

# Working together to address older people's concerns

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# Flourishing retirement housing

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## More needed...

- Not for everyone, but good option for many more people
- Still only 2-3% of over 65s compared to 70% home owners
- Pressure on social sector means private sector role critical

## The benefits...

- Remain independent longer
- Services delay need for public sector support
- Frees up larger homes for families, and equity for older people
- Community and environmental benefits



# Challenges for the sector

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- Planning regime
- Financing and affordability (mixed tenure; mid-income)
- Links to social care – ensuring new funding proposals are ‘sector neutral’
- Reform of benefits – CTB, HB?
- Quality of schemes – existing stock and new build
- Consumer confidence



# Planning

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- Draft National Planning Policy Framework
  - refers to older and disabled people, but a lot more needed – a system that actively encourages retirement housing
  - Age UK working with developers to ensure explicit encouragement and guidance on specialist housing (sector-led working group)
- C2 and C3 demarcation
  - Distinction not fit for purpose, and wrong that so much rides on it – reflecting poor engagement from planners
  - Recognition for extra care housing in planning
- s106 requirements
  - Case for reducing requirements where schemes include clear community benefits
  - Age UK yet to be convinced that answer is wholesale exemption – will more affordable housing result?

# Social care funding

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- Dilnot Commission will propose new offer to homeowners
  - A lifetime 'limited liability' for care costs (c £35k)
  - Will NOT propose abolition of Attendance Allowance
- Debate then clarity needed on boundaries of 'care' v 'housing'. Department of Health White Paper is an opportunity for the sector to ensure neutrality between care homes and housing with care.
- New business opportunities for retirement housing sector, and chance to support residents get most out of new system



# Consumer confidence

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## THE GOOD NEWS

- Most housing management is excellent and residents happy
- ARHM vital role in promoting good standards and sector reputation
- Existing Code of Practice is very good, when implemented in full, alongside the law

## THE BAD NEWS

- A small minority of agents offer a poor service, undermining whole market
- Continuing examples of poor practice in charging, many out-of-step with Code of Practice



# ‘Putting Retirement Housing in Order’

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Age UK championing interests and concerns of residents

Content of report largely based on direct contact

- Lack of transparency – present and future costs
- Unfair management fees
- Poor complaints and consultation procedures
- Unjustifiable transfer/exit fees
- Fair and open tendering
- High insurance premiums
- Unnecessary scheme manager costs (accommodation)



# Exit fees

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- We may disagree but we all want clarity. OFT sitting on issue not helping anyone
- Recognise that exit fees part of many business models, but use is totally inconsistent and often hard to justify.
- Lack of transparency and inconsistency is not helpful for sector – confusing vulnerable consumers, damaging confidence – led to OFT inquiry
- Age UK has called for abolition, championing consumers who strongly resent both the principle and the detail (eg letting; no link to service benefit)
- When we see OFT recommendations we'll look at our position again but status quo unsatisfactory



## Working with you

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- Positive engagement with ARHM on issues we've raised in report
- Accepted ARHM invitation to join group revising Code of Practice and compliance procedures. But this needs your support and resources to be effective.
- Agreed to act as a 'bridge' between residents and agents, where helpful
- Joint approach to Law Society to improve conveyancing of retirement housing – clear advice on service contracts etc
- Keen to offer our charitable services to residents through agents, especially Information and Advice.





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