability to choose is just as

important for those who may have specific needs or who do not have the resources to exercise choice.

The housing needs of older people are not homogenous and the housing options available to older people need to reflect this. The number of older black and minority ethnic households will rise faster than the remainder of the population and they have specific housing needs and preferences that need to reflect cultural factors. A survey of housing associations (Registered Social Landlords RSLs), published in September 2000, has shown that there is still much more to be done in consulting black and minority ethnic groups about their housing needs (with over half the RSLs in the study not undertaking consultation).

The Housing Corporation has produced specific strategies for minority ethnic groups involving the development of a number of black-led housing associations under its strategies from 1986- 1992, many of which provide housing and support services for older people. The current strategy, produced in May 1998, focuses on developing a culture amongst mainstream housing associations of empowering minority ethnic communities and reflecting diversity.

This means reflecting diversity within the workforce and governing bodies and a greater focus on identifying needs. Local authorities through HIP guidance are reminded of their duties to reflect diversity and are urged that local housing strategies have an ethnic dimension. Nick Raynsford launched new Chartered Institute of Housing/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance on developing these strategies on 19 October 2000.

A project developed by the Department of Health (DH) is tackling the difficulties for black and minority ethnic communities in assessing appropriate social care. By piloting the development of particular services that had been problematic in the past and disseminating the results, the aim of the project is to spread good practice and an understanding of the issues for developing inclusive and specialist services. Four authorities with the help of consultants have taken part in Phase 1 of the project and a report will be made available in early 2001. Phase 2 of the project began in late 2000 and is about mainstreaming services for black older people working with a further group of authorities.

Other groups whose needs may have been overlooked previously include ageing disabled people, older people with dementia, older carers, older people living alone, particularly women, and older homeless people, particularly rough sleepers. There are a number of initiatives being undertaken by housing associations and voluntary organisations, which are addressing these specific needs and it is important that these inform public policy both at a local and national level.

There needs to be a mixed economy of provision which is centred on the housing and support needs of the whole person and which allows choice. Involving users in the planning and delivery of these services is essential if a whole range of housing and support options is to develop and real choices are to be offered to all older people.

**Key outcomes in this area are:**

1. Increased informed choice in appropriate housing and care solutions.
2. Greater responses to the diverse needs and aspirations of vulnerable groups, including older people, for housing and care services.

## **Plans:**

1. Inclusion and evaluation of the needs of vulnerable groups including the needs and issues for older people in the pilots for customer-based choice proposed in the Housing Green Paper.
2. Guidance on good practice in the delivery of care and support for older people from black and minority ethnic groups.

## **Section 2 - Information and Advice**

### **Current concerns and Government action**

Effective and timely housing information and advice plays a key role in enabling older people to access the kind of housing, support and care that meets their needs and preferences. Disseminating good practice and new ideas through information and advice to service providers and planners is also important in promoting the needs of older people and in encouraging innovative solutions.

### **Information and Advice For Older People**

Local housing authorities have a duty to make housing advice services available in their area, with a particular emphasis on preventing and addressing homelessness.

The Housing Green Paper also proposed that housing authorities, in conjunction with social services authorities where necessary, give additional advice and assistance to those who might otherwise find it difficult to find or apply for housing suited to their needs. Good quality advice and assistance is one of the main ways in which older people can get help that can alleviate problems of fuel poverty, social exclusion and poor housing.

Housing advice and information also needs to take into account the different needs of older people. Not only do owners and renters have different needs, but the information provided to different groups within the community needs to be thought through in terms of format and cultural appropriateness. For example many people from black, minority ethnic and refugee groups use their community organisations as the point of call for advice and support. Another important factor is ensuring the availability of information at the right time to enable people to plan. Good quality advice and assistance is one of the main ways in which older people can get the help that can alleviate problems of fuel poverty, social exclusion and poor or inappropriate housing.

The Department of Health is to pilot **Care Direct** the result of a cross cutting review involving other Government departments in a number of places in April 2001. Care Direct aims to provide a new single information gateway for older people and disabled people who have no prospect of work. The aim in the longer term will be to have one national telephone number which will route callers to call centres and local help desks that also provide walk-in and out-reach facilities. The pilots will provide, via a telephone help-line and help-desks in each local authority area, access to information and advice on housing, care and support services and social security benefits. Care Direct will provide an opportunity to offer older people greater information about housing and support options.

## **Information and Advice for Service Provides and Planners**

In the full version of this framework , we have provided information on a range of initiatives that should be shared across service providers, local authorities and Government to improve the lives of older people. In order to make better links between housing and care for older people there needs to be better ways of sharing ideas across services, local authorities, the private sector and Government departments. This framework is a part of that process. We want to see a greater focus on housing amongst health and social care professionals and a greater focus on delivering care and support services for housing professionals. Older peoples needs are changing and services are changing to respond. These are therefore good reasons to improve the sharing of information.

### **Key outcomes in this area are:**

- Better access for older people to advice and information on housing options.
- Advice and information that is appropriate for all older people in different settings, formats and languages.
- A greater sharing of ideas and initiatives across national and local strategists and service providers to encourage new service models and provision.

### **Plans:**

- An assessment of the housing aspects of the Care Direct pilots during 2001/2002 in terms of delivering timely information and advice for older people.
- The development of a national website on housing care and support options for older people as a tool to share good information and innovation.

## **Section 3 - Flexible Service Provision**

### **Current concerns and Government action**

Older peoples need for housing, support and care varies throughout their lives. Housing and support policies need to focus on enabling older people to live as part of the community in their own homes, in comfort and safety and in the best possible health, for as long as they wish. A number of older people seek to move in early retirement to housing that is more appropriate and many others move in later years to more supported housing where care and support is available. Housing, care and support policies need to focus on enabling older people to live as part of the community in their own homes, in comfort and safety and in the best possible health, for as long as they wish to do so. Good quality housing is key to enabling older people to lead active and independent lives, and older people need real choice in their housing options.

### **Staying at Home**

Good appropriate **design** of housing should ensure that there is in-built flexibility that can cater for a variety of needs, particularly relating to access and mobility, to cultural needs and to peoples abilities and sensory impairments throughout the life-cycle of a residents occupation. The Housing Corporation will fund lifetime homes standards, for example, if this is a priority within local authority housing strategies. From October 1999, Part M of the Building Regulations, covering access and facilities for disabled people, has applied to the design of all new housing. Whilst this is a key issue for the future, it needs to be recognised now that issues of the repair and adaptability of existing older housing is of critical importance for many of today's older people.

The importance of **adaptations** for older people in sustaining their occupation in ordinary housing cannot be underestimated. Adaptations, such as the installation of stairlifts or downstairs bathrooms, can play an important role in helping disabled older people remain in their own homes. It is clear that the quality and speed of the delivery of adaptations by local authorities and their long-term resourcing is a major concern that needs to be addressed.

For 2000/01, the Government allocated £72 million to local housing authorities for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). From 1998/99, the Government introduced two-year supplementary credit approvals to enable authorities to make best use of the resources available for DFGs. The recent spending review announced in July 2000 has awarded increased funding of £39m for DFGs over the next three years meaning a spend of £87m in 2001/02, £88m in 2002/03 and £89m in 2003/04. Announced in the NHS Plan, the Government is also committed to ensuring that 50% more people benefit from community equipment services (assistive technology) and increased funding will be made available for this area of provision.

Initiatives such as Better Care, Higher Standards, the long term care charter, will help make clear the standards applicants can expect from local authorities during the application process. Local authorities, in developing local charters, will be expected to focus on outcomes and the quality and speed of delivery. Further action may be required to address current problems with delivering effective and timely adaptations. This is being addressed by DH/DETR, and is covered in Section 5.

The Housing Green Paper made a range of proposals for tackling poor housing in the private sector. The emphasis is on local authority strategies for tackling poor housing shifting to protecting people rather than preserving properties. This is key to recognising the particular difficulties of older people. There is also a greater push to flexibility for the delivery of minor works and the move towards broader advice about home maintenance in the Green Paper will also help people to plan their housing future, as they grow older.

A Government grant to local authorities towards the running costs of approved Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) has been increased from £4.5m in 1997/98 to £6.7m in 1999/00 and 2000/01. This has enabled many older people to remain in their own homes for longer. The Government recognises the key role that HIAs can play in delivering both central and local housing and community care policies and promoting sustainable home ownership. In this years spending review announcement, a further £5.4m will be provided in grants to local authorities to support HIAs over the next three years.

Increasing proportions of older people live in the private sector, overwhelmingly as owner-occupiers. It is estimated that older people households have £367bn locked up as equity in their homes. Equity release schemes could safely enable older people to access funds for improvements to their home improving information and the availability of options available on the market. The Government sees local authorities as key players if this equity is to be made accessible to those who need it.

Equity release schemes are not new, but have yet to fully establish themselves as a freely available, commercially viable product. One significant barrier to the success of equity release is the reluctance of much of the potential market to seriously consider these schemes, even where it would fund works that would enhance the value of their home, and more importantly, the quality of their living conditions. But the signs are encouraging, with specialist organisations such as the Home Improvement Trust nationally, and the Aston Reinvestment Trust regionally, working with lenders and local authorities to expand the equity release market.

There are also several factors driving the development of new **technology** as a way of supporting the independent living of older people and widening the housing options available to them. This includes the increased use of technology generally, the increasing emphasis on prevention and the need to support older people in their own homes where possible and the increasing healthcare costs associated with an ageing society.

Pilot projects have demonstrated the scope for grafting passive alarms and movement sensors onto existing community alarm services to help vulnerable people to remain at home. This is an area where mainstreaming needs to be encouraged and where relatively simple smart home or environmental technologies can be readily fitted to existing housing.

The DH is encouraging development in this field through its work on modernising community equipment services (assistive technologies) following publication of The NHS Plan. An important part of this work will be the promotion of the use and availability of new technologies (tele-care) to secure the safety and security of people at risk.

For many older people practical help and support at home can make a real difference in making decisions about staying in their own homes, as they grow older. HIAs are already providing a range of practical services and these services are diversifying to meet older peoples needs for security, safety and practical help with small jobs around the home. Social services are, through their prevention plans, funding preventative services such as domiciliary care programmes for those at risk of losing independence without support, handy person services, home safety schemes and schemes which strengthen community networks.

## **Moving Home**

Sheltered housing has been one of the main moving options for older people to receive support and remain living independently. It is provided by both the public and private sectors to rent, to purchase outright and as shared ownership schemes. There is a range of definitions and descriptions of sheltered housing which, in general terms, combines specifically designed housing in a group with services such as the support of a warden, communal facilities, an alarm system and laundry service (often known as Category 2 schemes). There are also grouped housing schemes without the services of a warden and other communal facilities commonly known as Category 1 schemes. A recent project funded by the Housing Corporation [\[1\]](#) has concluded that the use of such categories is often unhelpful for older people in accessing suitable housing and services and that schemes need to be described in terms of the property, environment, purpose and philosophy.

The HIP Guidance for 1999-2000 has a requirement for local authorities to review their sheltered housing provision. This entails looking at supply and demand both across local authority and RSL stock and then establishing priorities for action within the context of their housing strategies. A £10m pilot programme to remodel sheltered housing began in October 1999. The Housing Corporation will review this programme during 2001/02, with the aim of incorporating remodelling into mainstream programmes if the pilot proves successful. Scheme reviews will also take place as part of the Supporting People programme after April 2003.

In the private sector, there is evidence that some older people often consider an early move to schemes that offer care services on site should these become necessary. Moving to good quality sheltered housing in both the public and private sectors, is a positive experience for many older people. It enables older people to retain their independence in a home appropriate to their needs whilst receiving support, security and company. In some situations where providers have reinvented their approach to sheltered housing it can provide a home for life. There is evidence that there is a shortage of small, suitable housing for older people and that in some cases sheltered housing has met a housing gap irrespective of the support offered. It is clear

that the role and purpose of the range of sheltered schemes needs to be both clarified and promoted within the health, housing and social care agendas, given its preventative role.

**Extra care or very sheltered** housing can provide high levels of on-site care and support that previously was only available from a residential care setting. There is considerable activity by local authorities to develop service models involving care services being based in sheltered housing developments. There is a danger, however, that authorities and agencies are rushing to develop new very sheltered housing facilities without first clarifying what they are trying to achieve and whether very sheltered housing is the best way of delivering objectives and meeting older peoples needs.

Research for the Royal Commission on Long Term Care considered a range of alternative models of care for older people including very sheltered housing. It noted that this form of provision only catered for a small proportion of the older population and that the vast majority of older people live in ordinary housing. It urged therefore that more attention should be focussed on this in policy and practice than was seen to be the case at that time. Its conclusions about very sheltered housing were that this model should be seen as one of a range of options and not a panacea.

A recent report by Peter Fletcher Associates, *Citizenship and services in Old Age*, also considers the strategic role of very sheltered housing and raises some important questions for policy makers and providers. In particular it considers the importance of a whole systems approach to the development of new housing solutions for older people within a Best Value framework. It suggests there should be some caution in building new models, which base themselves on traditional views of older people as service recipients and not as active citizens. Combining housing and care services in a built form can create future problems of hard to let provision as has been seen with the early forms of sheltered housing. There can be difficulties in changing existing schemes, which are based on specific housing and support packages to those that offer flexible models of housing, support and care. Initiatives such as Supporting People and the reviews already expected through the HIP guidance can provide the impetus for a more strategic approach to reassessing the role of sheltered and very sheltered housing. There are also many good examples of the re-provision or reinvention of schemes. This tends to be where schemes have been seen as part of an integrated programme of service provision.

**Intermediate Care** The NHS Plan, in responding to many older peoples desire to remain in their own home for as long as possible is expanding the provision of intermediate care services. These services will give people the help they need to remain independent at home after or even through a period of acute illness. The aim is to speed up discharge when people go into hospital and ensure that rapid response and hospital at home teams work with GPs, community nurses and social care staff to promote independence and offer care close to home. An extra £900m is available to invest in intermediate care and related services providing, amongst other initiatives, active recovery and rehabilitation services, supported intermediate care places and extra rapid response teams and other forms of admission prevention.

The **Supporting People** initiative aims to encourage support services that can improve the response to peoples needs and preferences and can be delivered in ordinary housing as well as specialised schemes. The introduction of new funding arrangements for housing related support services from April 2003, which includes warden services in sheltered housing, will mean that the support will not have to be tied to specific accommodation. This will open the possibility of greater flexibility in service models, so that services are planned based on peoples needs rather than around the rules of current funding regimes. Supporting People will also cover HIAs. In the development of policy in this area DETR are working with a range of stakeholders including black and minority ethnic communities to ensure continued culturally appropriate services.

### **Key outcomes in this area are:**

- A greater focus on solutions that enable people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and a consequent move away from institutional models of provision.
- Facilities to enable older people to use their own resources effectively to improve their housing.
- The enhancement of technological solutions which help older people to feel safe and secure at home.
- Joint planning of new provision which takes a more strategic and whole systems and citizenship approach to meeting needs.

### **Plans**

- DH initiative on modernising and integrating community equipment services, together with new funding, will enable 50% more people to benefit from community equipment services by 2004. This will include promoting the increased use of new tele-care and new environmental technologies to support the safety and security of older people at risk.
- DETR to develop proposals on greater flexibility for home improvement and equity release, subject to consultation responses to the Green Paper and a suitable opportunity for legislation.
- DETR/DH guidance will be developed to consider a wider range of flexible service provision for older people encouraging a broader and more holistic approach to both staying put and moving options in older age.

## **Section 4 - Quality**

### **Current concerns and Government action**

Quality in this context refers to both the physical **quality of housing** and the mechanisms by which **quality standards of service** can be enhanced across the range of provision for older people including the provision of support and care.

### **Quality of Housing**

**Unfit housing**, like cold housing, can contribute significantly towards ill health among older people. Most unfit housing is privately owned, but unfitness is a problem in all sectors. Following the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review of housing, the Government allocated an additional £3.9bn over three years for housing, of which £3.6bn has been allocated to local authorities mainly to help them tackle the renovation and improvement backlog to their housing stock. This years Spending Review saw a further boost to improving the quality of housing with clear targets set to bring social housing up to a decent standard within a decade.

Recent reforms to the grants system have enabled authorities to target grants more effectively, and this has led to an increased use of home repair assistance, which is particularly targeted at older people. The Government is also developing an initiative the Quality Mark scheme to combat cowboy builders in the domestic repair and maintenance sector. This will offer significant

opportunities for older owner-occupiers (and renters who have responsibility for some of their own repairs) to identify reputable builders.

Tackling **fuel poverty** and improving energy efficiency from a relatively small outlay can yield significant outcomes for older people such as improved health, mobility and social inclusion. Following an inter-departmental review of policy, a radically reformed Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) was introduced in June 2000. HEES provides greatly increased assistance, including central heating systems for low-income over-60s through a new grant maximum of £2,000 per household. There is also a linked scheme whereby older people living in high crime areas may be eligible, after a security assessment of the property, for home security measures.

The Keep Warm, Keep Well campaign has run for twelve years providing advice through leaflets and a help line for older people on keeping warm in winter. Advice covers home insulation, income help and health advice. The campaign was relaunched this winter to include a resource pack for professionals and guidance to local authorities on tackling fuel poverty.

There is also an Inter-Ministerial Group on Fuel Poverty, which has developed a broader UK Fuel Poverty Strategy consultation document published in late 2000, which will impact on the needs of older people.

### **Quality Standards of Service**

The enhancement of quality standards has been an important theme of the modernisation agenda in social services and health with examples of key initiatives such as the Care Standards Act 2000 and the NHS Plan. Best Value also has at its heart the enhancement of quality services across all services including the Best Value in housing framework. Supporting People will also ensure that housing related services for vulnerable groups are monitored in a more effective and structured way to enhance quality. The need to ensure that standards increase over time is also reflected in initiatives such as Better Care, Higher Standards. Quality is a key feature of the Governments modernising agenda.

The Best Value framework for housing has been supplemented by advice to local authorities (Best Value in Housing, Care and Support Guidance and Good Practice. DETR, November 2000) on the links between housing, care and support. There are already good examples of crosscutting reviews of older peoples services being undertaken by local authorities. These can provide an effective mechanism for enhancing co-ordinated and high quality service provision.

Anchor Trust is currently exploring quality issues in housing, which will be developed by older people. This aims to consider housing in the round focussing on the broader issues that concern older people and finding ways of involving older people in the development of quality standards in housing and care.

The National Service Framework for Older People (NSF) which will be published in early 2001, will set for the first time national standards and define service models for the care of older people. It will put in place strategies to support implementation and establish performance measures against which progress within an agreed time scale will be measured.

### **Key outcomes in this area are:**

- A marked improvement in the quality of older peoples housing.
- Greater involvement of older people in setting and monitoring the quality of services they receive.

**Plans:**

- DETR to develop the proposals to provide more effective help to owners of poor quality private sector housing following consultation responses to the Green Paper.
- DETR to follow up proposals to replace the current Housing Fitness Standard by a new Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
- The Government to support Anchor Trust to develop proposals for a charter in social housing, which is compiled, audited, inspected and awarded by older people.
- DETR/DH to provide further joint advice to local councils on good practice in setting local BCHS charters to drive up standards locally across health, housing and social services in dialogue with older people and their carers.
- Supporting People will set and monitor standards in the provision of support services for vulnerable groups from 2003.

**Section 5 - Joint Working****Current concerns and Government action**

In considering policy on housing and older people, it is important to take a holistic approach, looking at crime, distance to shops, amenities, transport links and cultural amenities and preferences as well as physical aspects of the housing stock. Smaller, easier to manage housing, in locations close to all amenities can make independent living easier, and the planning system has a key role to play in facilitating such housing choices.

Policies that affect the lives of older people and impact upon their housing choices need to be joined up at both the central and local level. The need for a joined up approach is one of the most discussed issues in providing older people with a plea for a whole systems approach to delivering services. The Better Government for Older People report, All Our Futures, gives great prominence to the need for a greater joined up approach with public services engaged with older people to deliver holistic services. This approach is one of the most challenging in delivering the objectives of this framework.

**National Level**

There are a variety of Government policies and initiatives which impact upon the housing, care and support services available to older people and which are encouraging the local delivery of such services to be more joined up. These include the Better Government for Older People programme, planning policies, Supporting People, the Beacon Council scheme, Better Care, Higher Standards (the long-term care charter), Care Direct, Health Improvement Programmes (HImPs) Joint Investment Programmes (JIPs) and Local Action Plans and the joint and integrated services set out in The NHS Plan.

The NHS Plan also recognises the need for a more client-centred approach in the delivery of disability equipment and housing adaptations, with better links between services and closer partnerships between housing, health and social services. Social services authorities currently have an overall responsibility for ensuring that the needs of disabled older people are met under Community Care legislation and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. Local housing

authorities are responsible for paying DFGs towards the cost of adaptations to their homes. Extra resources for community equipment services and for DFGs will improve services. Community equipment services will be integrated between health and social services by 2004 and the DETR with DH will publish joint guidance on the provision of housing adaptations which will promote partnership working between housing, social services and the NHS.

### **Local Level**

Improving the delivery of services to older people at the local level requires effective joint-working between agencies in the planning, funding, commissioning and monitoring of services, and also in consulting with older people. This is generally supported although is often difficult to achieve in practice.

Many legal, cultural and financial barriers to joint-working exist, including different organisational cultures, mistrust, role uncertainty, the fear of losing funding and control over funding and different and sometimes contradictory goals, can exist at the national, regional and local level.

### **There are ways to overcome these barriers:**

**Training** Staff need support, joint training and development on their own goals and the roles of their partner agencies. Techniques such as shadowing and job swapping are good initiatives. Including co-operative skills-based training within national training modules, qualification training, and university programmes and placements are other ways forward. Multi-agency joint problem solving exercises, using realistic scenarios, can also be helpful in enhancing constructive joint-policy making. As part of its Special Grants Programme, the DETR is funding the Key Potential project, which aims to develop a map of the training pathways available and required by all involved in working towards meeting the housing, care and support needs of individuals.

**Information** About services Staff, especially those dealing directly with older people, need to have access to current information about a variety of programmes and development opportunities as well as recommended inter-agency referral streams. Simple leaflets or links to websites would help. Unless staff are well informed, older people will continue to be given different and confusing information from a variety of sources rather than coherent information as might be available at their first point of call.

*About users of service* Guidance on information sharing is set out in the Guidance issued on the Health Act section 31 Partnership arrangements. Principally about sharing information between NHS bodies and social services, the principles can be applied across all other local authority services and covers the sharing of information in a legally and ethically acceptable way to improve service provision and service access whilst responding to issues of confidentiality. DH is currently developing this area of work further through an information-sharing group involving Government departments, local and health authorities, local service providers and representative bodies with the aim of providing further guidance.

**User dialogue and involvement** Involving users is one way to focus activities on the user rather than the staff and militate against the tendencies of mistrust between agencies. Older people should be involved more in issues that concern them. Asking people what they want, rather than to respond to what is wrong with current programmes, would help define a more inclusive methodology. Many initiatives from Government are clearly focused on users and carers having a clearer say in policy developments such as Better Care, Higher Standards. Best Value sees consultation as an essential part of the review of services. It is important that work with users of services also assesses the service from the point of view of potential users and this means, in terms of older peoples provision, consulting with people of a younger age so that services planned are flexible for all time.

**Shared goals and budgets** Shared goals at the highest levels can foster better relations and closer joint-working between agencies. There is a need to embrace joint funding and joint budget accountability as a catalyst to changing behaviour and developing inter-agency work. The use of pooled budgets can avoid duplication of services and enhance efficient and effective working. This is particularly occurring in relation to health and social services provision and, with the implementation of Supporting People, the links with housing, social services and health becomes more critical. In some cases, current partnership arrangements could be strengthened, in others they need to be initiated and developed. In all cases, older people and other stakeholders need to be involved in goal setting on an ongoing basis.

**Key outcomes in this area are:**

- More integrated services and a shift in the cultural barriers that have made joint working difficult.

**Plans:**

- The dissemination of good practice surrounding services provided for older people through the Beacon Council scheme from March 2001.
- Publication and consideration of the results of the Key Potential training project to promote a joint approach to training as part of the Modernising Services agenda.
- Joint DETR/DH guidance on housing adaptation services is planned for 2001/02.

**The Next Steps**

This report is a first step in meeting the changing expectations and needs of our older population, bringing together housing, support and care options to provide older people with a good life at home. Many current Government policies are aimed at bringing together discreet services in a more holistic and preventative way providing a challenge to local authorities and service providers in terms of future provision. In many of these initiatives housing plays a crucial role and it will be important for DETR and DH to assess the impact on patterns of housing provision and assess what further action may be required.

The outcomes of the strategy will be judged by whether it meets the concerns of older people and leads to changes in approach. We need first to take into account the messages we have picked up, notably from the Listening to Older People events, and use these to judge change. These are broadly as follows:

- a preference for housing solutions that facilitate living independently in the community and meet the needs of minority ethnic groups;
- less disruption and inconvenience when a need or preference for moving arises, cutting down lengthy waiting times for adaptations and repairs or unnecessary future moves because the accommodation was not the right solution in the first place;
- more flexibility and choice, both within and between tenures, in the kind of housing, support and care services available;
- better transport and safety in homes and communities;
- clearer information and advice on the range of housing options available; and

- more involvement and a bigger say in the shaping of housing and related services.

**For Government, the outcomes of the strategy are:**

- improved co-ordination of policy and practice initiatives;
- clearer awareness of the gaps in current housing, support, care and other services, with ongoing development of policy and new practice;
- stronger and clearer guidance to responsible authorities and service providers for housing, support and care services;
- wider sharing of best practice;
- improved involvement of older people in developing and evaluating solutions; and
- agreed performance measures.

We have commissioned work to develop performance measures relating to the outcomes in this strategic framework and will be assessing their implementation as part of the implementation plans for this work. We will also develop an Implementation Group to meet regularly to assess the impact of the strategy, the progress of the actions proposed and what further work needs to be undertaken.

This document sets out the Governments vision for housing older people. Local authorities and service providers will have a critical role in assessing whether their policies and provision enable older people to retain their independence and receive their care close to home. We will expect local housing strategies, community care plans and new strategies, such as Supporting People, to take into account the issues raised in this document and continue the process of change.

We wish to ensure that we can continue to raise awareness of the importance of housing in the lives of older people and the importance of support and care to facilitate independent living. Housing is much more than just the bricks and mortar. It determines people's identity, their privacy, space and the place where they express their individuality. It is one of the determining factors in promoting the independence of older people, wherever they choose to live.

1. The Case for a Common Currency, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, 2000.

The full document '*Quality and Choice for Older people's Housing - A Strategic Framework*' which contains statistics, contacts in the field, information on a range of initiatives currently underway in the field and a reading list of key material is available.

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