



Growing Older Together: An Overview of Collaborative Forms of Housing for Older People



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Contents

1. Outline.	2
2. Collaborative health, care and housing for older people	3
3. A range of examples of collaborative housing for older people	7
4. Ways of realising collaborative housing for older people.	23
5. The way ahead.	27
6. About the author and the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.	31

Foreword

This case study report is published to coincide with the Housing LIN annual conference in March 2016 entitled, 'People Powered Change: A Festival of Ideas'. It shows how collaborative models of service delivery for older people are now being widely adopted in the health and care sectors and suggests that the housing sector could do more to embrace this. And with an increasing interest in building community resilience through co-producing and co-creating locally driven solutions for older people, this report demonstrates that collaborative ways of providing housing that older people want are becoming more common.

Drawing on a selection of case examples and the lessons learnt, I very much hope that this report will help inform and influence the adoption of more collaborative approaches to housing for older people. It illustrates the wide and expanding range of options for older people and how these should come in from the margins into the mainstream of housing policy. Here at the Housing LIN, we believe that the time has now come.

Jeremy Porteus
Director, Housing LIN

Picture on the front cover

We are grateful to the Older Women's Co-Housing Group and Pollard Thomas Edwards architects for their permission to use this picture

1. Outline

In 2013, the Housing LIN published two reports, which looked at forms of housing shaped and managed by older people. The first, *Growing Older Together: the Case for Housing that is Shaped and Controlled by Older People*¹, described various projects that were mainly resident-led. The second, *Community-Led Housing for Older People*², looked at models that were developed by local communities working with older people. Also, in 2013, the Housing LIN published two related briefings on senior cohousing called, *Work on the Wild Side*³; one for commissioners and providers and one for architects and developers.

Taken together, these reports and briefings made the case for *collaborative housing* for older people and they argued that such housing is of growing interest and relevance to many older people. The reports went on to suggest that *collaborative housing* should be made available to older people on a much greater scale and they suggested how this might happen.

This overview report from Housing LIN, *Growing Older Together: An Overview of Collaborative Forms of Housing for Older People*, is published to coincide with the 2016 Housing LIN annual conference, People Powered Change: A Festival of Ideas. It looks at developments over the last three years; it shows how collaborative models of service delivery for older people are now being widely adopted in the health and care sectors and it suggests that in this respect housing is lagging behind. Nevertheless, the overview demonstrates that collaborative ways of providing housing are becoming more common and it contains nine case examples. These examples - when considered alongside examples from the two earlier reports - illustrate the wide and expanding range of collaborative housing options for older people.

The report goes on to emphasise that collaborative housing schemes can be produced in a variety of ways from self-organised schemes through co-produced options to market (off-the-shelf) developments. This is an important line of argument, because all too often it is assumed that the only way for older people to access collaborative housing is for groups of older people take on the development role directly. This is one way of doing it, as a number of co-operative and cohousing groups have successfully shown, but there are many other development paths that can be followed as illustrated by the various exemplars.

The overview concludes by revisiting the challenges set out in the first *Growing Older Together* report and reframes them in a way which, it is hoped, will put collaborative housing for older people firmly on the agenda, alongside collaborative health and social care.

‘...the involvement of older people’s perspectives in shaping their homes and communities is vital for better ageing’

Looking ahead, the overview touches on recent work by the Centre for Ageing Better on the aspirations and expectations of older people. It notes that a number of respondents to a recent consultation on homes and neighbourhoods stated that *‘the involvement of older people’s perspectives in shaping their homes and communities is vital for better ageing’*⁴. This is the main thesis of this overview.

1 *Growing Older Together: the Case for Housing that is Shaped and Controlled by Older People* (2013) by Jon Stevens for Housing LIN, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Reports/HLIN_CaseStudyReport_GrowingOlderTogether.pdf

2 *Community-Led Housing for Older People (and the Community Right to Build)* (2013) by Jon Stevens for Housing LIN, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint40_CRTB.pdf

3 *Work on the Wild Side* (2013), by Moyra Riseborough for Housing LIN, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/UserInvolvement/?parent=3667&child=8951

4 See the February Centre for Ageing Better newsletter on: www.ageing-better.org.uk/our-work/topics/feel-in-control/#neighbourhood

2. Collaborative health, care and housing for older people

For some years people have been arguing that we need to fundamentally rethink how we meet the needs and aspirations of our ageing population. These arguments are underpinned by three important factors.

Firstly: the dramatic growth in the numbers of the older people and the concomitant reduction in the size of working or economically active population (commonly referred to as the age dependency ratio) is altering the whole make-up and balance of society in an unprecedented way and this will inevitably reduce the amount of informal care and support older people can receive from their families in future.

Secondly: this is happening at a time of general and long-term cutbacks in public expenditure, which are significantly reducing the level of state funding available to support health, social care and housing services for older people; the combined effect of these two factors will make our current ways of meeting the needs of older people increasingly unsustainable.

Thirdly: there is growing recognition that providing ‘universal services’ for older people may not *in any case* be the best way of meeting the varying needs and expectations of a growing and diverse older population; rather we need to develop ‘people-centred’ and ‘collaborative’ models of provision in health, social care and housing provision.

These processes of rebalancing, redirection and reinvention are enormously challenging for policy makers and for ‘service-driven’ institutions but the need for a significant change of direction is now being acknowledged and new thinking is beginning to be adopted in the sphere of health and social care. Such thinking is less common in relation to the provision of housing for older people. People-centred and collaborative approaches to supporting older people either in their existing housing or in specialist housing for older people are difficult to find. The provision of housing for older people still seems to be to be largely ‘provider driven’.

A résumé of new thinking in health and social care and the power of collaboration

In the fields of health and social care, new collaborative thinking is increasingly advocated; in long-term national plans; in recent legislation; and in changing ways of working on the ground. This overview can only provide a short résumé of these trends but it is hoped this will be valuable as a basis for exploring collaborative housing options and choices for older people.

A good starting point is the NHS Five-Year Forward View (5YFV)⁵, published by NHS England at the end of 2014. This is because the growing pressures on the health service caused by our ageing population (as noted above) are demanding a substantial and holistic response. The 5YFV begins by summarising the main pressures on the service and the growing gaps in provision, before proposing a new operating philosophy based on ‘a new relationship with patients and communities’. In Chapter 2, it suggests that:

“the health service has been prone to operating a ‘factory’ model of care and repair... and that as result we have not fully harnessed the renewable energy represented by patients and communities...”

The chapter goes on to explain what this might look like under three headings: *Getting serious about prevention; Empowering patients; and Engaging communities*. And the chapter ends by proposing that the NHS needs to be seen as less of a service and more ‘as a social

5 Five Year Forward View (2014) NHS England.

movement'. In achieving this transformation, the plan looks for a new settlement between health and social care, noting that housing circumstances and conditions will be an important part of the mix.

Thinking of this kind is also found in the 2014 Care Act, although it is expressed in more formal language. The recently published Housing LIN Policy Technical Brief on *Care and Support in Housing With Care for Older People*⁶ sets out the key principles embodied in the Act, which will guide Local Authorities and other agencies in future. Foremost amongst these is the *wellbeing principle*, which puts personal needs and relationships at the core of any form of social care provision. The key principles also highlight the importance of preventative - often community-based - strategies and of integrated working; with a new duty on the Local Authority to co-operate with all parties. The need for joint working may seem obvious but, by making it a duty for Local Authorities, the Act provides a new underpinning for collaborative working.

Clearly some important shifts are going on, but it remains difficult to envisage how people-centred and collaborative services might be developed on a significant scale and what they might look like. To this end, several helpful reports and guides have been produced recently, including *Collaborative Healthcare*⁷ published in January 2016 by a consortium of health and social care agencies and providers. This accessible and well-argued review looks at a wide range of new approaches and it contains fifteen case studies. These all show how collaboration can transform the shape and nature of health and social care. The case studies are not all about meeting the needs of older people but many of them are. And some of them look at how older people can collaboratively 'live well' in their housing, including Community Catalysts, Connecting Communities, Local Area Co-ordination and perhaps the most relevant in the context of this overview, Shared Lives⁸.

Collaborative housing for older people: user involvement and co-production

Turning to the possibilities for people-centred and collaborative housing, the Housing LIN under the leadership of Jeremy Porteus has been tracking relevant changes and shifts for many years. In particular, the pages on its website devoted to User Involvement and Co-production contain a growing number of reports, case studies and viewpoints⁹.

Two recent overarching reports from these pages are *Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in Practice: Connecting Older People*¹⁰ and *Communities, People, Places and Possibilities: Progress on Local Area Co-ordination*¹¹. These reports describe the theory and practice of collaborative working within communities and between communities and public services and they outline some of the methods that have been effective in engaging with people and in developing local partnerships focusing on health and social care.

6 Sue Garwood *Care and Support in Housing with Care for Older People* (2015) Housing LIN Policy Technical Guide. See page 8 for outline of the 2014 Care Act. The brief can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Technical_briefs/HLIN_PolicyTechBrief_CareAndSupport.pdf

7 *Collaborative Healthcare* (2016) Inclusive Change Partnership; available from: www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk

8 Shared Lives is a relatively unknown alternative to home care and care homes for older people. For more information, see: www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk

9 Relevant reports, case studies and resources can be found on the User Involvement and Coproduction pages of the Housing LIN website at: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/UserInvolvement

10 *Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in Practice: Connecting Older People* (2014) by Burcu Borysik for SITRA, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/abcd-in-practice.pdf

11 *Communities, People, Places and Possibilities: Progress on Local Area Co-ordination* (2015), by Ralph Broad for Centre for Welfare Reform, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/people-places-possibilities.pdf

More specifically, *A Strength Based Approach to Ageing Well: the Housing Dimension*¹² looks at the potential for people-centred and collaborative forms of housing. The report was published in July 2012, in advance of NHS England's 5YFV and the Care Act but it contains some relevant thinking and studies. It begins by highlighting the importance of housing and community for many older people and it highlights the need for 'connectedness' both in terms of access to facilities and services and in terms of social networks. The 'strength based' approach it advocates is based on similar principles to ABCD and the ways of working it promotes follow Local Area Co-ordination methods.

The report goes on to argue that housing that is designed, adapted, occupied and connected in certain ways provides a foundation for mutual care and support for many older people. It provides examples of housing and neighbourhood-based support networks for older people; such as Live at Home, Circles of Support and Time Banking. It describes KeyRing¹³, which is the most established networking model combining voluntary help and assistance with professional care. KeyRing is mostly used to support people with learning difficulties but it can equally be applied to vulnerable older people. The report also looks at house sharing options for older people, including Homeshare and Shared Lives, which is cited above.

Another Housing LIN report published in 2012, *Building Mutual Support and Social Capital in Retirement Communities*¹⁴, covered similar ground. But it had a different perspective, in that it looked at how certain types of housing for older people can provide a basis for building social and community networks. It showed how these forms of provision were providing a platform for many types of networking activity and it described how providers and other agencies were facilitating and stimulating such activity.

This and the previous report examine the case for forms of housing that offer older people direct 'choice and control' and they outline some of the options such as resident management, co-operatives and cohousing.

Resident-led and community-based forms of housing for older people

In 2013, as explained at the beginning of the overview, Housing LIN commissioned *Growing Older Together: The Case for Housing that is Shaped and Controlled by Older People* and *Community-Led Housing for Older People*, both of which set out to look in greater depth at these options for 'choice and control'. These reports concluded that collaborative housing for older people can indeed bring significant benefits to residents and to the wider community.

In *Growing Older Together*, it is argued (on pages 2 and 3) that such housing is attractive to many older people because it gives them the chance to:

- be in control, retaining their independence and feeling secure,
- (whilst being part of) active and self-sufficient communities...
- (communities that engender) mutual care and support.

12 *A Strength Based Approach to Ageing Well: the Housing Dimension* (2012), by Lawrence Miller and Cormac Russell for Housing LIN, can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint30_Strength-Based_Approach.pdf

13 KeyRing links vulnerable people in the community with 'community living volunteers' who can support them in various ways. Find out more about KeyRing on their website www.keyring.org

14 Imogen Blood and Jenny Pannel *Building Mutual Support and Social Capital in Retirement Communities* (2012) Housing LIN Viewpoint 23 can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint_23_Mutual_Support.pdf

Furthermore, the report argues that collaborative housing for older people is beneficial both for the older people who live in it and also for wider society, because it promotes:

- enhanced well-being and reduced dependence.

These benefits are further elaborated in the reports and they are validated by the first hand comments and experiences of older people living in the projects described, by evidence from the (albeit limited) research carried out in the UK and by learning from overseas practice - as highlighted in the first *Housing Our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation* (HAPPI) report¹⁵ published in September 2009.

¹⁵ *Housing Our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation Report* (2009) Homes and Communities Agency with the Department of Communities and Local Government and Department of Health. The report describes several co-operative, cohousing and community-based forms of provision for older people, it notes that *in terms of commissioning and managing new housing the panel has been impressed by models of mutual and cohousing seen in Europe* and goes on to make recommendations as to how such housing should be promoted in the UK. These recommendations have largely been ignored.

3. A range of examples of collaborative housing for older people

Previous Housing LIN reports have shown that there is small but growing number of examples of resident-led and community based housing for older people across the country. When all of these are taken together, it is reasonable to infer that collaborative housing for older people could and should have much wider relevance and applicability. This part of the overview draws together nine new examples and refers back to examples from the two earlier Housing LIN reports.

It starts by looking at the growth of collaborative ways of living and support for older people within and across existing neighbourhoods or villages. These 'place based' approaches need to be greatly expanded given that a majority of older people will remain living in their current homes, even if there is a significant increase in the supply of specialist housing for older people.

Community-based living and housing for older people

There have been many initiatives in the UK designed to help older people to 'age well at home' but most of these focus on the practical measures that help older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible - through the provision of aids and adaptations and the use of increasingly sophisticated assistive technology. Important though these measures are, they don't necessarily promote the kind of connectedness and the social support and mutual care that many older people also seek and need.

Some innovative networking approaches, such as KeyRing and Shared Lives have been mentioned earlier. Other more extended networks are being developed on a peer-to-peer basis; perhaps the most far-reaching of these is the older people's village model. This started in the USA over a decade ago with Beacon Hill Village in Boston and it has developed into a 'village' movement with over 200 villages¹⁶ across the whole country. The idea has since spread to the Netherlands and Australia and it has recently been introduced into the UK by Putney Village¹⁷. Putney Village aims to develop a 'self-sustaining community (of older people) where everyone wants to help one another'.

A more targeted collaborative network that supports older people experiencing dementia and their carers was described in *Community-Led Housing for Older People*. The Debenham Project in Suffolk (page 5 and 6) has attracted national recognition with its network of volunteer carers, its information and advice line and its wide range of support services and activities. The project has also been seeking to establish a community-based housing and care centre, in particular, to support people with dementia.

Going on from this, some communities have initiated specific housing developments to meet the needs of their ageing populations. *Community-Led Housing for Older People* describes one such project Esk Moors Lodge (page 4) in North Yorkshire. This is an extra care housing scheme and community hub developed by Esk Moors Caring - a local community network that provides a wide range of services for older people - run in partnership with the Abbeyfields Society. Another extra-care scheme for older people from the surrounding villages was described in *Growing Older Together: The Case for Housing That Is Shaped and Controlled*

16 More information about the 'village' movement can be found on the Village to Village Network website: www.vtvnetwork.org

17 For information about Putney Village see Age UK's information sheet in the Housing Choices section of their website: www.ageuk.org.uk

by *Older People*. This was being planned by Brampton and Beyond Community Trust (page 14) in Cumbria and it is now in development with the community trust working in partnership with a local housing association, Impact Housing.

A small number of neighbourhoods are served by community-based housing organisations or co-operatives and, as the make-up of the population they serve changes, some of them have adapted the housing they provide and developed new housing to specifically meet the needs of older people (or any other need group). One such is Witton Lodge Community Association in Birmingham.

‘Built in caring for older people’

Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA) is based in the Perry Common area of North Birmingham. It was established in the early 1990’s as a community-led regeneration organisation that would work with Birmingham City Council and various other development partners to revitalize a run-down Council estate, which included widening the tenure mix. WLCA was actively involved in planning the redevelopment and has also developed 187 homes for social renting in its own name, including Sycamore Court, a 40 apartment extra care housing scheme, which supports independent living. Over the last 20 years WLCA, which has eight resident representatives on its board of 12, has expanded and grown; it runs an improved and expanded community hall and provides a range of services to support local residents, with a focus on promoting health and wellbeing, employment and the environment.

Linda Hines MBE, who has been a Director since 1995 and is chair of the Association, said that right from the start there had been an emphasis on local people benefiting from the redevelopment and not being displaced against their will. She went onto explain that:

“Even in the 1990’s, Perry Common had an ageing population and we wanted the new development to provide for older residents. So we specified that alongside the family housing there should be bungalows or flats for older or more vulnerable people. In this way, we provided scope for ‘built-in’ caring and it has proved remarkably successful.”



An imaginative form of inter-generational housing with bungalows linked to family homes

Similarly, in 2005, when WLCA working with the Council developed Sycamore Court, Linda and other residents wanted it to offer a continuum of care for local residents and for the scheme to be a base for extended support for older and vulnerable people in the area. Importantly, Sycamore Court has an inclusive allocations policy, which covers not just older people but also younger people requiring support. One of the greatest successes that WLCA has had is that some younger people with support-needs have, after spending time in Sycamore Court, been able to move back into the community because of the local support networks that have been developed with other local organisations.

Afzal Hussain, Chief Officer of WLCA says that:

“Because of our detailed knowledge of the local community and the range of services that we have developed, we are able to support older people living in the community in a variety of ways to avoid them becoming isolated or over-dependent on a close family carer. Being able to offer different local housing options is an important part of this.”

For more information about Witton Lodge Community Association, see:
www.wittonlodge.org.uk

Other organisations with strong links to a particular area can act as a catalyst for new housing for older people. This is the case for Elderflowers Projects in Milton Keynes. Elderflowers aims to provide housing for active older people; the thinking behind Elderflowers is described in the Housing LIN viewpoint called *What about the other 95%?*¹⁸. The 95% are those older people who choose not to move to specialist housing but who might be attracted to alternative forms of housing¹⁸.

‘There are many people of 50 plus who will continue to work and be active...but who want more suitable housing’

Elderflowers Projects is based in Milton Keynes. The aim of Elderflowers is to encourage people in their late middle age - typically once their children have left home - to move to smaller more suitable accommodation. Carol Barac, a planner and housing researcher involved in community-based approaches to housing for a long time, identified the need for new forms of housing suitable for a new generation of older people in the late 1990's. As part of her work, she had interviewed many people in their eighties and nineties, living alone in large houses that they were struggling to maintain and heat.

Carol started a project called Third Age Lifestyle Choices and in 2003, she launched Elderflowers Projects with colleagues,. Their first task was to carry out an in-depth study, examining the housing needs and aspirations of older people, and to consider alternative forms of housing for people in their fifties and sixties who do not consider themselves to be old or in need of rehousing. The research report published in 2007, argued that

¹⁸ Carol Barac *What about the other 95%* (2013) Housing LIN can be found at:
www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint45_95percent.pdf

many people getting older would be interested in alternative housing that matched their changing needs and their evolving lifestyle, as opposed to more conventional 'retirement housing' - which is often seen as being 'end of life housing' with an institutional feel and a focus on care needs. The report went on to propose a new type of housing for active older people to be targeted at people on a range of incomes. It envisaged housing built to generous space standards, with some shared facilities and communal spaces, to be self-managed by the residents, who wanted to live in mixed and lively community.

To investigate further the market for this kind of development, Elderflowers carried out in-depth market research in Milton Keynes. The results published in 2010 revealed that a significant number of older people saw the attraction of downsizing and a high proportion of them liked the Elderflowers model; as described in a brochure sent out with the survey.

Based on the initial interest in the concept and with the evidence from the market research, proposals for a housing development by Elderflowers gained momentum. A desirable site in central Milton Keynes was identified for a development of 200 homes, to be developed in partnership with a housing association. Land was sought from the owners and pre-planning application approval was obtained from Milton Keynes Council. Unfortunately the housing association dropped out and the site is no longer available. However, there is now an opportunity for a pilot development of 16 flats. If this first project is successful, Elderflowers plans to continue to develop in Milton Keynes and promote similar developments elsewhere. Carol Barac, as the founder of Elderflowers, remains as convinced as ever that:

"We need to really rethink our whole approach to providing housing for older people. There are many people of 50 plus who will continue to work and be active in the community but who want more suitable housing. They don't see themselves as being 'retired' nor do they want to live apart from society at large and they would move if they were involved in planning their own housing on a suitable beautiful site! The ideas initially set out by Elderflowers have in recent years been acknowledged as 'the way to go'. As the population of older people increases and as more people become trapped in their large family homes, the development of Elderflowers type accommodation will give people, as they move into old age, the chance to provide themselves with more comfortable and suitable homes in caring communities."

For more information about Elderflowers Projects, see: www.elderflowers-projects.co.uk

Older people taking control: transferring management and ownership

The potential for older people to have more control over their housing and the advantages to be gained from this are clearly demonstrated where older people have taken over the management and ownership of their housing in recent years. Many examples come from the private sector, often based on the Right to Manage (RtM) powers incorporated in the 2002 Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act.

In *Growing Older Together* a leasehold retirement scheme in Bath, The Moorings (page 8 and 9), now run by a Right to Manage Company established by its residents in 2008, is described.

The benefits to residents in doing this were both practical - including considerable cost savings - and social - with the ethos of the scheme having been transformed.

It is difficult to estimate the number of RtM companies that have been established to take over retirement leasehold schemes. Recent estimates suggest that perhaps 6000 RtM companies had been established since 2002 and of these perhaps 50 to 100 companies have been formed to take over leasehold retirement housing in the same way as the Moorings¹⁹. Whatever the precise figures are, it is surely significant that several thousand older people - who chose to move to in the first place to housing developed by specialist providers - have subsequently decided that they would rather run it themselves.

There have been fewer examples of older people taking over both ownership and management through a process of leasehold enfranchisement. But this has happened in a number of cases; by agreement with the freeholder; by using powers in the 2002 Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act; or as a result of the freeholder going into administration. Clifton Court in the Midlands is an example of residents acquiring their freehold via a voluntary process.

***‘Our sense of community at Clifton Court ... has been enriched by the residents’
recognition of their own independence’***

Clifton Court is small leasehold development of 36 apartments for older people who are able to live independently in an historic Midlands market town. Clifton Court was opened in the late 1980’s by a large housing association as what was known as a ‘Sundowner’ scheme. These schemes were intended to give control over the running of the scheme to the leaseholders via a fully mutual housing association in which they were all shareholders. The freehold was retained by the ‘parent’ housing association, which had a head lease to the fully mutual, and the fully mutual then had sub-leases to the residents. In addition to being the freeholder, the ‘parent’ housing association also provided management agency services under contract to the fully mutual.

In recent years, the residents’ committee of Clifton Court became concerned about how the scheme was being managed. In particular, they were worried that insufficient money had been set aside for major repairs and renovations in the sinking fund. This meant that the scheme was beginning to feel tired and neglected and some significant improvements such as installation of double-glazing had not been carried out because they were told that ‘they didn’t have enough money in the sinking fund’. Rather than advising the committee about what steps needed to be taken to ensure that a prudent reserve was established, the committee felt that the managing agent had allowed the situation deteriorate.

Initial discussions with the managing agent/freeholder to resolve matters proved difficult, as it seemed as if they didn’t fully understand the mutual basis of the scheme and the authority this gave the residents to take control of their own destiny. However, as the residents persisted, the association came to recognise the right of the residents to have far more control over the running of the scheme. Following further negotiations, in 2014, the residents were able to acquire the freehold of their housing.

19 These approximations are derived from information about the leasehold sector contained in *Residential property management services; a market study* (2014) Competition and Markets Authority. 5% of leasehold housing is for older people and given the greater complexity in pursuing RtM for such housing, the figure of 50 to 100 RtM companies seems to be a good guesstimate.

Since the residents took full control of their housing they continue to work with the association as managing agent but have negotiated new management arrangements, embarked on a programme of investment in improvements, and have appointed a new scheme manager. Dr Jane Robinson, Chair of the mutual ownership company, who was one of the main driving forces behind the transfer of ownership, says that by taking over the residents have:

“not only secured much needed improvements but have also established a new working relationship. Instead of being treated paternalistically by the association they now work much more as partners. Importantly, the sense of community at Clifton Court, which has always been good, has been enriched by the residents’ recognition of their own independence.”

An unusual example of residents taking control of the ownership of their housing is provided by Woodchester Valley Retirement Village in Gloucestershire, which became Britain’s first mutually owned retirement village three years ago following the collapse of the company that owned the village. Although it is a one-off, the residents are convinced it could provide a model for other mutually owned retirement villages.

‘Residents now feel confident and secure here ... and there is no reason why other communities for older people could not be developed in this way’

Woodchester Valley Retirement Village is a picturesque retirement community set in extensive grounds at the top of a wooded valley just south of Stroud. Fifty-two houses and flats, built in Cotswold stone and part rendered, are clustered around a series of courtyards with an adjoining village centre. There are an additional twenty assisted living flats and a range of community facilities, including the Octagon lounge (the village social room), a dining room, a library and a bridge club lounge, as well as a laundry, commercial grade kitchen and staff offices. This peaceful valley is an unlikely setting for a revolution but that is what took place there four years ago.

Woodchester Valley is now the UK’s first mutually-owned, not for profit, retirement community, which is owned by and is run solely for the benefit of its residents. It didn’t start off this way; it was originally a commercial development, which opened in 2002. However, the leaseholders soon became unhappy about how the ‘for profit’ private freeholder was running things.

In 2007, the residents became extremely concerned to learn that the care home was being closed; thus destroying the expectation of a seamless transition from independent living to assisted living and, if needed, to a care environment on site. Over the next couple of years the leaseholders tried to get matters resolved but then, late in 2010, they heard that the freeholder for the village was in serious financial trouble, and in 2011 their village went into administration.

The future looked uncertain for the residents. With the care home having closed and without a known owner for the freehold, properties would not sell. For those who had invested in their village homes in expectation of having a care home on site to cater for

their future needs, things looked very bleak. If their homes would not sell, how could they afford to move to a care home elsewhere when necessary? They were naturally even more concerned as to what would happen if a new unknown company took over.

But then some of the leaseholders had a brainwave, and decided to form a resident-owned company to take over the village. There followed a lengthy period of complex negotiations with the administrators and with the banks that had lent money against the assets of the village. To secure their dream the residents had to raise considerable sums of money, largely from their own resources. But in the end, and against the odds, they succeeded.

Nowadays Woodchester Valley is a place transformed. As Peter Wilson, Chair of the mutually-owned company says:

“Residents now feel confident and secure here, we own the village freehold ourselves and we decide how it is run for the benefit of all. We have already invested in many improvements and we are planning more in future. And the whole atmosphere of the place has changed, it truly is a village community now.”

Peter’s colleague Howard Gawler explained how he had become involved in supporting his late mother, who was formerly a resident. He has now moved into the village himself and has become Vice Chair, in place of Betty Young, who was the co-founder working alongside Peter Wilson. Howard explained:

“Family members play an important role in Woodchester Valley Village. They are a valuable source of advice, guidance and expertise and in some cases they sit on our boards and committees. It feels as if the village has become a sort of extended family and we often have events that include children, grandchildren and friends.”



Three generations meeting together in the dining area at Woodchester Valley Village

Peter concluded by saying:

“There is no reason why other communities for older people could not be developed in this way. More community-owned places like Woodchester Valley Village would ensure that many people could look forward to a stimulating, sociable and secure old age.”

For more information about Woodchester Valley Village, see:

www.woodchestervalleyretirementvillage.co.uk

Whereas resident management and control is proving popular in the retirement leasehold sector, it is harder to find examples in the much larger socially-rented retirement or sheltered housing sector. *Growing Older Together* (page 8) explored some of underlying reasons for this, including the constrained expectations of existing sheltered housing tenants and the paternalistic ethos of some social housing providers.

However, in the three years since the publication of *Growing Older Together*, there are signs that housing associations and local authorities are recognising the importance of empowering their older residents, not just in specialised housing but across all of their stock. This is important because a growing proportion of older people live in social housing, with almost a third of social renters aged 65 plus.

Reference was made in *Growing Older Together* to Hanover Housing Association’s My Home, My Say (page 8) scheme, which offered residents of all their retirement housing schemes more control over their housing through Local Service Agreements. Other social landlords are following their example, including Bolton at Home, which inherited a number of Council developed sheltered housing schemes housing in Bolton.

‘We want to see the ‘progressive empowerment’ of residents living in sheltered housing in Bolton’

Bolton at Home was established to take over the management of Bolton’s Council housing in 2002 and, in 2011, it took on full ownership via a stock transfer. Bolton at Home inherited around 5000 units of housing for older people either in sheltered housing schemes or in age-restricted housing. Much of this was outdated and not fit for purpose but after an in depth review it was decided to retain and upgrade about half of this housing; including 16 sheltered housing schemes housing over a thousand older people.

The upgrading was partly about investing in improvements and in the reconfiguration of individual schemes but, importantly, it was also about looking at how the schemes were managed. The intention was to transform the ethos of sheltered housing giving each scheme a much livelier and welcoming character for residents and for the surrounding community.

The old residential warden service was replaced by a smaller number of scheme managers and a new position of Activities Co-ordinator was established with a remit to work across all of the 16 schemes. Her job was: to assess with residents and staff the

‘state of play’ in each scheme; to establish what changes residents might like to see in how the scheme is run and in the day-to-day life of the community; and to work with residents’ associations and other parties to transform the nature of each scheme at a pace that works for most if not all residents.

The extent to which the residents were organised varied enormously. In some schemes, there were highly effective groups, who very much knew what they wanted but who welcomed advice, guidance and assistance. In other schemes, there were established groups but they weren’t functioning well and they required help to develop and to involve more residents. And in the remaining schemes, there wasn’t an organised body of residents to work with and a group had to be developed from scratch.

The programme is making a significant impact. Residents are more engaged, residents groups are more active and they are becoming more influential as a ‘voice’ for each of the schemes. The range and nature of activities for residents has expanded supported by local partnerships, working particularly with Age UK. There is also improved liaison with the early intervention team of adult social services to ensure vulnerable residents are supported more effectively.

Beyond this, a Seniors Partnership Forum has also been established with the majority of schemes represented. The forum works with Bolton at Home to develop the overall strategy and programme, it pinpoints common problems and obstacles and it is a good place for older residents to exchange ideas and to share experiences. Recently, a similar forum has been established for residents of four extra care schemes.



The ‘Four Seasons Unite’ group from four extra care schemes meet to share ideas, to liaise with Bolton at Home and to plan activities and fund raising events for older and more vulnerable residents

John Dunn, Deputy Director for Housing Services, explained that a review of Bolton's strategy for meeting the needs of older people, carried out with the Local Authority and Housing LIN recently, had influenced their thinking:

"We realised that it was important not only to make physical improvements to our housing for older people but also to make sure they were much more engaged in how services were designed and implemented. We want to see a process of 'progressive empowerment' in which older people are able to secure influence and control on a step-by-step basis."

Lesley Tyrer, the Activities Co-ordinator, added:

"My job is about much more than organising and facilitating a wide range of activities and events for residents - important though this is. It is also about supporting and enabling the residents' groups in each scheme so that their scheme can be run in a way that is shaped by the needs and wishes of residents and so that it is connected to the local community."

You can contact Bolton at Home via: www.boltonathome.org.uk

Another housing association that is currently exploring how the residents of its socially-rented and leasehold retirement housing can have more influence and control over their housing and related services is Housing and Care 21 (HC21). They are developing an incremental approach, based on a menu of options working in partnership with their residents.

In one particular case, HC21 has already devolved management to a leasehold retirement scheme they developed over 25 years ago. The residents of the scheme in question, Ashfields in Telford, had been seeking more direct control over their repairs services and greater local accountability for some time. As a bungalow development they could not follow the Right to Manage (RtM) route but HC21 offered them a voluntary form of RtM instead.

In January 2016 the residents took over management functions from HC21 on the basis of a mutually agreed management agreement. HC21 has commissioned research into the Ashfields devolved management project, which they see as an important opportunity to learn. A report prepared by the Housing and Communities Research Group of the University of Birmingham University will be produced for them in March 2016.

Older people in control: co-operatives and co-housing

When resident-controlled housing is discussed as an attractive option for some older people, most people tend to think of housing co-operatives for older people or of senior cohousing. And it is true that co-operative housing has long appealed to older people; because of the community spirit it offers and because of the mutual care and support it engenders.

Growing Older Together looked at how several established 'general needs' co-operatives had developed strategies for supporting their growing number of older members. One example was Senacre Housing Co-operative (page 4 and 5) in Kent, where the committee had recently redesigned its services for older members and they had built a community room, which was proving to be of particular benefit to older members.

Growing Older Together also described the only co-operative sheltered housing scheme in the UK, Huyton Community Co-operative for the Elderly (page 6 and 7), which had been run by its residents for over 30 years. Its success begged the question of why there hadn't been any other examples of co-operative sheltered housing?

Both *Community-Led Housing for Older People* and *Growing Older Together* discussed the growing interest in senior cohousing as a model of housing for both older and intergenerational communities that has had considerable success in Northern Europe (starting in Denmark) and in North America. Cohousing lays more emphasis on communal living than most co-operatives, with most developments having a common house for shared meals and activities. Cohousing has a particular appeal for many older people, hence senior cohousing.

Growing Older Together described the Older Women's Cohousing community (OWCH) (page 12 and 13), which was then under development in North London (see cover photograph). The project is nearing completion and residents hope to move in later this year. There are many other cohousing projects for older people in the pipeline²⁰. One of these is Still Green Third Age Cohousing.

'Mutuality trumps dependency!'

Still Green Third Age Cohousing is based in Milton Keynes. It is being developed by a group of committed older people, who are planning a socially-inclusive and self-reliant cohousing scheme of around 30 homes, for both owners and tenants. Over the last few years, the group has undertaken extensive research into the type of scheme they wish to develop, they have formed a legal body to undertake the project and, in February 2015, they published an impressive prospectus aimed at new members and development partners.

The prospectus sets out the design thinking for the housing (which they want to be built to a high standard of sustainability) and for the shared facilities they wish to provide for all residents (including a common house for shared meals and activities). They have given considerable thought to how the scheme can provide homes for people to purchase or rent, to how it might be funded and to alternative ways in which it could be procured. The prospectus contains a step-by-step plan for project development and for expanding the membership of Still Green.

Still Green has liaised closely with Milton Keynes Council over the whole project and in particular over how the rented units would be allocated to older people from Milton Keynes. The council is very supportive of the thinking behind the project. Rob Paton, Chair of Still Green says the project is at an important stage:

"We have shaken hands on buying a suitable site and expect to announce it shortly when the contract is signed. We have detailed plans for the number and mix of units in a configuration to which the planners have responded well and currently we are talking to a potential development partner and to funders. Soon, we expect to publish a new prospectus with a much more detailed offer so we can attract members for the remaining units."

20 For details of cohousing projects for older people see the website of the UK Cohousing Network www.cohousing.org.uk



Members of Still Green working together on the plans for their new homes

The prospectus has two appendices of wider interest. The first describes the values that Still Green will seek to offer its residents; these derive in part from the early sponsorship of the scheme by The Milton Keynes Quaker Meeting. These values are summarised as; peace of mind, continuity, contact and support, continuing engagement with the world, simplicity, design with nature and relational maturity.

The second appendix looks at Still Green as a contribution to public policy. It argues that senior co-housing not only meets the housing needs of older people effectively; it can also address the 'limits of formal health and social care systems'. Older people who live inter-dependently are likely to experience a more supportive and healthy way of life:

"In health, prevention is better than cure; while for ordinary social support and assistance, mutuality trumps dependency on professional (ie. impersonal) systems in terms of both cost and quality."

For information on Still Green, visit: www.stillgreenweb.org

OWCH and Still Green - although outward looking in their thinking - are exclusively for older people. Other cohousing schemes seek to provide intergenerational housing with an emphasis on providing for and supporting older members. Cannock Mill Cohousing in Colchester, which has just received planning permission, is a scheme of this kind developed by a group aged 40+, some of whom are still working full-time whilst others are retired or semi-retired. Cannock Mill does not include any rented housing, not because the members were against the idea but because it proved difficult to secure funding for affordable rented housing.

‘Living (here)...we will be able to remain active and independent because we will be part of an inclusive and supportive community’

Cannock Mill Cohousing is a group of mainly professional people who - after a careful search - have acquired a site in Colchester formerly occupied by a water mill. They have recently obtained planning permission for a development of 23 homes, with 6 one and two bed flats and 17 houses with up to three bedrooms all to be built to Passivhaus standards²¹. At the heart of the development, in the disused water mill, is a common house with a kitchen and flexible dining room/meeting room for shared meals and gatherings and a quiet room/library. On the ground floor will be accommodation for guests and workshop spaces.

The group have been working together for 7 years; gathering momentum and refining their ideas as they went along. Members of the original group (LoCo) were based in London and wanted to live in a co-housing scheme that would be within striking distance of the city for those with ties. However, since acquiring the site, the group has almost doubled in size and half do not come from London. The group is aged 40 plus; many are still working but others are retired or semi-retired. All members see cohousing as a way of living that will work particularly well as they grow older.

Now the scheme is close to being realised, an ‘ever after’ sub-group has been developing ideas about how they will build their community, how they will eat together regularly and make good use of the common house, how they will develop the communal gardens and restore the mill pond and how they can effectively pool and share resources.



Members of Cannock Mill visiting their recently acquired site and looking at the old mill buildings that will be restored and turned into their common house

²¹ Passivhaus is an internationally recognised standard for energy efficient construction. Houses built to the standard require very little energy to achieve a comfortable temperature year-round making conventional heating and air conditioning systems unnecessary.

Ann Thorne, who runs an architectural practice in East London that specialises in community-based buildings, housing and low energy design, helped to form the group and she worked collaboratively with members on the design. She is confident that:

“Living in Cannock Mill Cohousing will help all of us to look forward to growing older together. We will be able to remain active and independent because we will be part of an inclusive and supportive community.”

For more information, go to: www.cannockmillcohousingcolchester.co.uk

Caring communities run by and with older people

There is an assumption that as older people become more frail and vulnerable that they will become less interested in and less competent to make decisions about how they live and on the services they want to receive. They are seen as changing from being ‘active citizens’ to being ‘passive service-users’. However, even when older people are restricted in one way or another, this doesn’t mean that they don’t want to be involved in decision-making nor in making choices about how they live. A Housing LIN Viewpoint published in 2012 called, *A radical rethink is needed in the way we engage with residents of extra care housing*, made this point forcefully²². The author found a number of examples of consultation with residents but this rarely extended to giving residents control over decision-making.

Growing Older Together, however, described a model of ‘very sheltered housing’ developed by Retirement Security Ltd. over thirty years ago, which gave residents direct control over their housing and care. In Plymouth Court in Redditch (page 10 and 11) the residents own the leases of their homes and they are all shareholders of a management company that manages the scheme, including the community centre and the care and support staff based there. Plymouth Court is one of more than 30 schemes developed by RSL; each with its own management company supported by RSL but able to make decisions independently.

The principle of active resident engagement can be extended into forms of housing that provide even higher levels of care; normally provided for the frailest older people in care or nursing homes. Many older people are fearful of ‘being warehoused’ in these institutions which - however well run - strip people of their individuality and their autonomy. But there are alternatives. New thinking is beginning to spread across the housing with care sector. An influential figure behind this is Dr Bill Thomas, who developed The Eden Alternative programme as a way of humanising and deinstitutionalising care homes in the USA in the 1990’s. The Eden Alternative has had a significant impact in the UK, particularly in the running of many extra-care schemes; but although Eden can enrich the lives of residents, it can be argued that it doesn’t necessarily empower them.

Subsequently, Bill Thomas developed a more radical programme called The Green House Project. The aim of Green House is to replace traditional care homes with smaller ‘home-like’ environments in which vulnerable older people, typically with significant health problems and disabilities, can continue to lead full and interactive lives. In the USA, there are over 140 Green House projects with over 120 more in development. Green House thinking has spread to many other countries and it is now being introduced into the UK by Evermore Wellbeing.

²² Maggi Shand *A radical rethink is needed in the way we engage with residents of extra care housing* (2012) Housing LIN Viewpoint 28 can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/Viewpoint28_Radical_Rethink.pdf

‘Our focus is on providing warm household environments that enable older people to create and maintain connection as well as remaining part of their community’

Evermore Wellbeing seeks to *‘co-create places where older people always have love and companionship and where they have the ability to lead meaningful lives in the heart of their community. Evermore villages feature six or more family households of about a dozen apartments per household. Apartments are clustered around open plan areas including kitchen, dining and living rooms to encourage social interaction’.*

Each household will be supported by an autonomous, self-managed team of multi-skilled staff called Mulinellos. The Mulinellos will work with the residents to run the household and provide support such as cooking, cleaning, and personal care as well as helping residents access other services (e.g. doctors & district nurses) when necessary. The Mulinellos will be empowered to make decisions specific to their household’s requirements so each household will reflect the residents’ preferences.

Residents, who typically will be in the second phase of retirement, will own the apartments. This brings together the security of home ownership with the sociability of a community and a safety net if they need it.

There is growing interest in the Evermore model and Evermore has a pipeline of properties ready for development in England and Wales. Evermore’s founder, Sara McKee, has also been meeting senior Government officials to share Evermore’s approach, highlighting the demand for small household living across the world including Denmark, Japan and Australia. She says that she is committed to revolutionising the housing choices available for older people in the UK:

“Older people are savvy and demanding consumers and currently their housing needs are not being met, which means people are putting off planning for later life and only making decisions at crisis point. Developing aspirational housing choices will help address this.

Instead of building large, institutionalised warehouses, our focus is on providing warm household environments that enable older people to create and maintain connection as well remain part of their community. Evermore households will be like student living but for older people.

Our Mulinellos are 100% customer focussed and have the training, skills and the power to meet the needs of our residents. We’ve eradicated the traditional task approach so the Mulinellos will have the space and time to focus on developing meaningful relationships with each resident. It will transform what people expect from the housing and care sectors.”

For more information about Evermore, see the recent Housing LIN Viewpoint, *Meeting lifestyle aspirations of older consumers*²³. Also see: www.evermorewellbeing.com

An even more ambitious idea is being developed by Stroud Common Wealth; they want to create an ‘interdependent’ community in which people who need care as they get older can receive a judicious ‘blend of care’; from ‘live alongside’ carers who chose to live in the village with them; from volunteers who are committed to the idea of mutual care; and from on-site professionals accountable to the whole community. They have developed plans for Standish Garden Village on a former hospital site near Stroud.

23 Sara McKee, *Meeting lifestyle aspirations of older consumers* (2016) Housing LIN Viewpoint 77 can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/pagefinder.cfm?cid=10054

‘An extended family network offering mutual care and support for both care-receivers and care-givers’

Standish Garden Village is a proposal by Stroud Common Wealth to regenerate a 32-acre former hospital site outside Stonehouse in Gloucestershire. The scheme involves the reuse of a number of the existing buildings on the site, two of which are listed combined with new development. It will be an intergenerational development of housing for families and for older people based on the principle of ‘Care Housing’. This is a new concept that will combine the collaborative principles of co-housing and a wider intentional neighbourhood, offering supported independent living for *care-receivers* and *care-givers*. Max Comfort from Stroud Common Wealth explains that:

“People who come to live in Standish Garden Village will become part of an extended ‘family network’ in which they will provide each other with mutual care and support according to their needs over time. In this way older and more vulnerable residents will be able to live independently for longer as part of an intergenerational community, receiving help and practical assistance from their co-residents/neighbours. As well, their carers will be better able to lead their own lives rather than, as now, sinking into obscurity.”

The scheme will offer a mixture of privately owned and rented cohousing for families alongside a ‘cohousing with care’ scheme with separate apartments over a common house/care centre, which will combine voluntary care with more formal provision. At the centre of the whole village will be a community hub (in the former Stable block) with a café, shop, meeting rooms and workshop spaces for new health/care spin off businesses. And the landscaped grounds will provide a market garden for home-grown produce and a sensory garden.

The whole of Standish Garden Village will be owned by a Community Land Trust which will grant leases to the various users of the site ensuring that the land and the development remains in community control. Stroud Common Wealth has an established track record of developing community-based housing developments property and land initiatives and they are currently putting together more detailed plans for the scheme including funding arrangements.

The project is visionary and ambitious but it is attracting a lot of interest from local people and from other local interests. The site is currently owned by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Stroud Common Wealth are currently seeking to reach agreement with the HCA based on an Expression of Interest. Whatever the outcome, Stroud Common Wealth is confident that the work on the design and on the financial modelling for ‘Care Housing and Care Neighbourhoods’ will provide a blueprint for other developments in future.

For more information about Standish Garden Village contact Stroud Common Wealth on: www.stroudcommonwealth.org.uk

4. Ways of realising collaborative housing for older people

Growing Older Together: The Case for Housing That Is Shaped and Controlled by Older People and *Community-Led Housing for Older People* set out to show that resident and community-led housing brought many benefits to older people and that it could take many different forms. This overview report has built on and expanded the scope of the earlier reports by considering a greater breadth of possibilities and by describing nine further case examples.

In adopting the term ‘collaborative housing for older people’ (which might even be extended to ‘collaborative ways of living’), the intention has been to show that these forms of housing - when taken together - are much more prevalent than is generally understood and that they are expanding and developing to meet the changing needs and demands of a more discriminating generation of older people.

There are many different ways of realising collaborative housing

All too often resident and community-led housing for older people has been characterised as a niche form of provision that only appeals to small groups of people who have sufficient enthusiasm, energy and resources to develop their own housing from ‘beginning to end’. This is one way to produce such housing; one that is growing in popularity. But collaborative housing embraces a great deal more than this and it can be realised in many different ways.

To emphasise this point, it is worth looking at the various examples cited in the three reports and considering the various ways in which they were developed. They can be grouped under general headings, none of which are mutually exclusive, as follows:

- *Self-developed housing for older people.*

There are a growing number of developments initiated by groups of older people who adopt the senior cohousing model, such as Older Women’s Cohousing, Still Green Third Age Cohousing and Cannock Mill Cohousing. Beyond this some existing co-operatives, such as Senacre Housing Co-operative, are repurposing themselves to better meet the needs of older people. Most, but not all, schemes of this kind are supported by specialist bodies, like the UK Cohousing Network, the Confederation of Co-operative Housing and the National Community Land Trust network, and by regional and local enablers. Important work is currently in progress to strengthen this support infrastructure, learning from the European experience of self-developed housing. The Government has recognised the growing interest in self-build housing and recent measures to encourage collective schemes (under the name of custom-build²⁴) may offer an attractive and less onerous way of producing self-developed housing for older people.

- *Mutualised housing for older people.*

Residents of many leasehold retirement developments for older people have taken over the management of their schemes in recent years; often using Right to Manage. The Moorings is one example of this; among perhaps fifty or more. And some owners of such leasehold schemes are now considering offering the management to residents on a voluntary basis. Other residents have taken on full ownership, as in Clifton Court and Woodchester Valley Retirement Village. There is continuing demand for Right to Manage and pressure on the Government to make the process easier. A number of mainstream providers of older

²⁴ For information about collective custom build go to the website of the National Custom and Self Build Association at: www.nacsba.org.uk

people's housing are beginning to explore how they can empower their existing older residents living in retirement/sheltered housing; including housing associations such as Bolton at Home, Hanover and Housing and Care 21 but there is considerable scope for further mutualisation of all forms of specialist housing for older people.

- *Community-based developers of housing for older people.*

In recent years, particular neighbourhoods or communities have sought to find ways of meeting the housing and related needs of their older residents. Reference has been made to the growth of ways of supporting older people in their homes and to community based networks, of which the Debenham Project is only one example. There is much more scope for community-based housing organisations to support holistic housing and care approaches, along the lines of Witton Lodge Community Association. And some communities have taken on a procurement role themselves as in Esk Moors Lodge and the extra care scheme being developed by Brampton and Beyond Community Trust. The latter scheme uses the community land trust model, as does the ambitious Standish Garden Village, which is in the planning stage along with Elderflowers Projects, another community-based developer.

- *Collaborative housing for older people promoted by specialist developers/providers.*

There are a few specialist developers of resident-led housing for older people; interestingly and to some extent counter-intuitively, they have focused on housing with care schemes. Notable amongst these is Retirement Security Ltd, which developed Plymouth Court. A new entrant is Evermore Wellbeing with several schemes in development. There is significant scope for established specialist providers to develop schemes that embody collaborative principles.

- *Collaborative housing schemes for older people by private developers.*

Surprisingly - despite the obvious interest in and demand for resident-led housing for older people (as evidenced by Right To Manage in particular) - few, if any, private developers have entered what is certainly a market that would attract many new customers. The reasons for this are unclear; given that the potential market for collaborative housing for older people would seem to be growing all the time and with obvious potential for the future. Looking ahead, there is also scope for market-rented schemes for older people that could be collaboratively run.

Tenure and accessibility

It should be noted that collaborative housing schemes can and do vary in terms of their tenure; some are for social or market renting, some are for different levels of market ownership and some are cross-tenure. Furthermore, some schemes are for people who have significant levels of equity to invest, whilst others are designed for people with low levels of equity or none (It should be noted that reductions in subsidy and benefit levels are threatening many schemes for older people on lower incomes). Collaborative housing by its very nature has an inclusive character, which emphasises the commonalities between older people rather than the divisions and most schemes seek to embody this; including some with built-in cross-subsidy and some with funding structures that allow for variable income levels.

Coproduction and community-building

No matter which of these development pathways is followed, there is inevitably a need for effective partnership working in achieving the desired outcome but these partnerships are different from conventional partnerships in that the residents/users play a pivotal role alongside designers, developers and managers (excepting those schemes that are developed on the open market). Going on from this, many newer schemes are emerging through a process of coproduction, in which a progressive commissioner/enabler identifies and works with older people to produce a development, with a strong and continuing interplay between the parties involved.

Collaborative housing developments for older people are about more than housing; they are about becoming part of and contributing to a supportive community. However, the degree and extent of the 'community infrastructure' attached to each scheme varies. Some schemes, such as senior cohousing projects, have an inbuilt commitment to providing shared facilities and activities; other schemes focus more on how they are run by residents with associated community activities emerging and being shaped by circumstances and preferences; and in some neighbourhood networks, the housing occupied by older people is simply a base for mutual care and support, either within the home or across the community.

Inward/outward looking

Collaborative housing schemes are shaped by other important variables. Some schemes are exclusively for older people and some are intergenerational. Some schemes are 'outward looking'. They seek to be integrated into the local community or they develop within the fabric of the neighbourhood. Others schemes are more 'inward looking'. Most collaborative housing schemes are about the general need for 'togetherness' and they place a high value on energy efficiency and on sustainable ways of living.

All of the schemes seek an appropriate balance between individual autonomy and community benefit but in practice the boundaries vary; partly as result of the initial conception and design of the scheme and partly as result of the changing preferences of community members.

Levels of engagement

In common with other forms of resident-led and community-based housing, the levels of engagement that older people choose varies both with the nature of the scheme and according to their personal preferences. All of the schemes offer membership and democratic control to their members but beyond that there are significant differences. In some, all members take a part in decision-making and all participate in certain shared activities, others rely on executive committees to make decisions on behalf of the community within an agreed remit. Very few schemes are run on an exclusively self-help basis. Many use managing agents and some are effectively co-managed with a mainstream partner.

The many ways of 'growing older together'

In summary, two points need to be reiterated. Firstly, collaborative housing for older people can take many and varied forms and, as we have seen, new approaches and models are emerging all the time. When taken together these forms of housing have considerable scope and they have the potential to be developed on a much larger scale

Secondly, all forms of collaborative housing have a shared and distinctive quality. Collaborative housing is essentially about older people being able to have continuing influence and control over their housing and how they live - as their circumstances inevitably change even as they become more frail and vulnerable. It is about 'growing older together'.

If we are to realise the synergy that could and should exist between collaborative housing for older people and collaborative health and social care, then we need to address various misconceptions and challenges and we need to develop a coherent programme to support these enriching and sustainable ways of meeting the needs and aspirations of older people.

5. The Way Ahead

This section does not contain a detailed prescription for the promotion and development of collaborative housing for older people nor does it contain specific recommendations. Rather it outlines some issues to be addressed, some areas of work to be undertaken and some ways in which overall progress can be made.

Building knowledge and understanding

This overview, together with the two previous reports for Housing LIN, has described the growing range and number of collaborative older people's housing schemes and projects. These and other reports have shown the growing appeal and relevance of these approaches. And, importantly, this overview has drawn attention to the cross-connections with collaborative approaches to health and social care for older people.

More work is needed to build our knowledge and understanding of this expanding 'sector'. We need to clarify the defining features and characteristics of existing and emerging schemes and projects so we can better establish their utility and relevance in meeting the needs and aspirations of different groups of older people. Further, we also need to capture and better delineate the 'mutual advantage' offered by collaborative housing (ie. the personal, social and practical support such housing engenders) going beyond the convincing but largely anecdotal evidence gathered so far.

As part of this work, a more coherent 'spectrum' should be developed; spanning from place-based networks, through the repurposing and mutualisation of existing housing developments for older people and on to the many and various new types of collaborative housing. Such a spectrum would illustrate the full potential of collaborative housing and it would highlight gaps and opportunities across the spectrum.

Finally, work is needed to better understand the synergy between collaborative housing for older people and collaborative health and social care. Work on collaborative approaches is more advanced in the health and social care sectors and the housing sector can learn from this. The aim should be to demonstrate how 'collaborative ways of living' could inform and shape the wellbeing agenda for older people, as we move from 'service driven' to 'people centred' forms of provision.

Raising awareness

It is equally important that a significant effort is made to raise the awareness of older people of the potential of what has been called 'people powered change' in expanding their future housing options and choices. Older people value their independence and autonomy but, looking ahead, many recognise the growing importance of association and of mutual support as they grow more frail and isolated. Collaborative approaches to housing offer older people the opportunity to maintain their independence as part of a wider community that they shape and form. These approaches could and should have a wider appeal alongside the more prescriptive models of provision that are currently available but they are not widely known about or understood. And where people are attracted to the idea of collaborative housing - as many undoubtedly are - it can seem difficult to access or to realise.

There are important challenges here. Firstly, the advocates of collaborative housing need to develop a strong and coherent message about how these forms of housing can specifically

benefit older people and how they can be more easily be enabled and developed²⁵. Secondly, organisations that represent and connect older people, both nationally and locally (notably in response to the current debate about ‘downsizing’) should note the appeal and potential of collaborative housing for older people. A recent Housing LIN viewpoint, *Forget ‘downsizing’ think ‘rightsizing’ to meet older people’s housing needs and aspirations*²⁶, stresses the ‘need to design communities (and) places not just...houses’. This is clearly a ‘specification’ for the forms of housing described in this overview.

Alongside this, it is important that more comprehensive and accessible information on collaborative housing for older people is made available on mainstream websites and other outlets. For example, FirstStop Advice Service²⁷, one of the main sources of housing advice for older people, would be ideally placed to highlight those forms of housing that offer residents direct control and influence over how they are run.

The scope and value of collaborative housing for older people

It is generally acknowledged that current policies to meet the future housing needs of our ageing population are partial and inadequate. However, the housing and related needs of older people are so pressing that they will demand a more comprehensive response in the near future. And, in the ongoing debate about what needs to be done, the scope and value of collaborative approaches to housing should be understood and taken on board. Planners, policy makers and commissioners need to recognise that these models of housing for older people will become increasingly relevant as older people’s needs and expectations change, as levels of public capital and revenue funding are restricted and as traditional forms of provision become unattractive and potentially financially unsustainable.

As noted earlier, there is important new thinking by policy makers and commissioners going on in the fields of health and social care. It is imperative that this thinking is translated across into the development of new types of housing provision for older people. Thought must be given as to how such ‘people centred’ approaches to older peoples housing can be stimulated, promoted and supported nationally by the Government and other agencies. And at the local level Local Authorities, the NHS and others need to develop combined health, care and housing strategies for older people; strategies that are developed and implemented with older people, communities and providers working in collaborative partnerships.

Imaginative and progressive housing developers and providers

Notwithstanding the general lack of support from policy makers and commissioners (with a few notable exceptions), imaginative and progressive housing developers and providers have been developing collaborative housing schemes for many years and the pace of development has undoubtedly increased over the last five years. These developers have in the first instance been groups of older people themselves either promoting forms of housing that meet their

25 Some of the main organisations that promote collaborative housing, including the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, UK Cohousing Network and the National Community Land Trust Network, are currently discussing the formation of a ‘Community-Led Housing Alliance’, which should undoubtedly include meeting the needs of older people within its remit.

26 Tony Watts *Forget ‘downsizing’ think ‘rightsizing’ to meet older people’s housing needs and aspirations* (2016) Housing LIN Viewpoint 76 can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint_76_Rightsizing.pdf
See also Brian Beach *Generation Stuck: Exploring the Reality of Downsizing* (2016) ILC-UK.

27 For details of this service see www.firststopadvice.org.uk. Currently their website directory of housing schemes for older people, www.HousingCare.org, does not generally identify schemes that are resident controlled.

particular needs and preferences or alternatively taking over existing housing and running in ways that suit the residents better. More resident-led developers of this kind are coming forward²⁸ but the amount of new housing they can produce will inevitably be limited.

There are also, as noted earlier, various community-based housing enablers, such as the National Community Land Trust Network and its regional umbrellas. There is considerable potential for community-driven housing solutions for older people and it seems likely - in particular given the response to neighbourhood planning and other measures - that more locally based housing projects for older people will be forthcoming. Alongside this, new specialist developers are being formed around specific collaborative models that are seen to have strong market appeal.

At the same time, mainstream social and private housing developers and providers have been slow to respond to an evolving marketplace that could and should be able to accommodate both established housing options together with new models. One area where progress has been made (driven by older people themselves) is in the mutualisation of existing housing for older people. In the retirement leasehold sector, Right to Manage has been an important tool for older people to use and we need to see both the opportunities and rights for leaseholders and other older owners extended and reinforced. Social housing providers are also having to remodel and rethink much of their existing provision for older people and some progress is being made here both in terms of the 'mutualisation' of existing schemes (often on an incremental basis according to expressed demand) and in supporting wider neighbourhood working and networks.

Neither social housing providers nor private developers have shown much appetite for bringing forward new collaborative housing projects. There would seem to be several reasons for this; the overall market for private and social housing for older people is undoubtedly challenging and, in this climate, it is understandable that providers and developers will tend towards 'what they know'. At the same time, everyone can see that big demographic and structural changes are afoot and it is surprising that there has not been more experimentation and innovation; not just in design (where there has been progress since HAPPI 1) but also in forms of localised management and self-government.

Looking ahead

The debate about how we best provide for older people is not going to die down. Far from it, the pressures and challenges are growing all the time. One response to this, the development of collaborative models for delivering health and care to older people would seem to be equally applicable to older people's housing. This covers many possibilities; how older people can best 'age in place'; how existing housing schemes for older people can be re-imagined; and how new housing developments can be commissioned, developed and governed collaboratively?

At the end of last year, the Centre for Ageing Better published their research into 'Later Life in 2015'²⁹ which explored the views and experiences of a broad cross-section of people aged 50 or over. As might be expected, they found wide variations in how people experience later life but they drew out some broad conclusions regarding the circumstances that are conducive to happiness and wellbeing and about common issues facing older people. The research showed

28 The UK Cohousing Network is currently looking at how the range and extent of senior cohousing projects can be expanded. For more information contact the network via: www.cohousing.org.uk

29 See the executive summary on: www.ageing-better.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Later-life-in-2015-Executive-Summary1.pdf

the importance of 'social connections' and suggested that strong social connections can help older people overcome some of the disadvantages older they face, notably declining health and even financial insecurity. The research further pointed out that the homes older people occupy and links to their local areas are an important platform for building and sustaining connections and networks.

More recently, the centre has been hosting a series of roundtables in which they are debating 'how people can be best supported to remain in control of their lives...' and they have been expanding on the role of homes and neighbourhoods; as they are seen as being 'critical to enabling people to remain independent'. The full findings from the roundtable on 'homes and neighbourhoods' are yet to be published but in their February newsletter³⁰ some important points were highlighted.

Clearly the general suitability and physical condition of an older person's home is of high importance, as are suitable aids and adaptations. However, a number of participants and respondents '*stressed that the involvement of older people's perspectives in shaping their homes and communities is vital for better ageing*', thereby supporting the main contention of this overview. In the light of this and of other evidence, the newsletter suggests that we need to look again at how new housing developments can 'best meet older people's priorities'.

In parallel with this work, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People is conducting another inquiry into the provision of housing for older people called *Making retirement housing a positive choice*. This inquiry has been examining how older people's housing can be made more attractive to a new generation of older people and the inquiry has among other things received evidence about forms of housing that are shaped and influenced by older people. A report (likely to be described as HAPPI 3) on their findings will be published later this year and this too is likely to feed into the developing case for providing more collaborative housing - of all kinds - to meet the changing and diverse aspirations and needs of older people; at a time when traditional forms of provision and support are becoming increasingly unsustainable.

30 See the newsletter on: www.ageing-better.org.uk/our-work/topics/feel-in-control/#neighbourhood

6. About the author and Housing LIN

This overview has been compiled and written by Jon Stevens, who has been involved in community-led and co-operative housing for over 40 years. Since 2009, Jon has been researching co-operative and mutual models of housing and care for older people. He has published several reports on the subject, including 'Growing Older Together: the Case for Housing That Is Shaped and Controlled by Older People' and 'Community-led Housing for Older People and The Community Right to Build' both published by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network in 2013. Jon is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, where he is currently undertaking further research into collaborative housing for older people as a member of the Housing and Communities Research Group.

About the Housing Learning and Improvement Network

The Housing LIN is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing LIN is called upon by a wide range of statutory and other organisations to provide expert advice and support regarding the implementation of policy and good practice in the field of housing, care and support services.

To access the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources on coproduction and user involvement, visit:

www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/UserInvolvement

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