

Making the Case

FirstStop Advice: the evidence for integrated, impartial information and advice about housing and care for older people



This is a pivotal time for information and advice delivery.

- The Care Act 2014 and Guidance places new duties on local authorities to ensure that integrated information advice services covering social care, housing and related finance are available to all
- There is growing pressure on the NHS and Social Care to move towards prevention and away from crisis interventions e.g. when older people are admitted to hospital

Integrated housing and care information and advice services can help prevent such crises, manage them better when they do occur and thereby achieve the outcomes that the NHS, Public Health and Adult Social Care have to deliver.

“...impartial information and advice plays a critical role in enabling older people to make informed decisions about their later life, housing, and care, all of which fundamentally underpin wellbeing.”

Neil Revely, Chair of ADASS Housing Policy Network

This brochure summarises the results of an independent evaluation of local housing and care options advice services for older people which are working in partnership with EAC FirstStop, Care & Repair England and other national organisations* (see <http://www.housingcare.org/downloads/kbase/3433.pdf>) with financial support from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

- It provides evidence of significant financial savings to the NHS and Social Care
- It highlights how the services contribute to the achievement of NHS, Adult Social Care and Public Health outcomes and targets
- It demonstrates the value of such services to older people



The Bigger Picture

Housing factors play a critical role in determining health and independence, particularly in later life.

Currently 9.3 million households are headed by a person over retirement age – one third of all households – and this is rising. People are living longer, increasingly with long term health conditions. The largest rate of increase is in the number of people aged over 85 which is expected to more than double to 3.2 million by 2034. It is this age group which makes more demands on health and social care. The more that suitable housing and related support enables older people to live independently and well for longer, the greater the potential savings to the NHS and Social Care.

The Evidence

Savings to NHS and Social Care

Mrs Green, aged 89, lives on her own. She has had a number of falls at home and following a recent hip operation was unable to return home because her house was unsuitable. *“I didn’t know where to turn to, but I knew I couldn’t manage at home”* she said. Following a referral from a hospital social worker to the FirstStop local partner, the adviser carried out a full assessment of Mrs Green’s housing options and her finances. Handrails and a walker were provided to help with moving around the house, a stairlift has been installed so that the first floor bathroom can be used, and Mrs Green has been awarded Attendance Allowance enabling her to purchase practical support services.

Savings to the NHS

Reduced risk of falls resulting in a hospital admission	£3,577 ¹
Avoided delayed hospital discharge	£1,100 ²

Savings to social care

Deferred need for residential care	£25,600 ³
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Total health and social care savings	£29,277
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¹ NHS reference costs 2010/11; ² NHS reference costs 2013-14; ³ PSSRU Unit cost of health and Social care 2014

The Building Research Establishment estimates that poor housing costs the NHS in England £1.4 billion annually. Cold and damp housing and falls hazards are the main reasons for this health care cost.

BRE Briefing Paper 2015
<https://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/pdf/87741-Cost-of-Poor-Housing-Briefing-Paper-v3.pdf>



“Contacting [the housing options advice service] was the best thing I ever did. I have always felt supported. I would not have liked to go through it without them”

Delivering NHS and Social Care outcomes

Local housing and care options advice services help meet statutory outcomes, including enabling early discharge from hospital and helping avoid the risk of older people being prematurely readmitted to hospital. Services also support reablement, further minimising the risk of readmission.

The evaluation found clear evidence of falls being avoided. 45% of older people interviewed reported that they had experienced falls at home and through the intervention had received support with obtaining aids and/or adaptations to reduce the risk of further falls.

“...we have problems with hospital discharge because of housing problems. The service brings a range of expertise, and provides support once [patients] are home, taking pressure off social workers.”

Hospital Social Worker

Wellbeing and independence for older people

Local housing and care options advice services demonstrate a person-centred approach, providing older people with an enhanced sense of wellbeing and quality of life, helping to maintain social networks and enabling older people to continue to live safely and independently at home.

Neither Mr and Mrs Roper, aged 87 and 83, could manage the stairs in their home and Mr Roper had fallen several times. The housing and care service helped them to obtain and install a range of aids and adaptations including stair rails, hand rails and a food trolley. Mr Roper has not fallen in several months. They can now manage comfortably at home and Mrs Roper has returned to her local Mothers' Union meetings.



- In surveys 100% of service users found the advisers to be knowledgeable and 97% felt the information they received was easy to understand.
- 84% have also taken action as a result of using the service and 94% now feel more confident about making the right decisions about their housing and care options.

Source: FirstStop service user feedback survey, April-June 2015



Delivering Effective Outcomes

- Working together with other local agencies, the information, advice and service brokerage delivered by the 16 FirstStop local partners, at a cost to DCLG in 2015-16 of just under £500,000, resulted in approximately £11.5 million annual savings arising from the avoidance of falls, unplanned hospital admissions and GP appointments.
- A further £1.9 million is being secured annually in additional financial benefits which can support older people to remain independent and to make their own choices to purchase additional support.
- Wellbeing was improved for 59% of older people using local housing and care options services and health outcomes were improved for 43%.
- Local housing options advice services identify and secure aids, adaptations, and assistive technology and improved heating, and where appropriate identify alternative housing options. This has been vital in supporting successful hospital discharges and reablement for people with complex health conditions.
- Local FirstStop partners offer a flexible, personalised service that supports older people to take better decisions (a core principle of the Care Act 2014) and helps them with the actions they need to take so that they can continue to live safely, independently and well at home.



“The service is practical and valuable. We would like to see it spread further. It means health can stop addressing housing needs. We get better outcomes at lower costs.”

Senior Manager,
Integrated Care Project



Produced by EAC FirstStop & Care & Repair England

FirstStop is a partnership of national and local organisations*, led by Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC), and providing comprehensive information and advice about housing, care and support, plus related financial matters, to older people. The FirstStop Advice service is delivered via a website (www.firststopadvice.org.uk), a national advice line (0800 377 7070) and a network of FirstStop local partners delivering casework /advice services and, increasingly, peer support services.

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