

SEEFA Policy Panel on Later Life and Ageing

Summary of the key issues on

Housing and Age-friendly Environments

People's homes are extremely important to them. People want their homes to help them stay independent, healthy, safe and part of the local community – for as long as possible.

1. **Good housing is fundamental to good health and well-being.** Poor housing is estimated to cost the NHS £600 million a year. There are known causal links between poor housing and long term health conditions. Good housing prevents falls, mental ill health and excess winter deaths.
2. **Good housing extends independence and active citizenship.** This saves the economy money not only by reducing care costs but also because our economic and social contribution to our communities can continue.
3. **The engagement of those who will be using housing is still not good enough.** A much better housing experience could be achieved for today's and tomorrow's older people if experience-based collaboration and co-design were practiced at all levels, including:
 - with the Government on housing policy
 - with Local Authorities on housing planning requirements
 - with housing providers on housing design
4. **Future housing stock is not adequate to meet the known needs arising through demographic change.** We are seriously concerned about the under-provision of suitable housing of all types for an ageing population in the South East. There is a widely predicted growing demand for specialist and supported housing and it is known supported housing reduces health and care costs.
5. **We would like to see better integration of housing, health and care.** Robust mechanisms for improving communications between hospitals, adult social care teams and housing providers need to be put in place. We have examples of both good and bad practice. We would like to see an assessment of housing needs routinely included in care planning on discharge from hospital.

6. **We remain concerned about ageist attitudes.** For example the current debate about under occupation unfairly highlights older people even though almost as many people in other age groups 'under occupy' their homes. The underlying issue is that improvements to the quantity and quality of overall housing stock are needed.
 7. **The housing debate should take into account that 76% of over 65s are owner occupiers, many of whom are in low income and vulnerable groups.** Practical, cost effective solutions such as assistance with house maintenance and timely access to adaptations help keep people safe and independent.
 8. **If our houses are not in age friendly communities we face increased social isolation and curtailed independence.** We would like greater emphasis to be placed upon developing age friendly communities which enable all people to fully participate. This means having safe and welcoming streets with easy access to local shops, health services and community activities. We value positive interaction across all age groups.
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Some statistics on housing in later life

- Vulnerable people over 75 who are low income home owners are the ones most likely to live in poor housing
- One million older people live in 'non-decent homes'.
- The home is the most common place for falls. One in three people over 65 and one in two people over 80 suffer a fall requiring hospital treatment each year. 75% of deaths due to falls occur at home.
- The Building Research Establishment & Chartered Institute of Environmental Health found poor housing is estimated to cost the NHS £600 million a year. There are known causal links between poor housing and long term health conditions.
- A shortfall of 240,000 units of purpose-built housing for older people by 2030 is predicted by the Housing LIN and Elderly Accommodation Counsel.
- The National Housing Federation estimated that in 2011, 70,000 older people were on a waiting list for suitable housing and related housing support services and this is expected to quadruple to 300,000 by 2016.
- 76% of people over 65 are home owners.
- There were an estimated 24,000 excess winter deaths in England and Wales in 2011/12. The majority of deaths occurred among those aged 75 and over. There were 19,500 excess winter deaths in this age group in 2011/12 *

*Office for National Statistics.

Other data supplied by supplied by Care and Repair England

SEEFA is the South East England Forum on Ageing and aims to bring people together to influence later life strategies, policies and services to make life better for current and future generations of older people. SEEFA's Policy Panel comprises people who by virtue of their own life experiences are experts on later life and who can actively engage with policy makers and commissioners to influence later life policy.

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