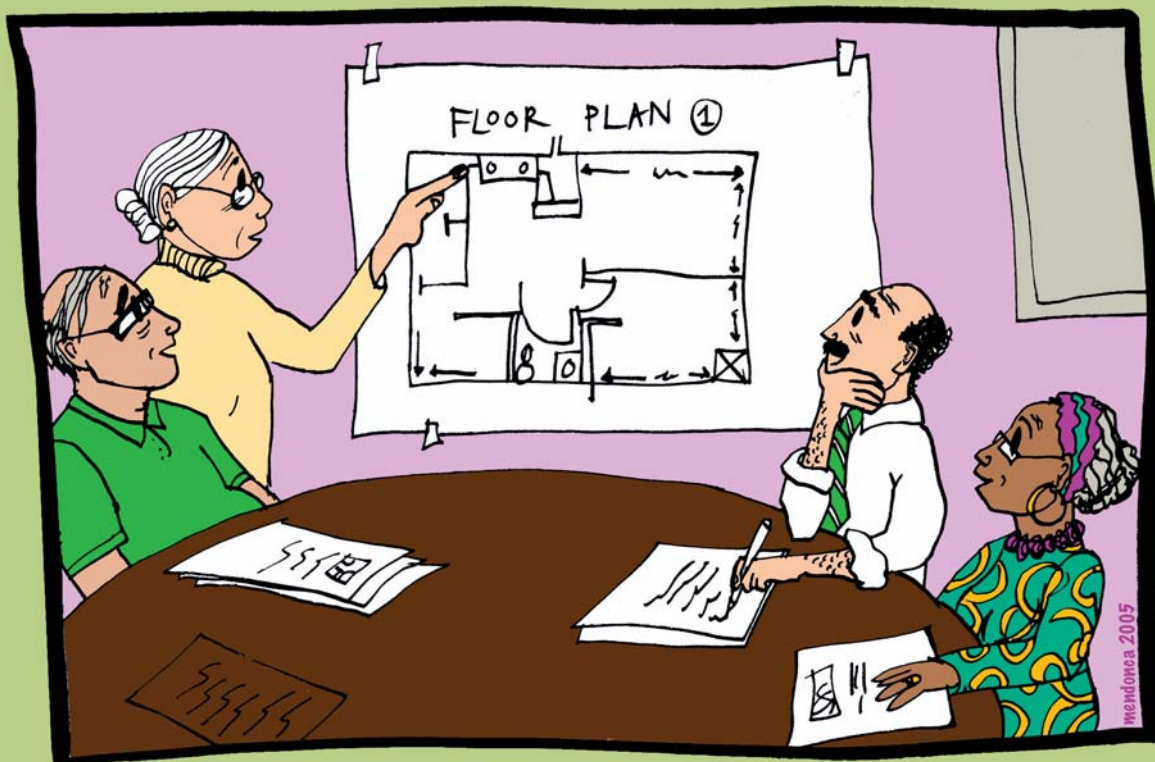


Older people's housing strategies:

Key policy drivers



Housing and Older People
Development Group



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About HOPDEV

The Housing and Older People Development Group (HOPDEV) was established in 2001 by the then Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and now the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), with the Department of Health (DH) to help Government deliver on the strategic framework *Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing*.

HOPDEV is the body charged with advising Government on matters relating to housing and older people. Its members include older people, housing providers, voluntary organisations, local authorities, and other experts on housing and older people. It works in partnership with other organisations and Government bodies.

HOPDEV has 4 work stream groups, each with its own programme of work in 2005-2006:

- Housing Strategies
- Ageism
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Elders
- Information & Advice

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Executive summary

Thirty per cent of all households in the UK are headed by someone aged 60 or over, a proportion that will increase over the next 15 years.

The most important development in recent Government policy is the recognition that older age is an active and inclusive time during which older people are to be treated as an integral and important part of mainstream life.

This active ageing agenda is intended to be the basis for all policy and service developments affecting older people. But mainstream housing policy makes limited reference to older people and even where it does so, this is often limited to the minority of older people who have care and support needs. The broader housing aspirations of older people remain unheard – in contrast to younger working adults whose housing ‘lifestyles’ are to be understood, encouraged and supported.

This strongly suggests a gap at the national level between the policy agenda for older people and the policy agenda for housing. The latter is largely focused on the housing needs of young families and key workers in a context in which the contribution of those groups to economic growth appears to be the single most important factor. No role in economic growth for older people is identified.

This gap is also reflected in regional strategies. Whilst pockets of good practice can be found at local levels, these are not currently fully supported by wider housing policy.

The time delay between policy formation and housing development can be considerable; in planning and housing terms, this can mean years.

Demographic change is already here. That context must be embedded in housing policy and planning, and soon.

It is therefore crucial to bring together the housing and active ageing agendas in order to ensure that housing is fit for purpose for an older population.

1. Introduction

In January 2006, it was announced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM, 2006) that a housing strategy for older people would be developed during 2006-2007 by ODPM, Department of Health (DH) and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

This welcome and important announcement recognises that at a time when 30% of all UK households are currently headed by someone aged 60 or over, housing for older people cannot adequately be addressed at the margins of housing policy (HOPDEV, 2005).

Too often only the care-related aspects of housing are considered relevant to older people; although these are important, they affect only a minority of older people. The broader housing aspirations and needs of older people remain undiscovered and unheard – in contrast to those of younger adults, whose housing ‘lifestyles’ are to be understood, encouraged and supported.

This report explores aspects of the relationship between the housing agenda and the agenda for older age. It looks at the ways in which any gaps at this national level are affecting and influencing regional strategies and local policies and implementation.

1.1 Background

In 2001, the Government published *Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – a Strategic Framework* and subsequently set up the Housing and Older People Development Group (HOPDEV) as an independent body to help it deliver the agenda identified.

Quality and Choice was an extremely important step in recognising the broad range of housing issues facing this significant section of the population. It set out for the first time Government's vision for older people's housing and housing-related support. As a joint publication from the Department of Health (DH) and the then Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), now ODPM, it also made explicit that strategic link at central government level.

1.2 HOPDEV's work on strategies

Strategies for, and strategic approaches to, housing for older people has formed a significant part of HOPDEV's work since 2001. Its initial work included an analysis of a selection of local authority housing strategies. This found that in many cases the needs of older people were scarcely mentioned. Those few that did consider the needs of older people did so within the context of social care needs, overlooking the high and increasing proportion of older homeowners as well as private tenants.

HOPDEV contributed to joint guidance published by DH, ODPM and the Housing Corporation intended to assist local authorities and health bodies produce strategies that considered older people's housing needs (ODPM, 2003).

In 2004, HOPDEV published a *Briefing Note* on Regional Housing Strategies and planning for an ageing population. This highlighted a number of important issues and emerging policy areas, including the;

- extent to which the links between the housing and health agendas were being increasingly recognised by Government and others
- need to take account of the impact of demographic changes on housing choices and markets
- need to link Supporting People strategies for older people with broader national and local strategies
- expectation of Government for socially inclusive regional and regeneration policies;
- importance of understanding the changing aspirations of older people; and crucially, the
- need for Regional Housing Strategies to give focus to the wishes and needs of older people.

In October 2005, the report *Delivering housing for an ageing population* (HOPDEV, 2005) reiterated the need to plan ahead for the whole of the older population as well as those with specific care and support needs.

HOPDEV welcomes the Government's decision to develop a housing strategy for older people during 2006-2007.

This report explores some of the aspects of current policies, strategies and implementation at national, regional and local levels that will be important in order to create a coherent strategy from these separate housing and older age agendas.

These are not just matters of interest to Government. Everyone involved in activities which impact on housing should ensure that the housing needs and aspirations of an ageing population are adequately and appropriately addressed.

2. Policy agenda for older people

2.1 The National Strategy on Ageing

In 2005 the Government published *Opportunity Age*, its national strategy on ageing (Cm 6466). Agreed by all Government departments, *Opportunity Age* sets out the overall framework for developing a coherent strategy for an ageing population. In particular, it stresses the importance of both public and private sectors addressing all the issues that enable older people, whatever their age, to live full lives and play an active role in the community.

This is a critical agenda that, rightly, sets the scene for all policies affecting older people. It is essential that those involved in housing – whether formulating policies and strategies or delivering services – understand this overarching agenda, in order to identify where housing and housing-related services now need to fit.

2.2 Active ageing

Opportunity Age's overarching agenda is one of active ageing.

Box 1. 'Active ageing'

'Active ageing' means a society where later life is as active and fulfilling as the earlier years. Older people are included and engaged in mainstream life, and are seen as an integral part of the wider adult population.

The active ageing agenda affects *every* older person regardless of their housing, health, care, income, family or other circumstances. Another way to describe this agenda would be that it is concerned in the broadest sense with 'participation and well-being'. It brings together approaches outlined in a number of Government strategies such as;

- promoting good mental health (*Our health, our care, our say*)
- designing and delivering support that goes beyond health and social care – such as transport, leisure and adult learning, fuel poverty and energy efficiency services and advice; volunteering; access to technology (*Sure Start to Later Life; Opportunity Age*)
- promoting exercise and physical activity (*Choosing Health; Our health our care our say*)
- supporting choice in health and social care services (*Our health our care our say*)
- tackling health inequalities (*Choosing Health*)
- promoting well-being and independence (*Sure Start to Later Life; Our health, our care, our say*)
- tackling social exclusion and isolation (*Sure Start to Later Life*).

The significance of this agenda is two-fold. Firstly, it considerably broadens discussions about the housing needs and wishes of those older people who do need care and support. It does this by looking at aspects of their lives that go beyond care and support needs and beyond the immediate housing elements that would meet those needs to include, for example, issues of

housing design to do with aesthetic or environmental concerns, not simply with adaptations. In short, it sees the care and support-related housing needs of that minority of older people as representing only one part of their housing interests and only a small part of their lives. Secondly, it brings into consideration the vast majority of older people who *do not* have care and support needs, but still have a wide range of legitimate – and often unrecognised – housing needs and wishes.

Box 2. Prevention

The question of preventative services straddles different aspects of the active ageing agenda for older people:

1. Much of this agenda is concerned with preventing or minimising different types of ill health, now and in the future;
2. 'Low level' preventative services – ie a Handyperson scheme – may provide the one-off support (such as a single housing repair or adaptation) that prevents deterioration in an older person's circumstances;
3. Preventative approaches for those needing ongoing support may serve either to maintain people's status quo, or enhance the quality of their lives – and so ensure this group of older people are included within the broad active ageing agenda.

But the preventative agenda – and active ageing – both go beyond health and social care, to include housing and housing-related issues and a much broader and inclusive approach to older people's overall quality of life.

This also helps to explain the growing importance of targets and performance measures that are able to reflect on multiple aspects of people's lives.

Steps are already being taken to deliver this active ageing agenda. For example, the White Paper *Our health, our care, our say* sets out the intention to issue joint commissioning guidance for services that promote overall 'health and well-being', with a separate set for those with ongoing needs, both by the end of 2006 (DH, 2006). In addition, a new National Reference Group for Health and Well-being is being proposed, to provide an evidence base for commissioning such services (DH, 2006). The Department of Health has also previously announced dedicated funding for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 to help older people live independently at home for longer via Partnerships for Older People Projects and Preventative Technology Grants - £60m and £80m respectively for the same period.

The active ageing agenda is intended to be the basis for all policy and service developments affecting older people. But this has not yet filtered through to the housing agenda, which remains focused only on the minority of older people who have care and support needs. This suggests a gap at the national level between the policy agenda for older people, and the policy agenda for housing.

3. National housing policy drivers

In 2003, the Deputy Prime Minister launched the Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a). The Plan aims to tackle housing supply issues in the South East of England and low demand in other parts of the country, as well as setting out the expected approach to what is built and how it is built.

Importantly, this long-term programme of action is aimed at delivering sustainable communities that are intended to be active, inclusive, safe, and fair for everyone, now and in the future.

3.1 Housing growth and affordability

In 2005, the Government set out its aim of a decent home for everyone in the country (HM Treasury, 2005). The independent review led by Kate Barker particularly focused, however, on the problems facing young workers (especially key workers). In its response in December 2005, the Government set out its view of the importance of making housing more affordable for the next generation – particularly for young families – and its three key goals:

- A step on the housing ladder for future generations
- Quality and choice for those who rent
- Mixed, sustainable communities.

Box 3. The current and next generations

The concentration on the 'next generation' might suggest that all is well for current generations. Yet there is an argument that this focus on the next generation has arisen only at the point of crisis, because of affordability. The concern is that issues for the current older generation will also not be addressed until a crisis point – whatever its basis – is reached.

It is hard to see how the next generation can be appropriately housed over the longer-term without addressing the inter-relationship between the housing market and housing supply, recognising the strong role played by older people in both.

The Government has also said it will:

- Undertake a cross-cutting review of spending across Government as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, to ensure all Departments provide the necessary infrastructure to support future housing and population growth
- Strengthen incentives for local authorities delivering high levels of housing growth
- Merge regional housing and planning functions by September 2006 to ensure regions take a strategic view of meeting housing and infrastructure needs together.

In the 2005 Pre-Budget Report, the Government announced that Kate Barker would lead a further review of land use planning. This is to report to the Chancellor and the Deputy Prime Minister later in 2006. Its purpose is to consider how planning policy and procedures can better deliver economic growth and prosperity alongside other sustainable development goals.

3.2 Economic growth and housing

One of the difficulties in ensuring that older people's broad housing needs and aspirations are understood and responded to lies in the emphasis currently being placed on economic factors. This is a particular issue because there is no clear economic role identified for older people to play.

If economic growth is the primary consideration with regard to housing, planning and development then the housing needs and aspirations of those expected to contribute towards that growth will be prioritised. Within the current model this means the younger population, primarily those in paid employment.

Such an approach is contrary to the recognition within *Opportunity Age* of older people's contributions and the importance of their inclusion within communities. It also ignores the palpable economic contribution made by older people. This goes beyond the significant contributions made by older people in their many paid and unpaid roles (Age Concern England, 2004).

In housing terms, the impact of large numbers of older people on the availability of housing stock is significant, particularly given the increasing numbers of older homeowners. People tend to buy their largest property between the ages of 45 and 54 – and most currently appear to stay put. This has implications for the dynamics of the housing market; for maintenance and upkeep; and for the general housing stock. If existing numbers of 'family homes' remain unavailable for younger couples with dependent children, this type of housing may become over-represented in new developments as a result - or there may be a shortage of family homes in the future. Importantly, older people may currently move house less frequently and thus not 'free up' housing options for other sections of the population precisely because of a lack of suitable alternatives into which to move.

Decent housing also has economic implications in terms of health and care costs, both in terms of the links between poor housing and ill health and also the availability of suitable stock to enable independent living.

Older people, just like the rest of the population, need affordable and good quality housing options. Such provision contributes to the economic strength of regions and local areas.

3.3 National planning policies

The Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3), published in draft form in December 2005, is intended to set out the national planning policies for housing that regional planning bodies and local authorities should take into account in developing Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, with the overall aim of delivering new homes at the right time in the right place (ODPM, 2005).

In this draft version, however, older people are mentioned only once in an appendix, alongside minority sections of the population. This is despite the fact that 30% of all UK households are currently headed by someone aged 60 or over and this is set to increase – a figure that does not support this view of older age as a minority issue.

All planning decisions need to be made within the context of the current and future demographic picture. This is necessary in order to ensure that housing is 'future-proofed' and that there is a wider environment which is fully inclusive for all sections of the population.

More importantly, our society is already ageing. Demographic change is already underway. Appropriate responses need to be planned for sooner rather than later. This demographic context must be explicitly addressed in all planning documents and decisions.

4. Regional strategies

Whether and how the separate housing and older age agendas are matched is particularly important in terms of how their aims are then reflected within regional strategies.

Regional strategies set the framework for housing in England from which local housing authorities and their partners are already delivering housing, and will carry on doing for the next 20 years. In other words, they set out the regional housing issues that should be being addressed during the time when the largest projected growth for all households is amongst those headed by people aged 55 and over (Housing Corporation, 2004).

4.1 Regional Housing Strategies

Regional Housing Strategies (RHS) were intended to set the framework for housing in the English regions.

The published RHS documents included some analysis of the local demographics, an acknowledgement of anticipated changes in the make up and numbers of the older population, and the overall implications of such changes on local housing markets. But little attention was paid to the everyday housing needs and aspirations of older adults who do not have care and support needs and who make up the vast majority of the older population.

Instead, the general approach to identifying older people's housing needs was that this was a matter of housing that related to specific care and support needs. Even when this specialist housing need was identified, little further detail was included in the RHS because, for older people, such matters were expected to be dealt with in Regional Supporting People strategies. Wider issues of design, or housing aspirations and choice – whether of size, location or tenure – were also limited to an emphasis on enabling older people to retain sufficient independence to remain living in their current home. There was an acknowledgement of some specific concerns, but not an approach that accepted – or indeed expected – that housing aspiration might also be found alongside housing need.

This lack of attention to – and arguably knowledge about – the broader housing needs and wishes of the older population raised questions as to where those housing aspirations were to be considered, if not within the Regional Housing Strategies.

It also threw into relief the emerging Regional Spatial Strategies, in terms of the ways in – and extent to – which older people and their housing needs and aspirations might feature.

4.2 Regional Spatial Strategies

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) are the new, current system for regional planning. They set out the factors that regional and local government must consider before making planning decisions, with one of the key elements being consideration of the overall housing market.

These strategies are being introduced for each of the nine English regions, including London. They form an integrated planning and transport strategy across a large geographical area and will cover a 15-20 year period, although they can and should be revised during that time.

The remit of the RSS includes;

- identifying the scale and distribution of provision for new housing
- priorities for the environment
- transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals extraction and waste treatment and disposal.

All the RSS are expected to be finalised and launched between 2007-2008 (with the exception of the London Plan, which is currently under review).

Some of the draft RSS concentrate on the region's geography, transport networks, and economic prospects, where others pay more attention to the region's population rather than these physical or financial aspects. Those that explicitly mention older people do so in one of two ways;

- describing older people as one section of the population, alongside other distinct groups such as families with children, people with disabilities, students, workers with and without dependents; or
- referring to older people alongside groups identified as minorities.

These different approaches affect the ways in which housing issues are then identified. Where older people are treated as an integral part of the region's population, general references to housing make clear how this issue relates to them as well as to other sections of the population.

Where older people are regarded as a minority interest group, housing issues are only made explicitly relevant to this section of the region's population when focused on specialist housing services. This approach is also reflected in the draft version of PPS3 (ODPM, 2005).

In line with those aspects of the national housing agenda, much of the emphasis within the RSS documents is on achieving and sustaining economic growth. Even those Regions that included older people as part and parcel of the mainstream population seemed unable to identify ways in which they might also contribute to regional economic growth.

Although disappointing, it is not surprising, then, to find that RSS appear much more focused on the housing needs and aspirations of younger workers – in particular, the role of housing and other amenities in attracting skilled workers to their region, and the importance of affordable housing options for key workers.

Whilst this is not surprising given the current national housing policy picture, it demonstrates a lack of coherent consideration of the overall housing market and suggests significant gaps in terms of how this approach will also fulfil the overarching agenda for older people.

5. Local policy and implementation

Aside from the national housing and older age agendas and the regional strategies, much of what is delivered at a local level is defined by a further series of policy drivers, particularly those affecting local housing authorities.

5.1 Private sector housing renewal (PSHR)

The PSHR strategy covers private tenants as well as homeowners. This is important since latest figures show that 30% of all private housing is 'non-decent'; and 80% of the housing stock in England is in private ownership (Groves and Sankey, 2005).

Aside from working in partnerships with the aim of improving domestic energy efficiency, and despite the target in Public Sector Agreement (PSA) 7 to increase to 70% the proportion of vulnerable people living in decent private housing by 2010, research suggests that PSHR strategies have a low political priority locally (Groves and Sankey, 2005).

5.2 Other housing and housing-related policies

There is a range of proposed strategies, targets and plans that will begin to impact on housing for older people in the immediate future, particularly at the local level. These include:

- Development of Housing Diversity Action Plan (ODPM) – to ensure that local authorities and their partners consider the full range of diverse needs within local communities;
- Lifetime Homes may be included in the Code for Sustainable Housing (ODPM) – these are 16 design features that affect the interior and exterior of people's homes that make these suitable for all needs at every stage of life by building in flexibility that make homes easier to adapt as peoples' lives change;
- Guidance to be developed for the NHS on working locally with planning authorities to consider the impact of new housing developments on primary care and community services (DH);
- Review of the Disabled Facilities Grant, and proposals for individual budgets to expand the current social services system of direct payments to pay for social care (DH);
- The further development of the Supporting People strategy, particularly around floating support approaches (ODPM).

5.3 Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are very important since they are effectively the local 'partnership of partnerships'. LSPs have to identify and deliver against the priorities for joint action in their area set out through: Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), Local Development Framework (LDF), Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) and Local Area Agreements (LAA).

LAA's are increasingly being identified as the way in which a wide policy agenda will be delivered for older people (Box 4).

Box 4. The growing role of Local Area Agreements

Local Area Agreements concentrate on four 'blocks' or themes – one of which is Healthier Communities and Older People. LAA's bring together the relevant agencies and authorities at a local level (particularly in terms of funding and reporting arrangements) to encourage better ways of joint working at local levels, and to streamline administrative and other procedures.

One of LAA's main roles is to tackle health inequalities amongst older people. But LAA's have also been identified as potentially contributing to;

- improving older people's quality of life by promoting active engagement in local communities, participation, independence and choice,
- piloting of Link Age Plus (part of the *Opportunity Age* agenda), to include the provision of housing information and advice for older people,
- joint planning and delivery of health and social care,
- facilitating joint public engagement on health and social care,
- tackling exclusion and isolation of older people,
- delivering Supporting People objectives.

Outcome measures for LAA's on health, social care and related activities are expected to be negotiated between 2006-2008 (DH, 2006). These outcomes, targets and indicators will be aimed at improving the quality of life of older people by improving local service performance, suggesting a further opportunity to develop housing indicators as part of a quality of life approach.

5.4 Performance measures

One of the main drivers of local delivery is performance measurement. This is increasingly moving beyond the absolute targets set in Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and Public Service Agreements (PSA) to encompass a broader range of measures.

For example, Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE) have been introduced by the Audit Commission to help inform their inspection judgements. These are detailed questions that look at a wide variety of public sector functions. For example, the Housing KLoEs look at how local councils are balancing the housing market with their local circumstances and meeting the needs for housing services. KLoEs are used by the Audit Commission's inspection teams, but are also published in order to help audited and inspected bodies with their own assessments.

KLoEs are also informing CPA. For example, the KLoE that looks across the performance of each council's total role, has a significant section on older people that looks at:

- What the council, with its partners and older people, have done to develop an approach to older people as citizens that goes beyond health and social care and covers the areas that older people say are important
- What the council and its partners have done to undertake meaningful engagement with older people and their representative groups on all aspects of the strategic approach to older people and service provision
- What the council and its partners have achieved in terms of their ambitions to deliver a comprehensive and co-ordinated range of services for older people.

Other performance aspects are also beginning to look across a range of issues to consider broader quality of life matters.

Box 5. **Quality of life indicators**

The Audit Commission is developing Area Profiles as a tool that provides a wide-ranging picture of the quality of life and service provision in a local area and sets out a picture of the needs of specific sections of the local community, such as older people. Area Profiles will;

- provide the public with a summary of data and information on their local area and local services
- help local public service providers to focus more clearly on the issues that most need improvement locally
- aid Government and regulators to concentrate strategically on those areas that most need support.

Hosted on the Audit Commission's website, Area Profiles bring together over 300 items of data that are already collected. This includes demographic information, performance results, the views of local residents and service users, and the assessments made by independent inspectorates of local authority services. They focus on ten 'quality of life' themes, including housing, community cohesion and involvement, health, and community safety.

The Government and the Audit Commission have recommended that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) use these indicators to help monitor the effectiveness of local sustainable community strategies.

In addition, the Audit Commission has been piloting tools that seek to identify how specific groups of citizens, such as older people, experience the quality of life and local services. The results will be available later in 2006.

The Government is also developing quality of life indicators as part of its national strategy on ageing, *Opportunity Age*. For housing, proposals for indicators include older people having choice over where they live (DWP, 2005).

Nonetheless, there are still some significant and absolute targets for local councils and their partners to reach. One example, which applies to local social services authorities, Public Service Agreement (PSA) 8 aims to improve the quality of life and independence of vulnerable older people by supporting them to live in their own homes where possible by;

- increasing the proportion of older people being supported to live in their current home by 1 per cent annually in 2007 and 2008; and
- increasing by 2008 the proportion of those supported intensively to live at home to 34 per cent of the total of those being supported at home or in residential care.

There is still a critical part of the health and social care agendas, and the agenda for services for *vulnerable* older people, which can only be delivered if individuals' existing homes are suitable. For care close to home to succeed as a policy imperative, and to work well for individual older people, those specific housing issues do need to be addressed. But this should go alongside identifying and meeting other housing needs and wishes that are also held by this group of vulnerable older people.

The more traditional performance targets may not be sufficiently broad to take into account the full range of older people's needs and wishes where their housing and living arrangements are concerned.

Instead, the emerging emphasis on quality of life, and the development of quality of life indicators may provide a better route for such broad issues to be considered, at least in the short term. The growing role envisaged for Local Area Agreements may usefully ensure that all local approaches and services are future proofed to reflect the reality of the ageing population.

5.5 Local housing strategies

Every local authority must currently have its own housing strategy – but they are not yet required also to have a housing strategy for older people.

In 2004, a survey by a major private housing provider of local authorities with housing responsibilities found that most did not have and were not planning to develop strategies specifically to meet older people's housing needs.

There was very limited mention of older people in the housing strategies looked at by the survey. Where there was any mention at all it was often limited to public sector sheltered housing provision and funding issues, despite Government guidance that such a limited focus would not be considered adequate or comprehensive (ODPM, 2003). Detailed assessments of present and future housing need, including private sector provision, were missing from the vast majority of strategies.

Early indications from a follow up survey in 2006 suggest there may have been only marginal improvements in the numbers of local authorities developing strategies that specifically include housing for older people. However, where these do exist it is possible to identify pockets of positive activity that go beyond a limited focus.

5.6 Examples of local good practice

There are some examples of good practice, particularly in terms of:

- Involving older people in developing a housing strategy
- Acknowledging older home owners
- Working across health, housing and social care
- Inclusive strategies.

This section is not a definitive or comprehensive survey, but a snapshot that suggests there is both some willingness and ability to identify and address a range of housing issues for older people locally. This is important if the proposed national strategy on older people's housing is to work at local levels, where it will have greatest impact on individual older people.

Involving older people in developing a local strategy

The starting point for the development of Newcastle-upon-Tyne's Housing Strategy for Older People was a 'listening event'. This involved a wide range of older people, including older people from local authority and housing association tenancies, leaseholders, owner-occupiers, private rented housing, older people's Forum, and a local Consultation Panel. Strategy officers and representatives from voluntary agencies of and for older people were the 'listeners', acting as note takers and group facilitators.

The older people involved formulated key messages for the local authority with regard to;

- what can enable older people to live independently
- what special housing for older people should be like.

Importantly, those drawing up the strategy then identified action points and timetables clearly linked to the messages from the event. Equally importantly, the Strategy document made clear links to other relevant local strategies within the city, including the Supporting People strategy, Housing Investment Strategy and Homeless Strategy.

Source: Improving quality and choice: Newcastle's housing strategy for older people (2003-2005). Newcastle City Council

Recognising the needs of older homeowners

A Countywide Housing Needs Assessment, carried out for Gloucestershire County Council by an external consultancy, considered the housing needs of vulnerable people, including older people.

This found, through a large number of face-to-face interviews, that 75% of older people in the county were owner-occupiers. Two-thirds of older people with long-term illnesses owned their own homes. There were also reports of fuel poverty, low income and limited savings.

Of those who had moved in the last 2 years, only 10% had changed from home ownership to renting from a Registered Social Landlord. Home ownership remained the preferred option, though generally people wanted to move to smaller properties that were what they described as suitable for the needs of an older person. Yet at the time of the survey, most of the

Supporting People provision was being made for people in the social rented sector; the available sheltered housing schemes were also in the social rented sector.

This survey highlighted both the extent of the needs of local owner-occupiers and the imbalance between this group, service arrangements and housing options; and the need to fill significant gaps in housing options for large numbers of older people wanting to remain homeowners.

Source: The Housing Needs of Vulnerable People in Gloucestershire

Developing links across health, housing and social care

As part of its Housing, Care and Support Strategy for Older People, Halton developed shared performance indicators across health, housing and social care, building on DH's Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators for social services and ODPM indicators.

The aim of this was to define the housing role in supporting the delivery of these indicators, such as the housing role in falls prevention.

Source: Peter Fletcher Associates

Inclusive strategies

In 2005 North Tyneside commissioned consultants to help them to consider the future pattern of housing, care and support services for everyone over the age of 50. This includes homeowners, private tenants and social housing tenants. By including everyone, this goes well beyond the 15% of vulnerable older people who are regular users of health and social care services. The aim of this approach is to address wider issues about quality of life and social inclusion for all older citizens.

Source: Peter Fletcher Associates

Local strategies are important since they are a key determinant of what actually happens on the ground, including the 'bricks and mortar' of new housing provision. They are the interface between national and regional policy and front line delivery.

This means that if local strategies reflect the national and regional positions on housing where older people are concerned, then broader housing needs and aspirations will not be adequately considered locally.

As a result, most of the local planning and housing issues being pursued will be without reference to this significant section of the local population.

6. Conclusion

Strategies are extremely important since they are key determinants of what is actually delivered on the ground.

If local strategies reflect the current national and regional positions on housing where older people are concerned, then broader housing needs and aspirations will not be addressed. As a result, most of the local planning and housing issues identified for action will make no reference to the wide range of housing needs and aspirations of the 30% of households that are currently headed by someone aged 60 or over.

A major strand of the current health and care agendas is to deliver care at, or close to, home. This makes the housing element of that equation extremely important, not just for those who already have care and support needs but also as a preventative approach for all older people across housing tenure.

Local housing strategies will need to go beyond relying on rented sheltered housing as their primary response to meeting the housing needs of older people. If they are to meet the older age agenda they will need to go significantly further in order to ensure that the housing needs and wishes of all older citizens are understood and adequately addressed.

The more traditional performance targets may not be sufficiently broad to take into account the full range of older people's needs and wishes where their housing and living arrangements are concerned. Instead, the emerging emphasis on quality of life, and the development of quality of life indicators may provide a better route for such broad issues to be considered, at least in the short term. The growing role envisaged for Local Area Agreements may usefully ensure that all local approaches and services are future proofed to reflect the reality of the ageing population.

If economic issues are to remain a primary factor in terms of housing development, then this approach must look at the economic contribution made by the whole population in any area – including that made by older people.

The time delay between policy formation and housing development can be considerable; in planning and housing terms, this can mean years. Demographic change is already here. That context must be embedded in housing policy and planning, and soon.

The housing and active ageing agendas must be brought together now nationally, regionally and locally, in order to ensure that housing is fit for purpose for an older population.

7. References

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The need for housing and planning developments to meet the broad housing needs and wishes of the UK's ageing population is becoming ever more pressing. Thirty per cent of all UK households are currently headed by someone aged 60 or over – and this is set to increase.

Older People's Housing Strategies has been written following the Government's announcement that it will develop a national strategy on housing for older people. It looks across the separate national housing and older age agendas to consider what is happening at regional levels and at local levels in terms of strategies and services. It is intended for use by everyone involved in housing for older people.

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HOPDEV acts as a reference group and a sounding board to Government. Its members include older people, housing providers, voluntary organisations, local authorities, and other experts on housing and older people. It works in partnership with other organisations and Government bodies.



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