



Should I stay or should I go?

Developing Housing Options
Services for Older People

Supported by the
Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

*The
Rank
Foundation*



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The case examples and quotations in this report do not relate to any of the people shown in the photographs.

Foreword

Whatever our age, most of us would agree that we want to live healthy, independent lives in ways which reflect our own preferences and choices.

So older people are not exceptional when they express a wish to be independent and remain living in their own homes for as long as possible.

However, the reality for some people is that a family or health crisis can force them to make a radical and unplanned housing move. For many, there is no one to help them make an informed choice and implement their decision.

Many of the recent policy changes at national level on housing, health and social care issues give some emphasis to the importance of choice and to the provision of services which will help older people maintain their independence. Yet all too often, when it comes to making a choice about where to live, there is an absence of local services which can provide older people with impartial, up-to-date information, advice and practical support.

Of course, providing information and advice to consider housing options is not sufficient on its own. We need to have parallel developments to ensure that there are real options and real choices – in other words, that choice can actually be exercised, and that there are real, not just virtual choices.

‘Should I Stay or Should I Go?’ is tackling this deficit by stimulating and supporting the development of housing options services for older people and by subsequently evaluating their impact.

Much can be learned from listening to those on the receiving end of services. I hope that the ‘voices of experience’, as highlighted in this report, will help to demonstrate to policy makers, planners and practitioners alike that housing options services have an important role to play in achieving national aims of enabling people to stay in control of where and how they live as they grow older.

Vera Bolter MBE

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Summary

This report explores the need for older people's 'housing options' services. Such services provide information, advice, support and practical help for older people who are living in poor or unsuitable housing, and who are considering the possibility of moving home.

An overview is given of the policy background against which housing options services for older people currently operate. Significant changes in the housing, health and social care sectors continue to have implications for the choices and options available to older people. Issues arising from national initiatives including Supporting People, Private Sector Housing Renewal, Hospital Discharge, Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal all have an inter-relationship with housing provision and the availability of the support services which can help older people remain living independently in their own homes.

The report also outlines the role of Care & Repair England's 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?' national programme. This was established in 2002 to stimulate and support the development of housing options services for older people and subsequently monitor and evaluate their impact.

The report provides an update on the progress made to date with the development of local pilot projects and highlights the resources now available from Care & Repair England. These resource materials have been developed as practical tools to help local providers and planners develop housing options services in their area.

Service users and other key players can provide a range of perspectives which can assist in further project development. As part of the background to this report, interviews were undertaken with older people and professionals who had used Bristol Care & Repair's 'Move-On'

Advisory Service for Older People. Listening to local people in Bristol has highlighted a range of issues, which have implications for the development of housing options services for older people. These will be of relevance to providers of services for older people and to planners, practitioners and managers across the health, housing, and social care sectors.

Based on the Bristol interviews, it is clear that a local housing options service can play a valuable role both in supporting older people to make informed choices about how and where they will live, and also with the implementation of those decisions. The view that housing options services can prevent people from moving into residential care sooner than is necessary also emerged from the interviews.

Housing options services aim to help people explore possible housing alternatives and make informed choices. People may choose to remain living in their existing home, reassured that this is the current best option but with a plan for the future should circumstances change. However, the Bristol interviews provided a picture of people wanting to move yet some being dissatisfied with the limited range of retirement homes or sheltered housing currently available. Housing options services will need to find ways of feeding such views into local planning processes if the real needs of older people are to be seriously addressed.

Section 1

Setting the Scene

The need for housing options information, advice and support for older people

1. Overview

The dilemma of whether to “move on” or “stay put” is faced by many older people as they consider their future housing needs. Many people struggle to maintain homes and lifestyles in the face of problems such as deteriorating health, poor housing conditions, isolation or low income. Yet many older people have no one who can help with impartial information about possible housing options or who can provide the practical support necessary to implement changes.

Living in a safe, adapted and manageable home not only increases older people's level of independence, but also improves their health and reduces the need for support services. The Audit Commission in its report 'Integrated Services for Older People' (2002) highlighted that older people value services that help them to live independently. Yet *“services for older people are not well co-ordinated”* and *“preventative services, which aim to promote independence, are underdeveloped”*. The report points out that the drive towards reducing delays in hospital discharges has focused resources on getting people out of hospital at the expense of measures which would help older people live more independent lives.

The Commission advocates a whole system approach containing a comprehensive range of services including those that help older people to live independent lives and which guide them through the systems of service provision.

Other studies have demonstrated the wider links between poor housing and ill health. As long ago as 1980, the Black Report (Department of Health and Social Security) drew attention to some of the health inequalities that arose for those living in poor housing conditions. The more recent Acheson inquiry into health inequalities (1998) raised similar concerns. There is evidence to suggest that housing improvements lead to *“improved physical and mental health as reported by individuals, as well as reductions in symptoms and the use of health services”* (Thomson et al, 2001).

When housing problems occur, lack of independent advice can hinder older people's ability to make informed choices about where and how they will live. All too often irrevocable housing moves are made hurriedly following on from a health or family crisis. Sometimes older people think they really “ought” to move, or pressure is put on them to move, but they have no idea what is available nor where to start looking. Others are left worrying about the future, not really knowing how they will manage their home and maintain their independence.

The majority of older people in need of such support are likely to be living in owner-occupied or private rented housing; 70% of older people are owner-occupiers. Owner occupation does not automatically bring a better standard of living or greater housing choice. Half of all people living on low incomes are owner-occupiers and many are living in homes with low equity (Burrows R 'Home-ownership and poverty in contemporary Britain' JRF 2003). Even where the equity is not low, it may well be below the level required to enable older people to purchase the often favoured bungalow or a private sector retirement flat.

Current national statistics reveal that there are 1.5 million unfit homes across the UK most of which are owner occupied. The majority of people living in poor and unfit housing are older people, predominantly older women and people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities (The State of UK Housing, Policy Press 2000 & English House Conditions Survey 1996). And there is very limited provision of special needs housing schemes catering specifically for the needs of BME elders, despite the demographic trend towards an ageing of this sector of the population.

Older people are over represented in the local authority housing stock and are least likely to be catered for by Registered Social Landlords, (RSLs), the major builders of quality rented accommodation over the past decade. There has only been limited progress on choice based lettings schemes and movement across tenure, both of which could improve older people's access to housing options.

The scale of the potential need for local housing options services is considerable bearing in mind that there are 6.7 million pensioner households across Britain.

2. National Housing Information Services

A range of national services have been developed to provide older people with information to assist with making a decision about moving home, including moving to special needs accommodation and residential care. These include the information services operated by the Elderly Accommodation Counsel, Counsel & Care for the Elderly, Disabled People's Advisory Services, Help the Aged and Age Concern England. There are a number of initiatives currently underway looking at the global provision of housing information for older people, including improving access to housing availability data via the internet, work supported by the Housing Corporation. There is also an initiative by Help the Aged to improve general housing advice provision for older people.

Better access to housing information will be very useful to many older people, their relatives, carers and professionals, and will help to enable people to make an informed housing choice. However, for some older people a local, impartial adviser with whom they can talk through the pros and cons of possible housing alternatives face to face, and who can help to sort out the practicalities of moving when there are no friends and relatives on hand, is of equal importance to obtaining factual information.

3. Help to Stay Put

Many poorly housed older people have been helped by Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) to remain living in their own homes. HIAs help mostly older and disabled homeowners carry out essential repairs and adaptations to their existing homes, and may also assist with financial affairs and accessing support services.

However, for some older people their existing home can become more of a hindrance than a help to maintaining independence. In some cases, where a house is in a very poor state of repair, the upheaval of major building work can be too much for a person to cope with, even assuming that the financial costs of such work can be met. Moving may be a preferable option.

The national grant system for helping poorer householders pay for essential repairs has had a major impact on the ability of many older people to stay put in their existing home. The 2002 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order gives local authorities a broad new discretionary power to provide assistance in the way that they choose. Provision of assistance with the costs of moving to a more suitable home instead of renovating or adapting an existing home is one way in which local authorities could use this new power.

The reforms should be fully implemented by July 2003. Early signs indicate that any remaining grant aid is likely to be more specifically targeted and there is a growing emphasis on use of equity release. To date this has proved to be an unpopular option for many older people, so it remains to be seen what impact these changes will have on older people's housing options. Increasingly, older people may need or wish to think about alternatives to staying put.

4. Local Housing Options Services

A local housing options service can respond to the expressed concerns of older people by providing information, advice, support and practical help for those who are living in poor or unsuitable housing, finding their accommodation difficult to manage or considering the possibility of moving home.

If, having looked at the range of housing alternatives, an older person decides that moving is their best option, the local housing options service can help with finding suitable accommodation, be this through arranging visits to special needs housing or help with the practicalities of buying and selling a home. If remaining in their existing home is the best option, help with current problems can often be given. The person is left better informed of their housing options should their needs change and secure in the knowledge that there is someone to turn to should that need arise.

In addition to providing practical advice and support for individuals, a local housing options service can also seek to improve the range of housing options available to older people by establishing links with local planners of housing and related support services. Highlighting needs, influencing local strategic thinking, involving older people in shaping service developments, can all be valuable roles that a local housing options service can play in stimulating change.

Finally, a local housing options service can act as a resource to other workers across the housing, health, social care and advice sectors through initiatives such as provision of information packs and training sessions to raise awareness of housing options issues.

5. The 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?' National Programme

Overview

Should I Stay Or Should I Go? is the name of Care & Repair England's national programme, established in 2002 to stimulate and assist in the development of local housing options services for older people.

The driving forces behind the initiative were the expressed wishes of older people emerging at local events and meetings, and an analysis of the changing policy context with regard to housing provision.

The Should I Stay or Should I Go? national programme aims to address the difficulties faced by older people who are living in poor and/or unsuitable housing and who are facing the possibility of moving home, by promoting the growth of practical help, advice, information and support services. A number of locally managed pilot projects are being supported, monitored and evaluated by the national programme, which is also developing a range of service models and an evidence base for use by policy makers at local, regional and national level.

The national programme is examining the applicability of a housing options service model in a rural context and also with regard to meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic elders; a number of the pilots have been selected to specifically address these issues.

The Should I Stay or Should I Go? programme is supported nationally and locally by a wide range of funders including hact (the Housing Associations Charitable Trust), the Housing Corporation, the Rank Foundation, the Tudor Trust, the Countryside Agency, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (via help with Care & Repair England core costs) and Help The Aged.

A national Advisory Committee provides expertise and guidance for the programme, undertaking a regular review of performance and also linking related developments within their own organisations with that of Should I Stay or Should I Go?.

Listening to Older People

As noted above, one of the factors stimulating the development of the Should I Stay or Should I Go? programme was the expressed concerns of older people about their housing needs.

In 2000 Care & Repair England published the outcome of a series of meetings with older people around England in the report 'Learning to Listen'. Older people came along to these meetings to discuss general housing issues, as well as talking about their experience of using HIA services.

One of the key messages to emerge from the events was the need for access to someone who is well informed but impartial to talk to about possible housing options. The housing problems of older people from Asian communities emerged as particularly acute as many were living in the worst housing yet were the least likely to access existing services.

This need for advice was voiced yet again at a joint Care & Repair England/Age Concern Warwickshire countywide housing event for older people, 'Keeping your Own Front Door Day'. The need for improved housing advice has also been identified in research by Age Concern England and hact.

Aims of the National Programme

The national programme has a number of key strands. On a practical level, the programme is helping a number of local housing options projects, managed by a variety of agencies, to develop in different parts of the country. These are intended to operate as pilot or demonstration projects. The national programme is developing an evidence base, aimed at informing and influencing the strategic planning of housing, health, care and support services for older people at national, regional and local level.

A national monitoring system and a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the impact of pilot services is being developed in partnership with the School of Health and Social Care at Sheffield Hallam University.

The programme's work with the pilot projects includes the provision of training, information and support alongside the development of replicable models of service and good practice. These models can be adapted by the projects to suit local needs, skills, knowledge and circumstances.

In partnership with the national programme, some of the local pilot projects will also develop training for the staff of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) on housing options for older people and related issues. They will also examine the scope with RSLs for the development of more flexible allocations policies, for movement across tenure and other initiatives which could widen housing choice for older people.

Some of the other specific outputs of the *Should I Stay or Should I Go?* national programme include the development of:

- *A comprehensive Toolkit of how to set up and run a housing options project*
- *A set of possible models for provision of housing options advice in a variety of settings, including operation in rural areas and how best to meet the needs of BME older people*
- *A national, interactive network of housing options type projects*
- *Training materials for improving knowledge and awareness of housing options for older people among professionals in the housing, health and social care sectors*

- *Identification of good practice models with regard to the work of Local Authorities and RSLs for inclusion in an older people's housing strategy, such as improved allocations policies and better provision of information for older people*
- *Provision of information packs to support working with volunteer housing options advisers, including older people who have themselves faced similar situations*
- *A national system for the monitoring and evaluation of housing options services.*

6. Bristol Care & Repair 'Move-On' Project

Bristol Care & Repair have been operating a housing options project, entitled the Bristol Care & Repair 'Move-On' Advisory Service for Older People, for the past four years. The innovative work of this service is of significant importance with regard to the national programme and the lessons learned by Bristol have been extremely useful in the development of support materials for pilot projects.

One of the aims of this report is to identify the views of people who have made use of a housing options service and to examine the practical lessons emerging from this local experience. Interviews were conducted with service users and professionals in Bristol in order to obtain a range of opinions about the service and older people's views about moving home.



Section 2

Policy Context

1. Overview

National housing, health and social care policies which impact on older people's lives increasingly stress the importance of enabling older people to live independently, usually in their existing homes, and of reducing reliance on special needs accommodation.

There is also a growing emphasis on the importance of people planning for their retirement and taking more of the financial responsibility for supporting themselves. Owner occupiers are increasingly being expected to utilise the equity in their homes to pay for repairs or ultimately pay for their care needs.

National policies also stress the importance of social services, housing and health working together as enablers rather than providers of the services that can help older people to live independently.

In this section we examine some of the key policy areas which impact on the housing options available to older people, and hence on the ability of housing options services to help people improve their housing situation.

2. Housing

'Quality and Choice For Older People's Housing: A Strategic Framework' (DETR/ DH 2001) defined the Government's housing vision. This was the first time that

two government departments had jointly published a national policy statement with regard to housing for older people.

Two policy objectives for older people's housing were set out:

- 1. to ensure older people are able to secure and sustain their independence in a home appropriate to their circumstances*
- 2. 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 line with the policies set out in the Housing Green Paper in 2000, the role of central government with regard to housing policy emerges as one of setting out general principles and themes which individual local authorities interpret and implement in the ways that they consider appropriate for their area. There is also an expectation that local authorities will take on an enabling role rather than that of a provider of housing.

Since the publication of the Framework, there has been a significant level of public investment in housing. This has primarily been directed at the general improvement of local authority stock and this has been beneficial

to older people as the majority occupiers of local authority housing stock. There has been no specific ring fenced investment in the provision of new housing for older people following on from the Framework.

Two main issues have remained top of the housing agenda – low demand, decline and abandonment in parts of the North of England and the shortage of affordable homes in the South East. In many ways housing for older people continues to have a low profile, but there is increasing interest in housing provision for older people from the health sector (see below).

In terms of the implications for housing options services it is notable how central such services could be with regard to the 5 key areas set out in the Framework:

- **Diversity and Choice** – ensuring the provision of services which are responsive to all older people's 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

With regard to central government policy for the owner occupied sector, there has been a fundamental change. Older home owners and private tenants are the majority of occupiers of unfit housing and the major recipients of government help with repairs to their homes. The national system of repair grants is coming to an end following the introduction of a new general power to enable local authorities to tackle unfitness and disrepair in the ways that they consider the most appropriate to their area. A new target has been set for local authorities to improve private sector stock:

“By 2010, all social housing will have been made decent and a further 130,000 vulnerable households in the private sector will have had their homes made decent [in addition to the 80,000 helped during 2003-6].” (ODPM, 2003)

The new power also enables local authorities to consider providing people with financial help to move home, rather than repairing or adapting, where this is a more cost-effective and suitable solution.

These changes to the grant system could have a significant impact on low income older people's ability to stay put in their homes. The effect of this legislative change will only emerge slowly over the next few years as local authorities redefine their role with regard to the owner occupied sector.

Adaptations to people's homes can be critical to their ability to remain living independently; an adaptation can make the difference between a person being able to live in their existing home or having to move.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) have played a major role in enabling people to undertake essential adaptations to their homes. These grants remain largely unchanged under the new housing legislation, and expenditure also stays ring fenced. A consultation paper about delivery of adaptations services was published in February 2003 and there are discussions at a policy level about the continuing rise in demand for adaptations. Again, the future availability of help with adaptations could impact on the work of housing options services.

As part of its overall housing policy, the Government produced 'Action Plan: Addressing the housing needs of black and minority ethnic people' (ODPM Nov. 2002). With regard to older people, there is recognition of the increase in numbers of BME older people and their relative poverty and exclusion. The ODPM has highlighted how important it is to older people that their cultural needs and preferences are understood and respected in the provision of housing and related support services. This is further promoted within the 2001 strategic framework 'Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing' (DETR/DH 2001).

The Action Plan points out that many older people from BME communities do not access the support services available. Reasons for this include lack of awareness and *"religious or cultural barriers to seeking help outside the family"*. The Action Plan forms part of the ODPM's overall policy to ensure that race and equality issues are mainstreamed across the housing agenda whilst also recognising the need to have initiatives specifically targeted at BME communities. Two of the pilot housing options services are specifically targeted at meeting the needs of BME elders.

A major player in the provision of housing for older people is the Housing Corporation, the primary conduit for government funding for new-build social rented housing. The Housing Corporation published their new policy on housing for older people at the end of 2002 and this supports the priorities set out in the Government's own Strategic Framework. There is an emphasis on provision of a range of housing and related services that improve quality of life and enable older people to live independently and interdependently. The Corporation is a key supporter of initiatives to develop comprehensive information, advice and advocacy services, including 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?'

3. Health

In recent years the focus of health and social care policies emerging from the Department of Health (DH) has shifted significantly towards promoting independence and in providing care 'close to home' as opposed to 'institutional' solutions. With a growing body of evidence illustrating the inter-relationship between poor housing and health problems, there is increasing recognition that housing quality and suitability have a significant impact on the achievement of this general aim.

Similarly, there is a government commitment to improve people's health and reduce health inequalities (Tackling Health Inequalities – results of the consultation exercise, DH 2003). Here too the role of housing in bringing about such improvements is starting to be acknowledged.

The NHS Plan 2000 is a key document with regard to setting out the policy framework for the delivery of services for older people. One of the aims of the plan is to *"remove the outdated institutional barriers between health*

and social services, which have got in the way of people getting the care they need when they need it". One of its many radical proposals is to bring together health and social care, with services for older people being one of the first areas for transformation.

Whilst the Health Act 1999 gave health and social services the ability to pool budgets, and deliver services through one-stop shop arrangements or nomination of a lead commissioner, the NHS Plan takes this further with a vision of more formal mergers and the creation of local Care Trusts.

Stimulating new services which prevent older people being unnecessarily admitted to hospital and keep more people out of long term care is a key aim of DH. In 'Building Capacity and Partnership in Care' (DH, Oct 2001), the Department reiterates the principles underlying its policies:

- *The support and promotion of independence*
- *Social inclusion and equitable access*
- *Rights and choices for people using services and their carers*
- *Better care and higher standards*
- *Care at, or closer to, home*
- *The need for a whole spectrum of care options*
- *Delivery through integrated working, unimpeded by organisational boundaries and supported by harmonised budgets*

Bearing in mind the links between poor housing and ill health that have already been mentioned, housing options services could be of particular interest to local health partners; they provide new ways of supporting people's aspirations to maintain independence and assist in the delivery of the above aims.

Another high profile area of health sector policy is discharge from hospital. In 2001, the Audit Commission found that two-thirds of hospital beds in England were occupied by people over 65 and that a key factor in their delayed discharge was the lack of community care. Under proposed new legislation local authorities could be recharged for the cost to the hospital of delayed discharge where the person is medically fit but remains in hospital because of a lack of a community care package or suitable accommodation.

Again, a housing options service which helps older people consider their housing alternatives and assists with their implementation, as well as advising health and social care staff on available housing options, could contribute to improved hospital discharge.

A further initiative by DH which is of particular relevance with regard to provision of information and advice, is Care Direct. Under this pilot initiative, a single point of access to a wide range of services was created via a telephone help line. There are potential links here to housing advice and information services, with a housing options service being a useful additional resource to older people who need more than basic information about housing.

4. Supporting People

A radical change to the system of funding housing related care and support was introduced in April 2003. Whilst a national system of housing benefit continues to meet the costs of the 'bricks and mortar' of housing provision, a locally managed 'Supporting People' fund finances the costs of related support services.

This integrated funding framework targets people in supported accommodation, or in receipt of flexible support, helps people leaving institutions (for example prison) to set up home, or those who have been homeless. It will provide on-going support for those adjusting to more independent living after moving out of special needs housing and/or supported housing scheme. In future, funding for HIAs will also come from Supporting People.

It remains to be seen whether this new system will improve the services available for older people who need support to live in the owner occupier sector.

5. Rural Issues

There are increasing concerns about availability of community care and alternative housing options in rural areas. 'Rurality' is now on the political agenda and a series of studies, particularly those carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation research programme 'Action in Rural Areas', have revealed the extent of rural poverty and disadvantage.

One of the major issues for older people living in the countryside is public transport – lack of this can be the catalyst to having to move home when a person can no longer drive or afford to run a car. Alternative housing options can also be very limited; there are few special needs housing schemes for older people in rural areas, although the level of provision in market towns is closer to average ('Living in the Countryside: The needs and aspirations of rural populations' The Countryside Agency, 1999)

The Government's White Paper 'Our Countryside: the Future' (DETR 2001)

addressed a number of key issues around housing. It announced the doubling of the Housing Corporation's Rural Programme and urged planners to make better use of the policies available to secure more affordable and better-designed housing.

A study of housing and support provision for people living in rural areas was undertaken as part of The Rural Supported Housing Programme, funded jointly by hact, the Countryside Agency and the Housing Corporation. This concluded that *"despite the fact that older people are the largest disadvantaged group living in the countryside, there is very little provision for them other than sheltered housing and this is often unpopular.... Housing and support services have a vital role in preventing [older people's] recourse to intensive health and care services"* ('Support and Housing in the Countryside', Countryside Agency, 2002). It suggests that providers should be encouraged to expand on the very limited existing services and these should go far beyond sheltered housing, particularly to include meeting the support needs of owner occupiers. A housing options service would be one useful part of improved housing services.

6. Social Exclusion

The Government's Social Exclusion Unit was set up to help improve government action to reduce social exclusion by producing "joined-up solutions to joined-up problems". The Unit describes 'social exclusion' as a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health and family breakdown.

A report published by the Social Exclusion Unit in 1998 exposed the scale and complexity of the problems in deprived neighbourhoods. An action plan was published in 2001, and it is envisaged that this will be delivered through new ways of working at a local level. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the creation of Local Strategic Partnerships and the piloting of neighbourhood management initiatives are all the direct result of the Social Exclusion Unit's work.

The implications for older people's housing and support services lie in the extent to which older people's needs and wishes are acknowledged within each local neighbourhood renewal strategy and community strategy. It could be argued that the need for specific support around housing options is likely to be highest in areas where poor housing predominates. It is anticipated that in areas of low housing demand and high levels of unfitness, there will be an increasing use of selective demolition and remodelling of areas. In such cases many of the people affected by these changes will be older people who will need particular help with looking at their future housing options.

7. Government Engaging with Older People

In recent years the Better Government for Older People programme has heralded a new level of interaction between policy makers and older people. A Cabinet Committee on Older People has been established, aiming to improve the overall quality of life for older people. Older people from the national network of older people's action groups are represented on the external Housing and Older People Development Group which was created to take forward action under the Strategic Framework for Older People's Housing.

Increasingly, policy directives and guidance across sectors emphasise the importance of actively engaging with older people when making policies and decisions that will impact on older people's lives.

Housing options services could potentially play a constructive role in linking marginalised older people living in unsuitable housing to the process of locally defining strategies for the future provision of housing, health and social care for older people.

Mr and Mrs Brown are both in their 80s, and were living in their own two bedroom, second floor flat when they first contacted the Move On service. The flat had no central heating and was in need of renovation. Mrs Brown had not been feeling well and was finding their living situation increasingly depressing. Though they had decided that they wanted to move, they didn't know where to start, particularly as there was not a great deal of equity in the flat and no relatives to help.

The Move On worker visited the Browns to talk through their possible housing options. She then helped them with the housing application forms and correspondence with a housing association, taking them to view the ground floor retirement flat offered to them. They both liked the flat and the Move On worker helped them through all the practical arrangements of selling their home, moving and organising the home care support needed because of Mrs Brown's deteriorating health.

“They helped with everything – the service was fantastic.”

Section 3

The Story So Far



1. New National Resources for Housing Options Services

To date the national programme has produced:

- ▶ Resource materials, including a detailed 'Toolkit'
- ▶ Website
- ▶ National help service
- ▶ Monitoring and Evaluation System
- ▶ Rationale and framework for the development of local pilots

Toolkit and website

In order to help organisations interested in developing better housing information and advice services, a 'Housing Options' section has been created on the Care & Repair England website (www.careandrepair-england.org.uk). All Should I Stay or Should I Go? national resources are freely available in downloadable formats. At the time of writing this report, resources available on the website included:

■ Recruitment Pack that offers:

- *model job description for a 'housing options' advisor post*
- *models for person specification, job advertisement & supplementary application form*
- *suggested recruitment and selection process*
- *staged induction framework.*

■ Should I Stay or Should I Go? Toolkit that provides:

- *description of a housing options service*
- *commentary and analysis of the wider context and the policy background*
- *explanation of why a local service is needed*
- *useful sources of advice and information on such issues as accessible information formats, disabled persons housing registers, HIAs, housing for older people, money advice, practical support services, and residential/nursing care*
- *sample housing options information leaflets for older people.*

■ News section to share information on latest developments, particularly the work undertaken by the local pilot housing options projects

■ LINKS to provide information and easy access to the websites of over 100 organisations including those dealing with Care and Support, Disability, Equal Opportunities, Health, Housing, Older People, and Social Policy/Research issues.

■ 'Join the Debate' email group, which offers an opportunity for users to share information and comments on current local and national issues of relevance to housing options schemes.

Self-help tutorials designed for the pilot housing options projects will be added as they are developed.

The national Should I Stay or Should I Go? programme co-ordinator also provides an information service and is available to advise organisations interested in housing options services.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Frameworks for monitoring and evaluating both the local housing options pilot services and also the Should I Stay or Should I Go? national programme have been produced. The data collection system has been designed to answer some of the following key questions about local services:

- What is the demand for housing options services?
- What impact do they have on older people's housing situations?
- What impact do they have on service planning and provision?
- What are the lessons about the best way to deliver such services?

The monitoring and evaluation is being undertaken by Care & Repair England and the School of Health and Social Care at Sheffield Hallam University under an innovative partnership arrangement.

2. Pilot Housing Options Projects

Local demonstration housing options projects form the cornerstone of the Should I Stay or Should I Go? programme. Specialist housing options advisers for older people, operating within a range of existing older people's services, will contribute evidence for evaluation of the whole programme.

Pilot projects were selected to provide data on the operation of a housing options service in a wide range of settings and to consequently enable the national programme to evaluate the applicability of the model in different environments and contribute to a shared pool of knowledge and good practice.

Factors to be covered:

- ▶ Rural and urban operation
- ▶ Meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic elders
- ▶ Operation in areas of housing decline/ abandonment/higher equity areas
- ▶ Management model

The following project locations have been selected to date:

■ Bristol

Managed by Bristol Care & Repair, an independent HIA. Pilot will undertake extension of its 'Move-On' service into targeted work with black and minority ethnic elders. Operating in a city with relatively high equity, but with areas of urban decay.

■ Burnley

Managed by Anchor Staying Put HIA. Operating in an area of urban decline, low equity and housing abandonment.

■ Derbyshire

Managed by Age Concern Derby & Derbyshire. Operating in a rural area.

■ East Riding of Yorkshire

Managed by East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Operating in a rural area.

■ Leeds

Managed by Leeds Care & Repair, an independent HIA. Operating in an urban area with a wide range of home equity levels. History of working in areas with a high proportion of BME householders but pilot not specifically targeted at this sector.

■ Warwickshire

Managed by Age Concern Warwickshire. Operating two pilots, one working with Asian elders in Leamington Spa, and a rural pilot in South Warwickshire.

At the time of writing, each of the pilots had either recruited staff or were in the process of recruitment, with the exception of Burnley.



Section 4

The Voices of Experience

In this section we highlight the findings arising from interviews undertaken with older people and professionals who have used the Bristol 'Move-On' service.

1. Bristol Care & Repair 'Move-On' Advisory Service

Bristol Care & Repair established its 'Move-On' Advisory Service for older people in May 1998. The initial evaluation concluded that the 'Move-On' project was addressing an otherwise unmet local need. The service was recommended to work closely with the local authority to improve the range of housing options for older people, including a relaxation of the restrictions on specialist retirement housing for rent in Bristol. Since then the project has weathered funding uncertainties and currently employs one full time worker.

The primary focus of the project is housing help for individual older people. However, the project has also produced housing options information materials and a video outlining retirement housing options for older people. In producing the video, a particular goal was to address the needs of older people from minority ethnic communities for whom English was their second language. The video is now available in English, Hindi and Cantonese. The project worker has also contributed to local housing awareness training sessions for professionals from a wide range of sectors.

The direct work with older people ranges from provision of information and advice, to complex case-work lasting months and dealing with a spectrum of housing, financial and social care issues. Referrals originate from social services home care workers, social workers and community care workers; staff from Care Direct; hospital staff; health visitors; housing staff from both the local authority and RSLs, and the caseworkers of the Bristol Care & Repair service. Some referrals involve older people with high support needs.

Should I Stay or Should I Go? is indebted to the work of the Bristol 'Move-On' service, which has contributed its experience towards the initial development phase of some of the national programme's resource materials. There seems to be no better place to start for a "snapshot" picture of the impact one local housing options service is having on the ability of some older people to pursue their housing choices in order to retain their independence.

2. Background

During December 2002, 22 service users were contacted by Bristol Care & Repair 'Move-On' service to seek their agreement to participate in interviews by the Should I Stay or Should I Go? programme co-ordinator. An information sheet was issued to explain what would be involved if they decided to participate.

This ad hoc group of service users included some older people who had moved and others who had 'stayed put' after contact with the 'Move-On' service. 18 older people agreed to be interviewed during January 2003. Nine older people were interviewed in their own homes, and nine via a telephone discussion.

Interviews with older service users were informal but a structure for the questions was followed in order to obtain consistency of data collected. This was designed to obtain basic facts such as age, household type, the type of property lived in at the time of the initial contact with the 'Move-On' service, details of any help received with daily living tasks, and, if they had moved, the type of property people had moved to. Some questions were designed to prompt people to explain the sorts of problems they were facing when first in contact with the 'Move-On' service, what help and support they were given, and their views on the service itself.

Permission was given by each person for details and views to be quoted subject to identities remaining anonymous.

Eight local professionals with a working knowledge of the 'Move-On' service were sent an introductory letter during December 2002. The names had been provided by Bristol Care & Repair in order to provide a mixed group of those involved in service planning or commissioning and those working directly with older people in the area.

During January and February 2003, seven of these professionals participated in telephone interviews. Those interviewed were from a mix of agencies including Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Trust, Bristol Social Services, Bristol City Council and Registered Social Landlords. Their roles included social worker (both in community and hospital

settings), occupational therapist, community care worker and senior manager.

A structured framework for questions was designed to clarify any involvement in local policy and planning, ascertain the contact each professional had had with the 'Move-On' service and identify the types of situations which each person and their colleagues would refer to the service. Perceptions of the help and support provided by the 'Move-On' service were noted. Several questions were posed to elicit comments on the difference the service makes to the ways in which older people can now deal with their housing situation and the ways in which local professionals operate. Each person was asked for their views on the difference the 'Move On' service makes to local planning and policies.

It should be noted that the interviews were not designed to provide a comprehensive, quantitative analysis of all of the pros and cons of providing a housing options service, but rather to give a general qualitative overview. The evidence obtained from the interviews nevertheless provides some useful indicators about such service provision.

3. The Views of Older People

Outcomes for Service Users

Of the 18 people contacted, 55% (10) were women and 45% (8) were men. The youngest person interviewed was aged 70 years, the eldest was aged 96 years and the average age was 79.

At the time of first being in contact with the Bristol 'Move-On' service, 66% (12) of the older people interviewed had been living in a terraced house, 22% (4) had lived in a semi-detached house and 11% (2) people had each been living in a flat. Most people had

been living in a home with two or three bedrooms. Only one person had been living in a larger property: this had four bedrooms. 89% (16) had been owner-occupiers but three had only part owned their homes with other parties involved in the ownership. One of the owner-occupiers had purchased their home from the local council under “right to buy” arrangements. One person had been living with a relative and only one person had been in a private tenancy. After contact with the ‘Move-On’ service, 33% (6) had continued to stay in their original homes and 66% (12) had moved. Of those who had moved, 91% (11) were now living in retirement flats and 9% (1 person) had moved to a bungalow. All of their new homes were rented either from the local council or a registered social landlord, and were part of schemes that would have historically been developed as sheltered housing.

Support Services

When first referred to the ‘Move-On’ service, 83% (15 people) had not been in receipt of support or help with daily living tasks. 17% (3) had been provided with meals on wheels. One of this group had received help with laundry and another had received home help support with shopping and cleaning. The pattern of support changed slightly following receipt of the ‘Move-On’ service and/or a move of home. One person had been referred for a laundry service, one person had ceased to require a meals on wheels service following their housing move, and two people were now in receipt of a range of home care and support services, which they had not accessed prior to contact with the ‘Move-On’ service. One individual mentioned that the service had helped her to obtain a disability allowance, which had enabled her to pay for private support services.

**“I was getting beyond it.
I just couldn’t deal with it.”**

Mrs. T is aged 82 years and a widow. She had lived in her two bedroom terraced house for over 50 years. Although suffering from osteo-arthritis and asthma, she did not receive any home help support. The main problem she experienced was in getting upstairs to the bathroom. Before being in contact with the ‘Move-On’ service, she had received help from Bristol Care & Repair to improve the door locks and repair the plumbing in the kitchen. Following a winter when she had generally felt low and depressed, her daughter, herself of retirement age, had suggested that Mrs. T might think about moving into a flat. Her daughter suggested contacting the ‘Move-On’ service, which had been advertised in some information she had read about disability benefits.

As a result of the work of the ‘Move-On’ service Mrs. T is now living in a one-bedroom ground floor retirement flat (RSL managed), is in receipt of the higher rate of disability allowance and is now better able to live independently.

**“I wouldn’t have entertained
the move without her
[the Move-On worker’s] help”**

Reasons for Wanting to Move On

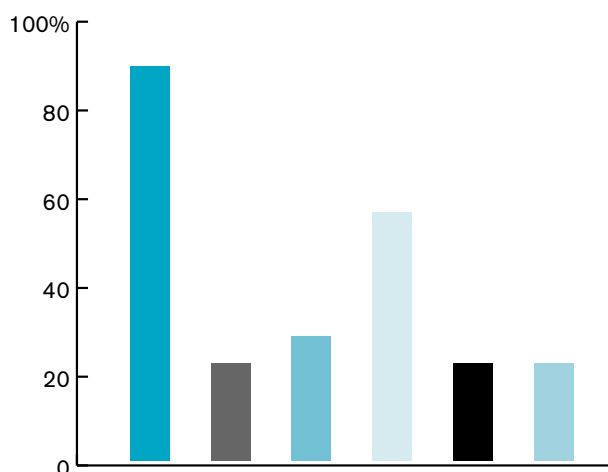
Each person had their own story to tell about the difficulties they were facing when they first came into contact with the 'Move-On' service. Most people (89%) mentioned health problems as being a significant issue. These ranged from not feeling well, to feeling "low" or suicidal, arthritis, giddiness, walking difficulties, leg ulcers, panic attacks, asthma, and emphysema. The most dramatic story came from two sisters who had been severely burned in a house fire. Each had spent weeks recovering in hospital. The 'Move-On' service had subsequently been able to help them each find a separate new home.

22% (4) of the people interviewed mentioned the death of their spouse as being significant in terms of how they felt about continuing to live in their home. Other people made it clear that living alone, having no one to rely on for help, and feeling unable to cope had contributed towards their decision to move. A range of problems with people's homes were mentioned such as the number of steps to the house or flat, a bathroom being inaccessible, a lack of central heating, noisy neighbours (even "neighbours from hell"), and drug taking in the neighbourhood. 56% (10) referred to the need for housing repairs and renovations, some of which had been extensive including those required following a fire. Homes and gardens too large to manage were described by 22% (4) of the people interviewed.

Finding the money to carry out repairs was raised as a problem by 22% (4) of the people interviewed. This included three people who wanted to move but had so far been unable to do so. Money was not always the main issue. For example, one person described

health problems, which included asthma and emphysema. She could no longer get into the bath because it was too high, and the house was damp. Although she had the finances to cover the cost of repairs, she could not cope with the dust. She had received help with housing application forms from the 'Move-On' service and eventually, the service had helped with packing and moving home.

Reasons for people wanting to move on



- Health - 89% (16)
- Death of Spouse - 22% (4)
- External/internal access issues - 28% (5)
- Repairs and renovations - 56% (10)
- Home/garden too large to manage - 22% (4)
- No money for repairs/renovations - 22% (4)

Help and Support Received

Descriptions of the help and support provided by the 'Move-On' service which people had valued included:

- initial advice,
- help with obtaining disability allowances and grants,
- helping with completion of application forms,
- sorting out immediate problems with the existing home (for example a front door which the owner could neither close nor lock),
- putting people in touch with Housing Associations,
- taking people to view potential new homes,
- helping with packing and organising removals,
- helping with purchase of new furniture,
- helping to deal with insurance issues,
- handling paperwork in general.

61% (11) of people did not refer to the existence of any relatives who could have helped them. Of the 38% (7) who mentioned their relatives, 71% (5 people) were quite explicit in stating that they could not have coped without the help of the 'Move-On' service. One person went further by commenting that they could not have called on their family for help.

Staying Put

Of the 33% (6) of people who had 'stayed put', only one individual seemed to have made a positive decision to do so. The remainder had not been able to move home for a variety of reasons.

The one person who had made a positive choice to stay put referred to comments

made by her doctor, who thought she ought to leave her existing home and had recommended residential care. She described the problems she was having eg. finding it difficult to do the housework. The 'Move-On' service had helped her to claim a disability allowance for which she had not thought she was eligible. This had enabled her to pay for the help she needed with the garden and the house. She had also been provided with various disability aids including a toilet seat and grab rails by the Bristol Care & Repair service. She was now thinking about the possibility of a stair lift.

**“I didn’t want to and still
don’t want to leave the house
unless I really have to”**

28% (5) of people interviewed still wanted to move home but they had found that nothing was available to suit their requirements. One person living in a Victorian four-bedroom house described it as “falling to bits”. She explained that the 'Move-On' service had not been able to find anything suitable for her. She had been interested in a local retirement housing scheme but had been told that she was too old, as the scheme did not accept anyone over the age of 90 years.

Another person had been offered a retirement flat and had signed the contract. She had put her house up for sale, disposed of furniture which would not fit into the new flat, and had purchased new easy chairs. Two days before she was due to move, she changed her mind because she felt the new flat was too small and confined. At the time of being interviewed, she talking of wanting to move into a flat but was convinced there was nowhere available for people like herself who wanted a 'decent amount of space'.

One couple decided that they would like to move after being told that they did not qualify for a grant to help with repairs to their home. A leaking roof over the kitchen had caused extensive damp and mould. Most of the plasterwork had fallen off the walls. There were similar problems in some of the bedrooms. They had visited a potential retirement flat but this had revived memories of an institution one of them had experienced as a child.

They had clear views about the accommodation they would like to move into (a council flat similar to one rented by a relative) but felt it unlikely they would get what they wanted. So they were continuing to live in their damp home with all its problems. They were very concerned about the future and expressed frustration and resentment that some people were being helped by the LA whilst others, like themselves, were not.

“I didn’t realise it was so controlled. As soon as I walked in the door... it all came back. Here in our own home we can come and go as we please.”

Apart from one person who could only recall the specific help given by Bristol Care & Repair with repairs and adaptations, the older people interviewed were enthusiastic in describing the help received from the ‘Move-On’ service. In reply to questioning about any disadvantages to the service offered, no one could identify any negative issues and most people were quite emphatic in stating none.

Those interviewed were asked how they would describe the ‘Move-On’ service to other older people and to describe the benefits of the service:

- ▶ *“It’s something really necessary for older people. The service ought to be available all over the country. She told me about possible help and how to go about it. I didn’t know how or what to do otherwise.”*
- ▶ *“The benefits are getting people out of a situation they can’t handle, dealing with a house and all that.”*
- ▶ *“If you’ve got no immediate family, if you’ve got no-one, then it’s a lifeline”*
- ▶ *“There are not enough people to advise you.”*
- ▶ *“People don’t know about the help given. I thought I wouldn’t be eligible but I got help to get rented accommodation.”*

4. The Views of Professionals

Roles and Relationship with ‘Move-On’ Service

Of the seven people interviewed, three had strategic planning responsibilities and four were providing a direct service to older people. Some professionals had directly referred people to the ‘Move-On’ service. Others knew about the service or had met the project worker during local planning meetings. Those professionals who were involved in strategic planning had a particular role in relation to very sheltered housing and general housing services plus related services for older people.

Views of Professionals Referring Older People To ‘Move-On’ Service

Professionals who had directly referred older people to the service expressed considerable support for the work undertaken and for the approach adopted with service users. Several commented that the ‘Move-On’ service helps older people remain independent and out of residential care. It was seen as particularly important that the service made sure older people were fully informed of their choices and options and in control of decisions.

Another professional quoted a case where joint work had been undertaken and referred to a 'partnership way of working'. One person commented that it was not only older people who received advice from the service. Staff in the hospital social work department had also benefited, thereby leaving them better able to address the housing needs of other patients.

Comments included:

- ▶ *"For people who need 'Move-On' advice and support, the service is absolutely crucial. Otherwise, people end up in care at too early a stage"*
- ▶ *"They have a big impact on us. They specialise. 'Move-On' does work we wouldn't have time to do otherwise or where the criteria for our help wouldn't fit. It makes all the difference to helping people remain independent"*
- ▶ *"It's crucial for people who need advice and support. 'Move-On' offers an independent, impartial, professional service we can trust and rely on"*
- ▶ *"It means we have another support outlet we can offer if people are thinking about moving, somewhere [older people] can get the right support which is non-biased and non-pressurised"*
- ▶ *"It's a partnership. I know a referral will be acted on fairly quickly and I know the people and what they can do"*
- ▶ *"The service offers information and advice not otherwise available"*
- ▶ *"From the individual's point of view, advice and support is crucial. Moving is difficult. The service makes a difference to help people know what is out there"*
- ▶ *"We have got good advice from the service. The service has advised staff in the social work department"*

Views of Service Planners and Commissioners

Remarks made by key managers involved in policy and planning issues made it clear that the 'Move-On' service, (and also the wider activities of Bristol Care & Repair), have had a significant local impact. Comments related particularly to the provision of advice and information not otherwise available for older people, and broader information which helps with the development of strategies for older people's housing and related services. One senior manager referred to the way in which the 'Move-On' worker was able to contribute to planning discussions by commenting on the impact of policies and developments based on her knowledge of the actual circumstances of some older people.

"It makes us work across sectors in a more integrated way. It gives us the ability to link with housing associations and the private sector. It gives us broader information for the development of strategies"

5. Overview of Findings

The Bristol interviews provide a 'snapshot' picture of opinions about one local housing options service for older people. The service was highly valued by the service users and professionals alike. Some professionals also valued the service as a source of information which would not otherwise have been available to them.

A high prevalence of health problems featured in the lives of service users at the time of their initial contact with the 'Move-On' service. At the same time, there was a very low level of use of daily living support services. Whilst some people's need for such services changed over time, it is notable that the overall pattern

of low level usage remained fairly constant in the group interviewed.

Apart from their state of health, people's primary reasons for contacting the 'Move-On' service were feeling unable to cope, problems with the condition of their home, loneliness and the decline in informal support networks. The latter problems often seemed to be linked to friends and neighbours dying or moving away from the area. Homes being too large to manage were a limited feature.

Only one service user of 18 interviewed seemed to have made a positive decision to stay in their home following on from advice from the 'Move-On' service. Others were staying put only because the alternative housing on offer was not acceptable to them. Some of these described the possible alternative accommodation as being too small.

None of the service users interviewed raised the costs of heating and running their home as being a key factor in thinking about moving, but meeting the cost of repairs was an issue for some.

Service users particularly valued the help received with application forms and the suggestions of possible housing options. Knowing what options were available was significant for service users and professionals alike.

An overriding picture which emerged from the interviews was of older people feeling unable to cope with the 'hassle' of moving, and needing very practical help and support. Many described feeling that they had not known what to do at the time and that they could not have managed without both the information and practical help given by the 'Move-On' service.

Professionals shared the same views as service users in terms of the need for older people to have access to information and advice about housing options issues.

Comments from some of the professionals indicated that the 'Move-On' service was having an impact on local planning debates about housing provision for older people through feedback about needs based on 'real life' situations.

Miss Pierce is 79 years of age and has no family. She had been a tenant of a tiny first floor bedsit flat for many years. The flat had been very poorly maintained by a hostile private landlord, who had not only refused to mend a badly leaking roof but also would not undertake any maintenance.

When Miss Pierce was discharged from hospital following an operation on her foot she had to use crutches and found it difficult to use the stairs. The hospital stay prompted a visit by a social worker who was 'appalled' at the state of the housing that Miss Pierce was living in. She contacted the Move On service who came to visit Miss Pierce to discuss her housing options.

The service helped Miss Pierce through the process of applying for an RSL retirement flat, sorted her financial affairs and the practicalities of moving. Because Miss Pierce had very few possessions, the service also helped with obtaining basic furniture, including a microwave cooker, as she had no way to cook in the new flat.

The move has transformed Miss Pierce's life – she is no longer socially isolated and is delighted with her new home. She still has some health problems but is fully independent and has made friends with some of the older people living in the same retirement complex.

"She helped me a lot. Without her I wouldn't have known what to do."

Section 5

Conclusions



1. Issues Raised by Bristol Interviews

■ A housing options service is designed to help older people explore options and make a choice about whether to stay in their existing home or move on. Should I Stay or Should I Go? succinctly describes the dilemma.

However, only one of the 18 older people interviewed in Bristol had made a positive decision to stay put. Those interviewed had already given considerable thought to the possibility of moving before their first contact with the 'Move-On' service. Most were in the higher age group (average age 79 years) and faced significant health problems.

■ This raises questions about the role of housing options services in reaching 'younger' older people who are less clear about whether to move, or who are looking ahead before a crisis, and who could benefit from impartial advice and information about possible options available. It also raises issues about how information on housing options is shared with people at their pre-retirement stage or at least at a stage in their life when they may be in a position to think through and plan for their future housing needs.

■ It is noted that the name and profile of the Bristol service makes it more likely that a service user will be seeking help with 'moving on' rather than seeking general housing options advice. It also demonstrates the importance of deciding on the profile, range of services on offer and focus of a housing options service at its development stage.

■ The interviews highlighted the difficulties experienced by older people in finding out what options are available in terms of housing and related services. It was also clear that there is a need for this information to be readily accessible to local professionals. The availability, co-ordination and dissemination of information on housing options are issues for anyone trying to address the housing needs of older people.

■ Most of the older people interviewed had found the prospect of moving home very daunting, even overwhelming. The complexities of making an informed choice, completing application forms, dealing with a home which needs to be sold, and making all of the associated removal arrangements can be too much to contemplate, especially where there are no close family members to help. The importance of a service going beyond the provision of information and advice and providing an in depth, practical support service to help people to move is evident from the interviews.

■ Health problems were a major factor in prompting people to think about moving. However, no older person mentioned having been referred to the 'Move-On' service by their GP or primary care staff. Given the predominance of health issues amongst the service users interviewed, there is a clear indication that extra effort is needed to engage health centres and GP practices and to raise the profile of older people's housing needs.

■ It emerged that the retirement and sheltered housing currently available was not judged suitable by some older people who would like to move and perhaps need to move home. Some older people are likely to opt for remaining in a home where they are experiencing difficulties rather than move to such accommodation. Space was a particular concern as some of the people interviewed felt that the retirement housing units on offer were too small. This is an issue identified in a number of studies and is worthy of serious consideration by planners and providers of retirement housing.

■ There was a view amongst some local professionals that a housing options service can prevent people from entering 'care' at too early a stage. This needs further exploration in terms of future research. It also raises a link with Supporting People issues and requires examination at local level.

Consideration of the need for more housing help and support services for older people living in their own homes ought to feature in local planning discussions. Local housing options services could provide crucial information about needs which may not otherwise be identified.

2. Main Conclusions

- *A local housing options service can play a valuable role in supporting older people to make and implement an informed choice about where to live and thereby contribute to the maintenance of independence.*
- *A service should include practical help with moving home as well as provision of information and advice if it is to effectively meet the housing needs of older people.*
- *The provision of a local housing options service appears to be particularly useful to older people facing increasing health and disability problems. Early intervention and housing planning may prevent some older people from entering residential care. It is evident that a significant amount of effort has to be put into raising the profile of alternative housing options amongst health sector staff.*
- *Housing options services could play a valuable role in raising the profile locally of housing choices and options for older people. It would be beneficial to plan such promotion with a wide audience in mind, including recently retired people, those of pre-retirement age, carers and relatives.*
- *It is useful if a housing options service also provides specialist housing information and advice to local professionals, thereby enabling them to better help and advise the older people with whom they come into contact. The benefits for local older people will be a much-improved response to their needs at times when they may be feeling unable to cope with their housing and living situations.*
- *Housing options services aim to help people explore their options and make choices. However, the Bristol interviews provided a picture of some people wanting to move yet being unhappy with the retirement homes available. Housing options services will need to be prepared for this reaction and find ways of feeding such views into local planning processes. This should be a key part of housing options services. If the housing needs and aspirations of older people are to be addressed more effectively in the longer term, and housing choice made a reality, LA's need to implement a comprehensive older people's housing strategy*

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E-mail: enquiries@dialuk.org.uk

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East Riding of Yorkshire Council

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EAC advice & information service 020 7820 1343
E-mail: enquiries@e-a-c.demon.co.uk
www.housingcare.org

Help the Aged

207-221 Pentonville Road,
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SeniorLine (national advice and information service)

Telephone: 0808 800 6565
minicom: 0800 26 96 26
E-mail: info@helptheaged.org.uk
www.helptheaged.org.uk

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Related Websites

The Audit Commission

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

The Countryside Agency

www.countryside.gov.uk

The Department of Health

www.doh.gov.uk

Foundations –

the national co-ordinating body for HIAs

wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com

The Housing Corporation

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

www.jrf.org.uk

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

www.odpm.gov.uk

The Social Exclusion Unit

www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

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DH (2001) *Building Capacity and Partnership in Care.*

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Many government documents are available on the website of the relevant department.

Care & Repair England's Equal Opportunities Statement of Intent

Care & Repair England believes that equal opportunities is important in order to enhance people's choice and dignity and enable them to live a more fulfilling life.

Care & Repair England recognises that people are discriminated against on the basis of colour, class, creed, ethnic or national origin, sex, age, disability, physical appearance or sexuality. The organisation is committed to counteracting such discrimination.

Care & Repair England is committed to the active promotion of equality of opportunity in every aspect of its operations. This includes provision and development of policies, services, employment and management practices.



‘Should I Stay or Should I Go?’ describes a dilemma faced by many older people; whether to stay put in your current home or move on to alternative accommodation.

In order to make a fully informed choice, people need good housing advice. Local ‘housing options’ services can not only provide information, but also give support and practical help, if required, to enable a person to move home.

This report examines the work of a local housing options service, highlighting the views of both older people and professionals who have used the service.

It also explores the potential contribution that such services could make to meeting the aims of the wider housing, health and social care policy agendas.



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Care & Repair England is a national charity established in 1986 to improve the housing and living conditions of older and disabled people. Its aim is to innovate, develop, promote and support housing policies and initiatives which enable older and disabled people live independently in their homes for as long as they wish. Care & Repair England is an Industrial and Provident Society with Charitable Status Reg No 25121.