

Positive ageing - Housing choices

DRAFT

Older People's Housing Strategy 2011-15



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Plain English:

We have tried to make this document as readable as possible by minimising 'jargon' and technical words. However, there may still be words you are not familiar with, so we've produced a helpful guide. This available on the council's website at [X](#) or by requesting a hard copy using the contact details listed on page [X](#).

Foreword

Executive Member (when approved)

Executive Summary

This strategy builds upon progress made meeting the housing and support needs of older households¹ in York, as set out in the city's first ever older people's housing strategy 2006-09.

Since this first strategy, older people's aspirations and expectations have remained largely unchanged. There is a strong preference for remaining independent in one's own home for longer, for homes that take into account the changing needs of older people, for more flexibility and choice in housing care and support options and for better information about the housing choices on offer.

In 2006 we set out some of the key changes affecting York. Since then, we've worked to gain a better understanding of the views of older people and the housing and support issues facing them. We found that;

- the number of older people is increasing significantly, including those with a physical and/or mental frailty
- there is a need for more accessible and clear information about housing for older people and services available to support independent living
- one in every two older households is under occupying their home.² The reasons for this are complex, but in part due to a lack of attractive housing options
- there is significant need for more help maintaining homes, adaptations to keep homes safe and support options to enable older people to remain in their homes for longer
- there is scope for some of the equity tied up in people's homes to fund housing and support in later life
- there is a need for better designed homes offering longevity and flexibility for the changing needs of ageing

¹ Older households are taken to be aged 55 or over. There is no single accepted definition of 'older people' but definitions usually start from 50 through to 65.

² A household is said to be under occupying when they occupy a house with two bedrooms more than they need. This is set by the government.

Our review of what older people aspire to and our assessment of local needs has informed the following priorities, which form the basis of our action plan 2011-2015:

- **Ensure older people can make informed housing choices and plan ahead by providing accessible and clear information on their housing options:**

Comprehensive and trusted information about housing and support options is increasingly important as older households seek more choice and control about where they live.

- **Ensure older households can remain independent in their own homes for longer:**

Increasingly, older people wish to remain in their own home for longer, rather than have to go into residential or other 'specialist' accommodation. Services that help people remain independent and safe in their homes will be critical in meeting these wishes.

- **Where there is need for housing offering greater levels of support such as for frailer older people and those with specific needs, ensure it is designed to promote and enable maximum independence and choice:**

Where more specialist accommodation is required, it must be in the right place, well connected to local amenities, enable independence and offer a greater range of tenure options.

Investment priorities 2011-2015:

- Advice and information to older households about their housing options to promote informed choice
- A shift from residential care to support to live at home, with investment in 'stay at home' services
- Community based 'extra care' schemes to meet more specific needs, with a wider range of tenure options and agreed minimum standards designed to promote maximum independence. Plan as integral part of key strategic sites.

Introduction

The city's first housing strategy for older people was published in 2006. This set out the opportunities and challenges arising from a significant and growing number of older households. The strategy helped raise the profile of older people's housing issues and led to a much better understanding of local needs.

The age at which someone is defined as older is hotly debated and there are many different starting points ranging from 50 to 65. For the purpose of this strategy we have chosen to define it as 55 or over as this is towards the middle of this range and the starting point used in an independent study of older people needs in York undertaken in early 2010. Whatever starting age is used it is clear older people are not an homogenous group, but have different life experiences, values, expectations and needs.

As we saw in 2006, demographic changes, advances in health care, increasing wealth and other improvements mean people in the UK are living longer. There are now about 54,000 older people in York, almost 30 per cent of the total population, and this is set to increase significantly in future years.

Despite forming a significant proportion of all households, older people's housing aspirations can all too easily be overlooked. As the national trend for housing indicates, supply of affordable and decent homes has not kept pace with demand, and importantly the demands of an aging population. As a result, the older population will begin to experience increased difficulties securing housing which offers a variety of needs-related services focused around enhanced health and social wellbeing.

In older age a wide range of housing choices are needed, from mainstream housing that sustains independence and provides good access to local services and amenities to more specialist accommodation that enables the most frail to be supported.

This strategy has been written in the context of a national economic downturn, a new coalition government and concerns about the scope of public finances to fund housing and adult social care aspirations in the

future. The ring-fencing of national funds used to support care services is gradually being lifted, presenting new challenges and opportunities at the local level. In 2009 government published *Shaping the Future of Care Together*, a paper proposing a redesign of the funding system, which is currently under consultation. Any new funding system is likely to involve greater partnership between government, the individual and private insurance.

What this strategy hopes to achieve

This strategy forms part of the wider *York Housing Strategy 2011-15*. The strategy aims to raise the profile of older people's housing issues within this broader plan and focus specific action around the challenges and opportunities identified. It provides a framework within which investments decisions can be taken.

A wide range of national, regional and local strategies link into this work and support the wider agenda to promote choice, independence, well-being and improved quality of life. This strategy aims to make these links explicit so joint working and added value is enhanced and duplication and waste minimised.

As in 2006, this document briefly sets out national and local policy governing the development of older people's services and identifies the specific needs of older households in York. It details the key strategic aims we want to achieve with an action plan showing how we will measure progress.

A key aim of the strategy will be to ensure all older citizens, including those with physical frailty or mental illness are able to play a full and active role in society, and reduce differences in outcomes for such groups³.

³ Such as poor housing conditions, fuel poverty and health

Equalities and diversity

As well as a growing ageing population York also has an increasingly diverse population. The city's older population is now made up of people of different races, religious beliefs, sexual orientations and disabilities. We must ensure housing and related support services are welcoming and accessible to all these different households.⁴

Official figures put the black and minority ethnic (BME) population at around 6 per cent of all residents, though a recent local study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggested this could be much higher. From the work we have done we know that BME households are dispersed across the city. Our assessments showed a need to ensure better access to housing advice and information for BME households, but did not highlight specific issues around the need for culturally specific housing provision or support services. We need to explore these issues more to ensure we are not missing needs that are hidden, though we should be mindful of recently expressed views that the BME community has been over researched.⁵ In the meantime we need to ensure mainstream provision is accessible and suitable for all.

We know there are around 550 people with learning disabilities accessing formal support services in York and a proportion of these are older households. As with older people in general, there is an expectation that such households will be able to live independently at home for as long as they wish. Where specialist older persons accommodation is needed we must ensure it is appropriate to the needs of people with learning disabilities.

Consultation

⁴ A recent BBC Radio 4 report featured lesbian and gay households living in sheltered accommodation who felt they had to hide their sexuality from other residents due to openly expressed prejudice.

⁵ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/black-and-minority-ethnic-older-peoples-views-research-findings>

This strategy has been developed with the direct involvement of service providers and customers. The York Older People's Partnership Board commented on early drafts and wider consultation was undertaken at the annual York 50+ Festival Information Fair and a wider survey of older residents.

Older people's views

We reviewed national and local consultation with older people to find out more about the influences upon people's housing decisions, and their future housing intentions and aspirations. In *Housing Choices and Aspirations of Older People*⁶ the main themes underpinning decisions were attachment to current home, complexity of family/caring relationships, access to services and amenities, and health and well-being. Other research⁷ showed:

- increasing value placed on maintaining independence and control over one's life, with a preference to stay in one's own home for longer.
- a wish for more flexibility and choice in housing, care and support options
- a growing need for clear information and advice on what housing and support is available.
- a preference for well designed and flexible homes with a minimum of two bedrooms, to allow a carer or relative to stay when the alternative would be to go into hospital
- increasing value placed on homes that are well connected to existing personal networks, leisure and other amenities.

⁶ *Housing Choices and Aspirations of Older People: Research from the New Horizons Programme*, Communities and Local Government, 2008.

⁷ Such as the annual Residents Opinion Survey or Talkabout Panel.

National and local policy context

National policy

Demographic change, social trends and the views of older people are driving policy shifts at the national and local level. In the broadest terms national policy is shifting from a focus on treating ill health and frail older people towards promoting choice, well being and improved quality of life for all. Within this is a focus on preventative services that enable people to remain independent in their own homes, tackling age discrimination and recognising older people as valuable citizens.

The Government has invested in many schemes to improve the housing circumstances of older people over the past decade. One of the most significant is the Supporting People programme launched in 2003, which ensures people receive the help and support they need to live independently.

The current national strategy to meet the housing needs of older people, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods*,⁸ has three overarching themes: giving a better deal for older people today; building homes for our future; and reconnecting housing, health and care. The national strategy proposes the following steps:

- Provide a new approach to a national housing advice and information service
- New rapid repairs and adaptations services
- Modernise the Disabled Facilities Grant so that it reaches more people
- Continue the Decent Homes Programme⁹
- Build more mainstream and specialised homes for older people through increased investment in new housing
- Housing built to Lifetime Homes Standards
- Local plans required to take proper account of ageing

⁸ *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A national Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, Communities and Local Government, 2008, page 11.

⁹ The Decent Homes Programme aims to ensure all social rented homes meet a decent standard by 2011.

- Improve joined-up assessment, service provision and commissioning across housing, health and care

Older person housing needs are also reviewed in research by Help the Aged (now Age UK), which calls for quality housing for older people which has longevity and flexibility for the changing needs of ageing.¹⁰ The paper points towards a downwards trend in new supported housing schemes as government pushes towards ensuring older people have the choice to stay independent within their own homes. The report advocates a balance between these two options informed by a thorough understanding of the needs of older people, ensuring an availability of both adequate support in the home and quality supported housing schemes.

In the Department of health strategy *Our health, our care, our say*¹¹ a clear emphasis is placed on providing older people with improved access to information through technology such as the internet allowing a personalised care package, promoting a healthy and active life, independence, well-being and choice.

A related strategy from the Department of Health is *Living well with Dementia*.¹² It calls for an increased understanding of dementia to help remove the stigma of ageing. Care for people living with dementia should be promoted so that older people can remain in their homes and receive a more personalised package of care, possible through service providers working closely with community groups, voluntary groups and offering better support to carers (as supported by the *New Deal for Carers*¹³).

In terms of Adult Social Care, recent emphasis is on different agencies working together to jointly commission services which can offer tailored support to meet different needs. The intention is 'to make personalisation, including a strategic shift towards early intervention and prevention, the cornerstone of public services'.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Housing Choice for Older People*, Help the Aged, 2006.

¹¹ *Our Health, Our care, Our say*, Department of Health, 2006.

¹² *Living Well with Dementia: a national dementia strategy*, Department of Health, 2008.

¹³ *New Deal for Carers: Task Force reports*, Department of Health, 2008.

¹⁴ *Transforming Social Care*, Local Authority Circular 2008/1, Department of Health, 2008, page 2.

Within this overall strategy, housing-related support has been identified as a cost-effective mechanism to reduce dependency, promote independence and good health and to prevent social exclusion. It is also argued that timely intervention in housing-related support can reduce later demand for more expensive interventions and provide better outcomes for individuals.^{15,16}

Despite this, resources are often targeted only at those most in need. Service commissioners are therefore being encouraged to work with local partners to enable early intervention and bring about a shift in the focus of support away from intervention at the point of crisis to a more pro-active and preventative model centred on improved wellbeing, with greater choice and control for individuals.¹⁷

In York we consulted with customers and they told us of the importance of being able to move in preparation for older life. Research has shown this has been particularly effective with early onset dementia. Moving at an earlier stage increases social integration and reduces disorientation. Sheltered and extra care schemes are therefore commissioned on a basis that there will be different levels of support needs and that older people that have moved into a scheme before they need support or care are buying into the future security of a warden.

These policies are designed to address the significant implications that the UK's ageing population will have on future housing demand and support services. There are issues surrounding the quality of older people's accommodation and their ability to repair and maintain their properties to a sufficient standard. Despite there being significant amounts of un-mortgaged equity in older people's homes (estimated by the Council of Mortgage Lenders to be £367 billion nationally), older people are often unwilling to downsize from large, family homes to smaller, higher quality accommodation with the potential to unlock some of this equity. For many people, barriers to moving to suitable accommodation include lack of appropriate housing alternatives,

affordability, accessing the support services they require and the reduced independence intensive healthcare support can entail.

Local policy

At a more local level the *City of York Commissioning Strategy for Older People 2006-2021*¹⁸ and the draft *Vision for Older People's Health and Well Being in York 2010-2015* both document that the older person population of the City is set to rise dramatically in the next 15 years, and that demand on support services will increase as people live longer.

The *Commissioning Strategy* provides analysis of support needs and service needs of older people in York until 2020 using detailed demographic projections. The strategy indicates that advancements in provision will be needed to meet the anticipated increase in the population of older people. The strategy calculates increased investment in services to the sum of £23.3 million up £7.25 million on current investment figures. To meet need and keep within current funding budgets the strategy suggests to *"increase the number of people who are supported at home and reduce demand for acute hospital beds. Specifically we could develop specialist home and day care services."*¹⁹

It is supposed that such a shift in service provision is possible through investment in current extra care housing to ensure sufficient placements in existing stock, providing more cost effective community based support in areas such as mental health support, the introduction of assistive technologies such as tele-care and tele-health, and an increase in resources available to carers to ensure their wellbeing and ability to care for older relatives, friends or spouses.

Final recommendations of the strategy focus on future research, (such as the recent housing needs assessment in understanding current gaps in service provision and the positive impact increased take up can have on older people's wellbeing), what new services are needed, and what

¹⁵ *Commissioning Housing Support for Health and Wellbeing*, CLG, 2008,

¹⁶ *Better Outcomes, Lower Costs: Implications for health and social care budgets of investment in housing adaptations, improvements and equipment: a review of the evidence*, F. Heywood and L. Turner, Office for Disability Issues, 2007.

¹⁷ *Transforming Social Care*, op. cit. page 24.

¹⁸ City of York Council *City of York Commissioning Strategy for Older People 2006-2021* (2007)

¹⁹ City of York Council *City of York Commissioning Strategy for Older People 2006-2021* (2007) page 58

current services can be decommissioned or reduced as a result of new services.

The *Vision for Older People's Health and Well Being in York 2010-2015* says that older people should be helped to remain within a home of their own. It proposes the continued development of 'extra care' housing, but with future provision delivered on a community basis rather than as stand alone 'specialist' schemes, so that people receive the range of extra care services they need within a neighbourhood setting.

The document calls for much greater clarity about who the Local Authority will fund in residential care and why. Where aids and adaptations do not exacerbate people's dependency it says there should be a greater funding emphasis on providing property adaptations.

It concludes that, over and above access to health and care provision, older people's confidence to remain in the community is based on their ability to maintain their property, play a part in their neighbourhoods and to feel safe.

The *York - A City Making History, Vision and Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2025*²⁰ highlights results from a citizen consultation which outline several key features relevant to older people;

- Investment in housing stock should be made, with careful consideration of locality to shops, transport and general amenities. Such investment should be of a high standard, achieved through adopting 'lifetime standards'
- Older person support service delivery should be concentrated to four key areas: prevention to improve health and wellbeing, investment in community based services aimed at those living with mental health needs, improved coordinated care for those receiving long term care and a reduction in hospital stay times
- A positive attitude towards older people and ageing and increased value of the experience and knowledge of older people

²⁰ Without Walls. *York-a city making history, Vision and Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2025* (2008). This is an overarching strategic plan from which all other local plans should contribute to.

The *York Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2010*²¹ highlights housing related causes to poor health and well being, such as fuel poverty and poor housing conditions, which impact disproportionately on older households. A key recommendation in the report is to target measures to promote affordable warmth, such as the city's multi-agency Hot Spot scheme.

²¹ The JSNA outlines health related facts about York and identifies key priorities for future action.

Current approaches in York

There are wide range of approaches and services in York aiming to assist older households remain independent within their own home, as well as meet the accommodation and support needs of the more frail elderly. These services are provided by a range of agencies across the private, statutory and voluntary sectors. Many of these agencies work in partnership with each other and meet regularly to review and develop services.

Helping people understand their housing and support options

There is now a lot of advice available to older households about their housing options, provided by a vast array of different agencies. Much of this is available on-line, such as the Age UK website, or through government issued information leaflets. It can sometimes be confusing knowing which agency to approach for information.

Assisting older people to remain in their homes

As we have seen, many older people wish to remain within their own homes as they get older rather than access more specialist housing such as sheltered accommodation or residential care. In line with this wish, a wide range of services have developed aimed at sustaining independence and preventing the need to move out of ones home. Assistance can vary from simple safety checks to more costly adaptations and from low levels to intensive care and support. Whilst not exhaustive, the list below gives a picture of the types of services available:

- Falls prevention work led by the Primary Care Trust including home screening to ensure the home is safe to return to after a period in hospital.
- Help with minor adaptations to the home to enable people to remain in their own home and /or enable discharge from hospital
- Home Improvement Agency, providing homeowners and private sector tenants with support and practical help in maintaining their home.
- Handyperson Service and Approved Tradesman Scheme.

- Home safety loans for minor repair work and Home Appreciation Loans, enabling homeowners to release equity tied up in their home to fund repairs and make homes decent.
- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, to enable eligible persons to continue living in their own home.
- Energy efficiency grants for the over 60s and initiatives such as the Warm Front programme and the 'Hot Spots' referral scheme, aiming to tackle fuel poverty.
- Free community care assessments to determine eligibility for home support.
- Floating home support services.
- Community Alarm and tele-care services consisting of alarm only services or services with warden assistance. It involves equipment that allows for remote monitoring of people at risk.
- Services and support for older people to remain safe and active, such as GP referral scheme and active leisure
- On-line catalogue of care equipment and support services for elderly residents.
- Gardening services (Age UK)
- Support for carers.

Case study: Home maintenance advice pack:

The pack provides advice and help in regularly maintaining your home and covers things such as financial information, practical advice, DIY safety and links to useful organisations. For more information contact: 01904 554092

Assisting older people to move when they want to

Over the years different housing solutions have evolved as a response to older people's needs. These include retirement housing for independent living and specially designed housing with support for frail older people and those with specific needs such as dementia. As older people's aspirations change and we become better at supporting people to remain independent in mainstream homes, the need for more specialised forms of housing could well diminish. However, there will always be people for whom more specialised housing with support is the preferred or only option.

In recent years there has been a shift away from the traditional 'old peoples home' towards models that offer much more independence and choice. In line with many other areas, York has seen the development of 'extra care' housing. This is housing that offers people their own self contained home, with options to receive appropriate levels of care as required to sustain independent living. Sometimes there are shared facilities such as a meeting room, shop or activities, but this is not essential, especially if these amenities already exist nearby in the local community. (see Auden House case study).

For those wishing to move there are currently a variety of options:

- Downsizing initiatives to help older households in the social rented sector move to smaller accommodation.
- Retirement housing, often purpose built and offering independent housing aimed at the more active older person
- Sheltered housing, and housing with optional 'extra care' services. This is self contained housing, often on the same site or in the same area, with varying levels of care and support available to enable independent living tailored to individual needs.
- Residential care homes providing 24 hour, intensive support for those with high levels of care, offering less independence.

Case study: Auden House 'extra care'

This is the first purpose built extra care housing development in York for those aged 55 and over, offering 41 two bedroom self contained flats with a range of additional facilities. This type of housing provides independent living with 24 hour support if and when needed.

There are some community facilities built in such as a hairdressing salon, a café and a shop. A personal care service is available for residents and the services on offer are open to the wider local community.

Case study: Tangle Tree Court downsizing scheme

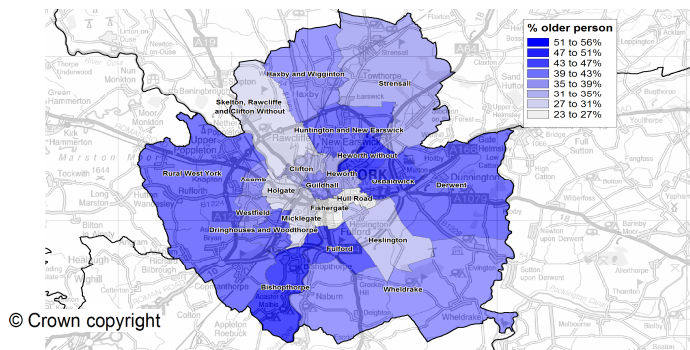
In 2009, six mostly older households in council accommodation were supported to downsize from family homes to smaller accommodation more suited to their housing needs. Residents were given new carpets, curtains, white goods and furniture and their moving costs were paid for. They were supported through each stage of the move by a support worker. The move enabled six families on the York Housing Register to take up the much needed family homes. No one was forced to move. Residents came forward voluntarily once they saw the quality apartments being offered by Yorkshire Housing Group. Everyone was a winner. The council will seek to replicate the scheme in future.

Local housing and support needs

In 2009/10 we completed a detailed housing needs assessment of older person households in York.²² The assessment was based on the views of almost 1,300 older person only households, representing 30,074 such households across the city.²³ We also used evidence from various other sources²⁴ to complete the picture.

- There are about 54,500 older people and just over 30,000 older person only households in York, around one in three of all households. Though large this is typical both regionally and nationally.
- The number of older people is expected to increase by over 30 per cent in the next 20 years, with the biggest rise being in those aged 85 and over. The highest number of older people live in the suburban areas of York.

Figure 2.2 Percentage of older person only households by ward



Source: City of York SHMA household survey, Fordham Research 2007

²² City of York: Older persons accommodation and support needs assessment 2009/10.

²³ 'Older person only' households are those which are comprised only of people aged 55 and over.

²⁴ Private Sector Stock Condition Survey and Fuel Poverty report 2008, Black and Minority Ethnic / Migrant Worker Housing Needs Assessment 2009, City of York Council Customer Profiling

- Three out of every four older households are owner-occupiers. Older person households have lower incomes than other households but notably higher levels of savings and equity.
- There are around 500 older person households on the York Housing Register,²⁵ with just over 10 per cent in the highest priority 'Band A'.
- One in two older person households is under occupying their home²⁶ with highest levels in the owner occupied sector. There are around 700 (13 per cent) social rented properties currently under occupied by older households. The majority of older people wish to stay in their long-term family home in retirement, though a significant minority have or plan to downsize. Very few people state that they anticipate moving to sheltered accommodation or living with family members²⁷.
- The main difficulty reported by older households is 'difficulty maintaining the home'. One in four older households reported one or more age-related problem with their home (some 7,500 households). Such reported problems increase with age, and are highest among those in social rented housing.
- More than a quarter of older households reported a 'support need' most commonly medical followed by physical disability. However, less than one in five older households used a support service. Households aged over 85 or social rented households were most likely to use such services.
- The most commonly requested support need was for a handyperson (2,488 households). A recent review found a significant increase in this need in future.

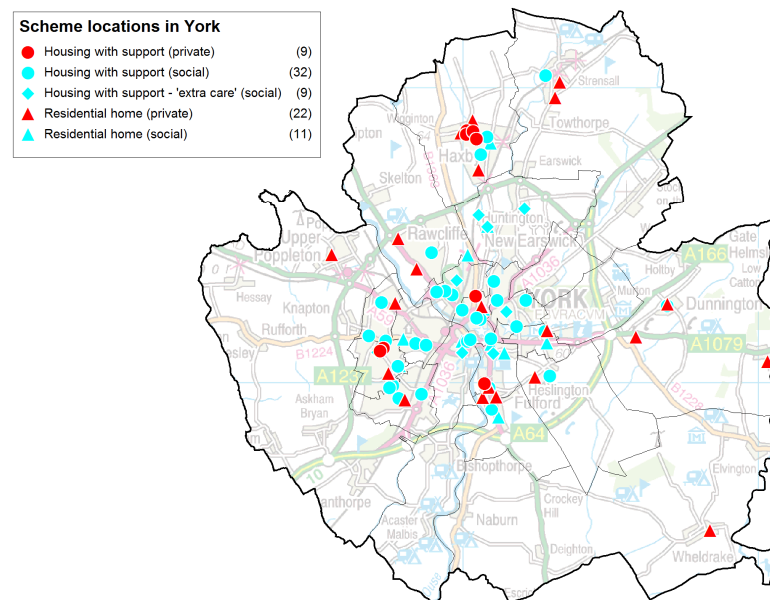
²⁵

²⁶ When measured against the government's 'bedroom Standard'

²⁷ Yorkshire Futures – Regional Citizens Panel Report, April 2010

- Falling is a serious and frequent occurrence in people aged 65 and over. Each year, 35 per cent of over-65s experience one or more falls. In 2009/10, 826 older people were admitted to York Hospital as a result of a fall. There is clear evidence that comprehensive integrated falls prevention and management programmes reduce the incidence and severity of first falls
- There is a significant need for additional community alarm services.
- There is a significant shortage of adaptations to help those who would prefer to stay at home. Only about half of those who needed adaptations to do so actually had them. The most commonly required adaptations were low cost items such as handrails and lever taps. Many older person households with support needs required further adaptations such as low level shower and downstairs toilet. Significant resources are spent each year adapting existing homes. It is vitally important to make the most of the existing stock of homes designed to be accessible and adapted dwellings.
- Within the City there are around 80 'specialist' housing schemes currently providing various kinds of housing with some element of on-site care and shared facilities. These can be either sheltered accommodation, sheltered with 'extra care' services or residential care.²⁸ About half of these are private and half publicly owned and are evenly spread across the city. Most of this accommodation is rented, despite almost half of those in need stating a preference for owner occupation.²⁹

Figure 2.8 Location of older persons specialist housing schemes in York



Source: City of York Council, Fordham Research 2009

- There is an over supply of 1 bedroom affordable specialist housing and an under supply of affordable 2 bedroom accommodation. Analysis of the need for affordable specialist accommodation between 2009 to 2014 suggests an unmet need of around 320 additional units.³⁰ Around half of future provision should be

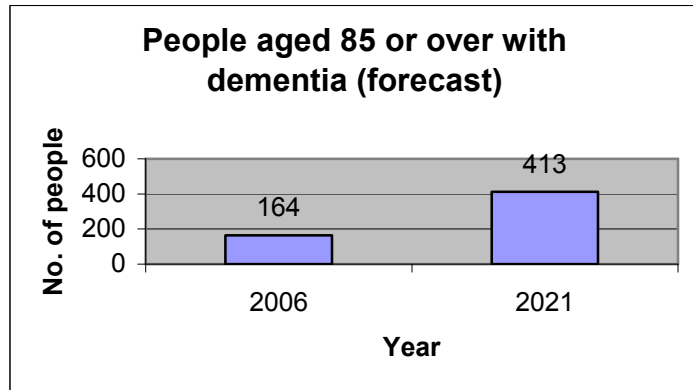
²⁸ See Glossary at back of document for a description of specialist housing.

²⁹ Signalling a possible future role for affordable shared ownership models.

³⁰ Based on all older households stating a need to move but being unable to afford private sector 2 bedroom specialist accommodation. If affordability was based on minimum 1 bed room accommodation then our assessment showed an over supply of affordable specialist accommodation. We must also bear in mind

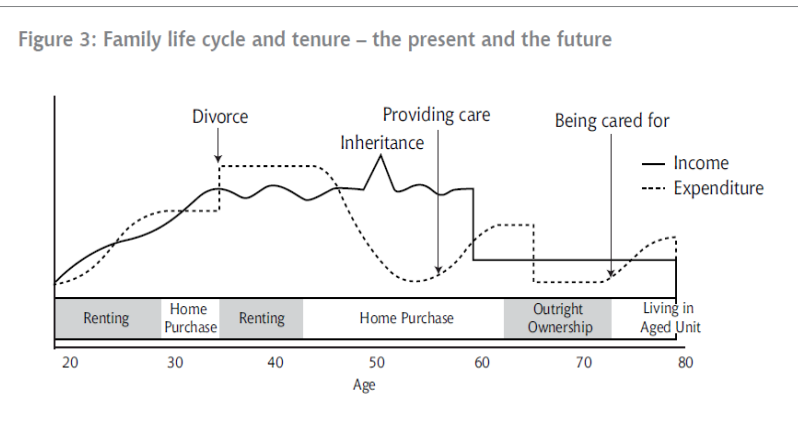
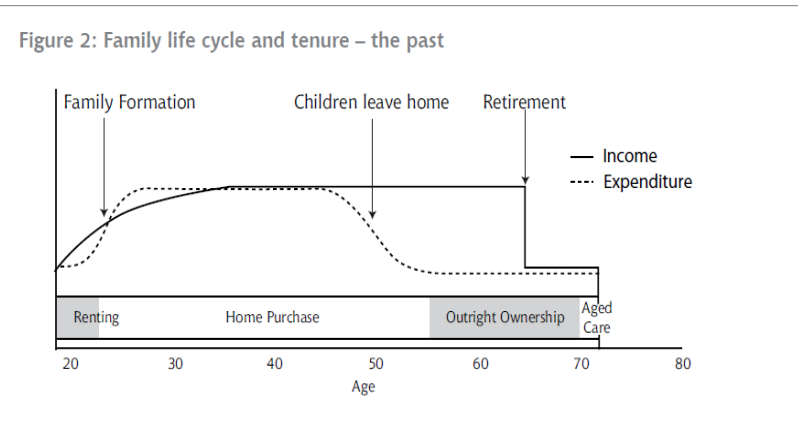
suburban with around 35 per cent urban and 15 per cent rural.³¹ Most of the publicly owned older persons provision was built in the 1960's and 1970's and is of questionable quality in terms of meeting modern needs.

- Around 7 per cent of people over 65 in York have dementia (some 2,400 people) and this is set to double over the next 15 years, signalling a substantial need for additional specialist dementia care services.



- Since three quarters of York's older people are owners there is clearly a lot of scope, and probably a lot of need, for equity release in York, to fund adaptations to existing homes or a move to other accommodation. This is particularly so for those households who do not qualify for assistance through the Disabled Facilities Grant. Releasing equity is unlikely to be an option for the nearly 20 per cent of older households in social rented accommodation and 4 per cent in private rental. There is a need to integrate financial advice with advice on benefits, local authority grants and weigh up other housing options including moving on.

that existing specialist provision is quite old, so unmet needs could be higher once obsolete stock is discounted from the supply side figures.



- Whilst almost all social rented homes now meet the Decent Homes standard³² over 12,000 private sector homes do not,³³ and 35 per cent of these are older households. The worst conditions are to be found in the private rented sector.
- Around 3,000 older person households are in fuel poverty, suggesting a need for targeted affordable warmth programmes.
- Older black and minority ethnic households in York do not display significantly different needs than those from other households,

³² Decent Homes Standard – see Glossary at back for full definition

³³ Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

though barriers to appropriate advice, information and support were identified.

- It is estimated that 2 million people across the country take on caring responsibilities for the first time each year. In York, the number of unpaid carers aged 65 or over in York is estimated to rise from 3,600 in 2008, to 4,729 in 2025.³⁴ There is a significant need to raise awareness amongst local housing providers about carers and their needs and ensure carers know about the support services available to them.³⁵

³⁴ York Carers Strategy 2009-2011

³⁵ See York Carers Strategy 2009-2011

What we plan to do

Our review of older people's aspirations and assessment of local needs has informed our strategic aims and objectives. These form the basis of our action plan 2011-2015.

1. Ensure older people can make informed choices and plan ahead by providing accessible and clear information on their housing options

We want to do more to help people make more informed choices about where they live. We want to encourage more people to plan earlier for their housing moves and to have good knowledge of, and access to, housing and support that best suits their needs and aspirations. Our focus will be on ensuring good access to information, given the increasingly diverse ageing population. Improving access to financial information to support housing choices will be an important element in strengthening housing advice for older people.

2. Ensure older households are able to live in their own homes for longer, rather than have to move to 'specialist' accommodation to maintain their independence and well being

The majority of us want to see out our lives at home, living alongside our friends and family, and in a community we know and trust. Ensuring we are able to do so in comfort and safety is a key challenge for those working in housing, which in turn will benefit others in health and care services. For many people, that choice can be made much easier by "that bit of help" to adapt and repair their homes to make them safe, warm, and comfortable. Low tech, low cost solutions are popular and cost effective, such as fixing a stair carpet, a hand rail into the garden or draught proofing and repairing a broken window.

For older people with disabilities there are additional challenges which are compounded when their homes are simply lacking in basic adaptations and amenities. We will work to enable access to a greater range of

funding options to meet people's needs, including equity release³⁶, and focus what public resources there are at the most vulnerable. As we've seen, there is a significant range of services available to help people stay at home, delivered by a sometimes bewildering array of agencies. Helping people understand and access these services will be critical to the success of this strategy. We will influence the design of new homes to ensure housing which is adaptable to people's changing needs as they grow older and we will look to offer a range of incentives for those that want to downsize.

3. Where there is need for more specialist types of accommodation for frailer older people and those with specific needs, ensure it promotes and enables maximum independence and choice

We must continue to explore options for specialist types of accommodation to meet a range of different needs. Existing sheltered schemes offer access to care and some element of shared facilities and activities. More recently 'sheltered with extra care' schemes have opened, which give maximum independence in self contained flats but with access to wider support as required. We must develop this concept further to ensure future housing is provided in community settings, where local services and facilities allow. Where services and amenities are absent we will look to be build these into scheme requirements.

There are also schemes that offer much more intensive care, sometimes around specialist needs such as mental health and dementia. We know there will be increased demand for these in the future. Whenever we plan for specialist housing we will ensure it serves to maximise independence and choice for older people.

Whilst our research found a 'need' for additional affordable specialist provision this does not square with what we know about demand for our own housing stock. We need to understand much better what people

³⁶ Research has shown that equity release was only considered as a last resort when there was a need for essential work and no other finance was available. Equity release is a relatively new financial product and people need to have confidence that the financial investment in their home will not be eroded. Levels of trust in the financial sector are also lower amongst older people (JRF, 2006). We consider that with good information and advice these barriers can be reduced over time.

mean when they state a need for sheltered or specialist housing, given the growing success in supporting people to stay at home. We know that much existing affordable specialist housing is becoming obsolete due to changing aspirations and there are ongoing vacancies in some schemes. We must review current provision in light of this and explore new ways to improve the outcomes for older people.

Action plan

The action plan at the back of this document details our key aims and priorities. (NOTE: once the strategy is agreed we will work with service teams to identify specific actions to help deliver the objectives, within the context of the spending cuts announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010. The action plan will seek to identify 'quick wins', things we can do in the short term to demonstrate progress in addressing the housing needs of older people in York).

Whilst this strategy sets out a broad framework for older people's housing up to 2015 it does not contain targets and actions beyond 2013. We will review this strategy annually and keep future targets under constant review.

Making sure we deliver

Funding the strategy

This strategy has been written at a time when the coalition government has announced significant and far reaching cuts in public spending. Housing and related support services have taken a share of these cuts.

There will be significant pressure on budgets in the short, medium and even longer term. Precise details are still emerging but it is clear that the ambitions set out in this strategy will need to be tempered by the finances available to fund them. Our overriding priority must be to focus what resources we do have to those in greatest need, and to where it can make most impact. Our assessment of needs, outlined in more detail later in this document, gives us pointers to what these areas might be.

Achieving value for money and efficiency savings

A key focus of our work must be to seek value for money and efficiency savings at every turn. We can achieve these by continuing our focus on prevention and by working more closely with partner agencies on some of our shared outcomes. For example:

- A social services authority, by spending £37,000 on equipment, was able to achieve savings of £4,900 per week in respect of residential care for ten people. The outlay was recouped in less than eight weeks.
- Adaptations that remove or reduce the need for daily visits pay for themselves in a time-span ranging from a few months to three years and then produce annual savings. In the cases reviewed, annual savings varied from £1,200 to £29,000 a year
- Registers of accessible and adapted properties can achieve significant savings for the public purse. In Cardiff, for example, a register was established, successfully re-housing three hundred disabled people between 2002 and 2005, saving an estimated £1 million pounds from the disabled facilities grant
- Handyperson service now costs Northampton Care and Repair £1,900 per month and during a typical month will help to discharge 20 people from hospital. One hospital day stay for 20 patients at an average UK-wide rate of £350 per day stay would on average cost the State £7,000.
- Providing a range of energy efficiency measures the Warm Front Scheme offers Benefit Entitlement Checks. These checks aim to ensure that households are claiming all benefits to which they are entitled. The average increase for a successful benefit entitlement in 2006-7 was over £1,300 a year.³⁷

Reviewing progress

³⁷ These examples and others are referenced in 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime neighbourhoods – A national strategy for housing in an ageing society'. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/lifetimehomesneighbourhoods>

The action plan in this document shows what we will do over the next three years. They detail our key objectives and sets some ambitious targets.

We are committed to ensuring this strategy is delivered and that customers and wider stakeholders help monitor our progress against the action plans and targets. We will work to establish a customer based monitoring group and keep wider residents updated on progress.

Contact details and further information

Copies of this document are available to download from the City of York Council website www.york.gov.uk/housing

Printed copies and further information about this strategy are available from:

Housing Strategy Manager
City of York Council Housing Services
10-12 George Hudson Street
York
YO1 6ZE
Tel: 01904 554379
Email: housingservice.development@york.gov.uk

Useful links

City of York Council: Telephone 01904 551550 or see website at <http://www.york.gov.uk> to speak to:

- Housing Options Team (Housing advice and Information)
- Housing Standards and Adaptations team
- Housing Support

Money made clear (formerly the Financial Services Authority): Telephone: 0300 500 5000 or see website www.moneymadeclear.org.uk

Age UK (Formerly Age Concern and Help the Aged): Telephone 0800 1696565 or see website <http://www.ageuk.org.uk>

York Older People's Assembly: Telephone 01904 634661 or see website at <http://www.yorkassembly.org.uk>

Energy Savings Trust: Telephone 0800 512 012 or see website at <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk>

FirstStop Advice – This is an independent, free service providing advice and information for older people, their families and carers about housing and care options in later life. Telephone: 0800 377 7070 or see website at <http://www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk>

Strategy Action Plan

Strategic aim 1. Ensure older people can make informed choices and plan ahead by providing accessible and clear information on their housing options

Key objectives:	Why	Target/date	Lead
Increase awareness of the housing and support options for older people	So people can make informed choices and plan ahead	Proportion of people asked who feel they receive the information and support needed to live independently - to be confirmed Dec 2010	HOM
Improve access to affordable homes that have already been adapted to support independent living	To gain better outcomes for people and achieve better value for money	September-11	HSAM
Ensure older people help direct the design and delivery of services through ongoing customer engagement	To ensure services remain responsive to customer needs	April-11	SDM

Strategic aim 2. Ensure older households are able to live in their own homes for longer, rather than have to move to 'specialist' accommodation to maintain their independence and well being

Key objectives:	Why	Target/date	Lead
Increase the proportion of all new homes built to 'lifetime' standards in well connected neighbourhoods	To ensure housing that is adaptable to peoples changing needs	100% of new homes built to lifetime standards by 2013	HSM
Enable the repair, maintenance and adaptation of existing homes to ensure they are decent and safe. Target support at those in greatest need	Most existing homes are not suitable for an ageing population	No. of households helped by the HIA by 2015 = to be confirmed Dec 2010 / No. of households taking up a HAL by 2015 = to be confirmed Dec 2010	HSAM
Enable access to services that support independent living, especially for the most vulnerable households	Most older people wish to remain in their own homes in later life	No. of vulnerable people maintaining independent living by 2015 =to be confirmed Dec 2010	SPM
Reduce fuel poverty, especially amongst most vulnerable households	Many older households are equity rich but cash poor. 12.4% of older households in private sector homes are in fuel poverty (2008)	Reduce the proportion of older households spending more that 10% of their income on domestic energy bills by 2013	HSAM
Enable people to move, should they want to, from larger homes to ones more suitable to their needs.	To ensure we make better use of the existing housing stock	6 households helped to downsize by April 2012	HSM

Strategic aim 3. Where there is a need for more specialist types of accommodation for frailer older people and those with specific needs, ensure it promotes and enables maximum independence and choice

Key objectives:	Why	Target/date	Lead
Explore further people's wish for specialist housing (e.g. sheltered housing) as opposed to mainstream housing with support	Awareness of different housing options available to older people is low	Proportion of older people that know about extra care housing and lifetime homes as a proportion of those asked (new measure)	Comm M
Work with private, public and voluntary sector partners to address the identified shortfall in 2 bedroom affordable specialist housing, especially extra care housing offering a range of tenure options	There is a shortage of 2 bedroom, self contained accommodation offering a range of tenures	Proportion of new specialist housing that offers a minimum of 2 bedrooms	HSM
Explore the options for best use of the existing affordable specialist housing to best meet identified needs	Much of the current specialist provision provided by the social sector does not meet modern expectations and some schemes have ongoing vacancies	Complete stock options appraisal of older persons schemes by July 2011	Comm M
Ensure specialist housing is accessible and welcoming to all types of households	The population of York is becoming increasingly diverse	Agreed equalities and diversity policy in place by April 2012	HCSM

Notes: HSEM = Housing strategy and enabling manager / HSM = Housing strategy manager / HSAM = Housing standards and adaptations manager / SP = Supporting People manager / CSM = Carers strategy manager / HO = Housing Options manager / HCSM = Home care services manager / LDFM = Local development framework manager / Comm M = Adults Social Services Commissioning Manager