



## **OPHTF CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

### **Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) Response**

#### **PEOPLE - Issues**

**Commitment** - The well worn statistics around the increasing number of older people and the associated socio – economic consequences have been publicised frequently during the life of the ARHM, over 30 plus years. We ask for a commitment to address the issues with a joined up approach between health, social care and housing. We hope that the outputs from the Task Force will be a sound first step to achieving better options for all older people. A collaborative approach needs to be developed and woven through Government Policy, with reference to the White Paper on Social Care, and obvious links to good housing and care leading to and maintaining good health. Conversely homes of a non decent standard, and inadequate support to live well, lead to more expense for the NHS.

**Choice** is key; to recognise that ‘older’ people’ are as diverse as the general population and this will be increasingly so with time. ‘One size’ absolutely does not ‘fit all’. There should be a range of options available to support **how** older people want to live. This may mean a range of types of housing but it may also mean facilitating support and care in peoples own homes.

**Information** - There is a lack of easily accessible information and advice for older people, their carers and families. Older people and their families don’t know where to go for advice; current advice options are fragmented and difficult to access.

#### **Recommendations**

A Government commitment to focus on the needs of older people and how best to serve them. A recognition that housing, care and support and health cannot be seen in isolation and are intrinsically linked.

All types of retirement housing options to be seen as equal; no **one** type should be promoted over another, if it is, then choice is undermined. The benefits of retirement housing should be 'celebrated' – reducing feelings of loneliness, access to activities and companionship, security, less of a burden compared to running and paying for family home.

The management of retirement housing, whatever form that may take, is reliant on a long term management relationship provided either by a developer/landlord or managing agent. On site staff whether that be resident or visiting posts (often referred to scheme manager, development manager etc) should be offered access to appropriate professional training.

An information and advice service to support older people accessing information about the choices available is essential. This should be on a 'one stop shop' basis so that customers can access the information easily. It should cover all forms of contact, email, telephone, virtual, ad hoc and by appointment. EAC has the credibility, knowledge and skills to put this into place relatively quickly if appropriate funding available.

## **PRODUCTS – Issues**

Main stream house builders not entering the retirement housing market by volume - the lack of supply to meet existing and future demand is already well documented.

Research from Shelter and The Co-operative Bank published last week found that a quarter (25%) of renters aged over 55 say worrying about eviction is negatively impacting their mental or physical health. Tenants over-55 are being hit with a no-fault eviction notice every 16 minutes.

Older people in private rented sector being evicted as landlord's mortgage payments and other costs increase and force a sale. They are unable to access local authority housing options as they don't fit the criteria and do not have the capital to purchase a property.

Lack of clarity regarding **Event Fees** creates adverse publicity affecting the retirement sector and putting off prospective purchasers.

Telecare underutilised.

## **Recommendations**

Create incentives for volume house builders to enter the retirement housing market and for landlords and those wishing to remain in mainstream housing to maintain and adapt if necessary to enable people to remain in their own

homes. The announcement on 7<sup>th</sup> September of £50m home adaptation funding announced jointly by DHSC and DLUHC is welcome and it is hoped that this funding stream will be easily accessible and administered for those wishing to utilise it.

OPSO has a place in addressing some of the issues with the those unable to purchase outright and can offer different financial options but needs to be carefully and diligently marketed to ensure that the product is understood and is affordable in the long term; need to avoid setting people up to fail.

Telecare options to be considered in a greater capacity, linking to the work of TAPPI report and encouraging collaborative working with the technology market.

Adopt a unified Code of Practice across the retirement sector that covers all forms of tenure and make clear that event fees should be payable for a service e.g. a contribution to a reserve fund for future capital renewals. Clarity on this point is essential and ARHM considers non negotiable. Our own Government approved Code contains the statutory requirements for managers of leasehold retirement housing but also goes further to include good practice and provides reassurance for leaseholders that their developments are managed to a certain standard.

### **PLACES - Issues**

Anecdotally we hear of examples of planning applications for specialist older peoples housing being unsuccessful in favour of more commercial interests e.g. supermarkets, distribution centres etc

Local Authorities inconsistent in their approach to their assessment and development of older peoples housing.

### **Recommendations**

To review national and local planning policies to ensure that older peoples specialist housing is factored into the planning policy framework and that the benefits of links to housing health and social care are woven into that policy framework.

## **Editorial notes.**

The Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) is an organisation committed to improving the lives of older people. We achieve this by raising standards in retirement housing.

Since our formation in 1991, our voluntary board has championed the rights of older leaseholders in private and housing association properties. By providing training, events and audit inspections, we support landlords to improve their standards and the lives of older people.

Through our 2016 Government-backed Code of Practice, we ensure leaseholders, their families, scheme and site managers and people working in the sector know what retirement housing providers legally must do and what they should do.

We are the largest trade association body for the retirement sector, with around 30 members representing more than 85,000 homes across the UK. We are the only body that represents private landlords and registered social housing providers.

## **Our role**

Our mission is to continually raise standards in older people's accommodation, by promoting best practice and ethical management amongst those responsible for retirement housing.

By setting standards for membership of our association and providing training and education to members, we improve the quality and professionalism of the leaseholder retirement sector.

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