

# Living and ageing in Hull



## Rooted in reality?

*Developing policy based on older people's diverse housing situations*



Older Peoples Partnership  
Hull & East Riding

## Credits

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*Care & Repair England (Charitable Society Reg. No. 25121R) aims to improve older people's housing. It innovates, develops, promotes and supports practical housing initiatives & related policy and practice which enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they choose.*

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# Contents

## **1. Context** page 3

**Older people influencing decision making**

**Current state of play with regard to housing related services for older people**

**Raising awareness of later life housing options**

**Identifying older people's housing priorities**

## **Part 2: The Listening Lunch** page 6

**Location - Newington**

**Organising the Listening Lunch**

**The Results**

**What worked best from this pilot 'Listening Lunch'?**

## **Part 3: Headline Messages** page 10

**What next?**

**Appendix 1: Note takers framework**

## **PART 1. Context**

Whilst the older population of Hull is below the national average (14.7% over 65s vs 17.7%), the City has a high level of older people who ageing in poor health (hence lower life expectancy/ lower healthy life expectancy).

With regard to future forecasting, the population of people under 65yrs is anticipated to decrease, but the older population is expected to rise by 34% during the period of 2016 - 2032.

Hull has an ageing housing stock with significant issues of disrepair, especially in the private sector. There is a long history of below average incomes, and hence low incomes in retirement. Consequently affordability of housing repair, maintenance and adaptation will be a rising issue.

During 2017 the local authority began a review of its Older People's Housing Strategy. However, this largely focussed on the number of specialist and supported homes available to older people. The importance of home adaptations and ensuring that older people had access to information and advice was noted as important but without specific proposals to address the need for I&A.

The draft strategy did not address housing disrepair, low income home ownership, the condition of the housing stock or important health, care and housing connections, such as falls and long term health conditions, that are exacerbated by cold homes.

### **Older people influencing decision making**

There is no active Older People's Housing Forum or Action Group in Hull and there was no engagement with older people in the review of the Older People's Housing Strategy.

The local authority recently distributed an online questionnaire to gather people's views via their People's Panel, however this was only accessible electronically and thereby excludes the majority of older people, especially the 'older old' and disadvantaged groups.

There is an Older People's Partnership Group that meets on a monthly basis. This is made up of a wide range of organisations and groups working with and supporting older people across the city.

To date, there has been no direct engagement with either older people's groups or the Older People's Partnership Group in connection with development of the local Older People's Housing Strategy.

### **Current state of play with regard to housing related services for older people**

As is the case for most local authorities, but particularly in the North of England, Hull City Council has faced major reductions in its funding from national government in recent years. Consequently many services have been reduced or closed, particularly those which are preventative rather than mandatory and/ or crisis intervention.

As part of this project a short survey of what housing related practical services are currently available to older people in Hull, results summarised in the following table.

## Practical Housing Help Services

### **The Handy Van Service ('Poppy Calls')**

This was delivered for many years by the Goodwin Trust, and for some time was co-funded by Royal British Legion (RBL), to provide vital practical housing help for low income older people who needed small repairs and minor adaptation jobs carried out in their homes delivered at low cost by a trusted source. *Funding from RBL to Goodwin Trust handyperson service ceased recently. There is now a regional service (covering East Riding, Hull and parts of Lincolnshire with limited staff) directly operated by RBL.*

### **Recycling Unlimited**

*Practical services such as gardening and decorating have ceased*

### **Hull Council for Disabled People**

Operate a small scale volunteer led service which charges accordingly. Prices listed on their website are Gardening £18-£55 depending on size of garden and decorating starts at £40 a day.

### **PROBE Hull**

Offer home security improvements for vulnerable residents and those who have been victims of crime or domestic violence.

## Information and Advice - specifically about housing for older people

*There is no specialist housing options information and advice service for older people in Hull. There are some generic advice services including:*

### **Hull City Council's general housing information service**

This is primarily concerned with (and viewed by most people as being about) homelessness or allocation of social housing.

### **Age UK Hull**

Provide a generic information & advice service for older people but do not have a specialist housing adviser. They operate a range of other services including some linked to the home, such as equipment loans and falls prevention.

### **Hull & East Riding Citizens Advice Bureau**

Refer older people to Age UK as they are so busy with crisis help for other age groups, particularly debt and welfare benefits for younger people and families.

### **Connect Well Hull**

Offers advice & helps individuals to access support and guidance on a range of issues including housing. People are able to self-refer and will be given an appointment with a Well Being Advisor. This service is fairly new in Hull and is part of the Social Prescribing model funded by Hull CCG.

### **Connect to Support**

A local information and advice website. This can be used to find information and advice and discover local groups and activities within the community. Information and advice on housing is included on the website. The project is funded and managed by Hull City Council.

## Help with home adaptations

Hull City Council delivers the national, mandatory system of means tested Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) to help disabled people who need adaptations to their home to enable them to live more safely and independently.

The council does not pro-actively promote the availability of DFG / adaptations availability to the wider public, partly due to concerns about budget constraints and staffing limitations. The authority does not assist disabled older people who fall outside the DFG criteria many of whom would still benefit from some help e.g. with impartial advice about the most appropriate adaptation, finding reputable builders, assistance with organising the home adaptations etc.

## Raising awareness of later life housing options

During 2016-17 Care & Repair England commissioned a local community worker to carry out a series of awareness raising workshops to groups of older people about their later life housing and care. The way that these sessions were delivered encouraged participants (over 200 older people) to take away housing related information and pass this on to other older people in their local communities.

These events were very well received, but the lack of local housing options information and advice limited the help that could be provided where people had more complex problems and there were few local support services to which older people could be referred.

## Identifying older people's housing priorities

The discussions in these local workshops revealed, as would be expected from a number of national surveys<sup>12</sup> that the majority of older people wanted to stay living independently at home for as long as possible, although a minority would be interested in looking at alternative housing options should these be available.

In 2018, Care & Repair England again commissioned the local community worker to trial innovative ways to find out what more disadvantaged and marginalised older people have to say about their home - what it means to them, whether they have any housing issues or concerns, what would help them to live well at home, where they would go for information and advice about housing problems.

The aim was to then take the information gathered to raise awareness amongst local decision makers about the importance of housing and housing services in enabling older people in Hull to age well, and to encourage a more collaborative housing planning and service decision making which takes account of the reality (and diversity) of older people's housing experiences and views.

A '*Listening Lunch*' was set up as a way of gathering views and is described in detail in Part 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) Later life in 2015: an analysis of the views and experiences of people aged 50 and over London: Centre for Ageing Better

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd, J. (2015) Older Owners Research on the lives, aspirations and housing outcomes of older homeowners in the UK. London: Strategic Society Centre

## Part 2: The Listening Lunch

Rather than have a formal 'meeting' with speakers talking at people, in order to trial a more informal way of finding out what more disadvantaged and marginalised older people have to say about their home - what it means to them, whether they have any housing issues or concerns, what would help them to live well at home, where they would go for information and advice about housing problems etc - an informal '*Listening Lunch*' was organised.

### Location - Newington

The Newington area in Hull was chosen because it has a high number of low income older owner occupiers who have lived in their current homes and the local community all their lives. The area has high levels of unemployment, crime and poor health. One of new Extra Care facilities was opened in the Newington Ward (Cecil Court on Hawthorn Avenue) in late 2017.

The Newington Ward has a population of approximately 12,181 people, with 95.73% designating the "White British" ethnicity. Of this population, 25.5% of the residents are in the age group 16 – 29 years, 20.7% are in the age group 45 – 64 years and 12.2% are over 65 years of age. 36% of people within Newington are single and 34% are married, 14% of these with dependent children.

Housing in this area is predominately privately owned (56.4%) 15% of households are rented from the Council, 21% of households rented from a private landlord and a small percentage (1.8% of homes) rented from a Housing Association or Social Landlord comprising in total of 5,583 dwellings.

### Organising the Listening Lunch

An open door event for older people, providing a free light lunch, was organised at the local Lonsdale community centre in Newington. Over the 4 weeks before the lunch flyers were put through doors all around the neighbourhood to advertise the event. Small posters were put on display in local GP surgeries and the library plus local shops were asked to display a poster. Flyers were also distributed to local households in the nearby residential streets. Staff and volunteers at the Community Centre also displayed information and told local residents using the centre about the event.

12 older people came along to the event on the day and engaged with facilitators at the round table discussions, sharing their thoughts, views and concerns about their homes and the local community. The attendees were two males and 10 females and were aged between 50 and 89. All attendees lived in this area of Hull and 8 lived in the immediate neighbourhood.

Older people's views and comments and were noted down by the facilitators, with the opportunity for older people to also write down their opinions about the importance of home, as well as noting problems/ issues/ ideas on comment cards.

## The Results

For each of the following key questions that were posed, data was collected from the completed postcards (some only partially completed) and facilitator notes.

### How long had people lived in their current homes?

Ranged from 48 years to under 1 year

48 years  
35 years  
25+ years  
12 years  
8 years  
9 years  
Almost 1 year

### Where did people hope they would be living the future ?

Most (66%) did not wish to move out of either current home or the local area.

#### Stay

*Still in current house*

*Hope to still live in same house*

*No intentions of moving at moment, too much of a upheaval*

*Wouldn't want to move, happy where I am, family live in Hull but not close*

*Hopefully in same area but in a bungalow*

*Unless nearer to family in Hessle then I wouldn't move, maybe Newland Avenue as I spend a lot of time there*

#### Move

*I have a fantasy of living on Newland Avenue area but reality is there isn't social landlords there*

*Bigger house possibly, private rented*

*In the East Riding Villages, maybe Dunswell, somewhere with a bit more countryside*

### Is there anything not so good, or that is a worry/ difficult about living in current home? If any problems noted, what would help?

The main concern & need for help was with adaptations, particularly bathing. Disrepair and security anxiety were other key issues.

#### **Adaptations**

- *Could do with some grabrails*
- *Would like to have a bath installed, currently there is a wet room*
- *In the future access to the house would need changing as there are steps*
- *I would need to sort a seat for the bath*
- *Can't reach the windows to open, they are too high*
- *A walk in shower would help due to both hips being replaced*

### **Poor housing condition**

- *House can be really cold*
- *Had to get a new smart meter and boiler but got no help from the Council*
- *The house is damp, waiting for council action*
- *House is subsiding*

### **Security/ other**

- *Security, news of violence in the area increases my anxiety*
- *Anxious about security*
- *Local gangs cause anti social behaviour, need more police presence*
- *Neighbours are good but I don't like the house it reminds me of the two sons I lost living in it.*

### **Any other comments/ ideas / suggestions about making homes and neighbourhoods better for older people?**

- *Access to good public transport*
- *Good and speedy repairs and upkeep of area*
- *Peaceful, quiet area*
- *Level access*
- *Near to bus stop*
- *Cul de sac too private – no one comes and checks*
- *Regeneration should be consistent, my street got missed out from around us*
- *Stairs are a problem for older people*
- *Having more community centres available for people to use*
- *Bring back the Community Wardens*
- *More level access accommodation*
- *Information available – not got internet*
- *Local shops and a local GP*

### **What should be Hull Council's priority with regard to housing and older people?**

- *More bungalows should be made available and elderly should be given priority*
- *More community centres and community wardens especially in isolated areas*
- *Making more 1 bedroom places for not just older people but vulnerable as well*
- *Local amenities – GP, health care, shops, post office, pharmacist*
- *To speak and listen to residents more*
- *Have an approved Handyman list or service*
- *Be able to provide list of reputable builders*
- *Should look after older people more*
- *More investment [in homes]*

### **Who do you turn to for help/assistance:**

*The council but there is a long wait*

*My family*

*Places for people and family*

*Private workmen and contractors*

*I have had some cowboys and been ripped off*

*Word of mouth*

*Friends*

*My neighbour helps with my garden*

*Won't have strangers doing work in the house – my family usually arranges it*

*Don't like canvassing and phone calls*

*Daughter helps me*

*Citizens Advice*

*Google*

### **Comments/feedback about the event:**

Both those attending and the facilitators welcomed the highly relaxed and informal approach of the event and felt that it had been a way of really listening to individuals who would be very unlikely to go to a more formal meeting, let alone speak out publicly.

*Got useful advice*

*Interesting – chance to have a say*

*Good thing, was a way of getting things off your chest*

*Very Good*

*Glad I came along*

### **What worked best from this pilot 'Listening Lunch'?**

The event demonstrated the value of finding different ways of engaging with older people that are more collaborative, which genuinely listen to the housing experiences/ views and priorities of less well off, more marginalised and

One to one, semi-structured conversations between older people and people who work in the housing and related fields, and who are committed to truly listening to and encouraging people who may not be used to setting out their views in public, can be mutually beneficial.

Older people from different tenures took part - home owners, social housing tenants and private tenants. It was noticeable that the Council tenants did gravitate to council staff who were facilitators and they often raised their personal housing issues from the tenant/ landlord perspective, ranging from overgrown hedges to home repair needs.

The lesson from this is that there needs to be a way to note and 'park' these concerns in order to get back to the more open conversation about housing and ageing. The local council officers involved in the event and who supported the facilitation of the round the table discussions on the day shared information about their Tenants Forums, Garden Competition and local IT community workshops and this was welcomed by participants.

Eating lunch together and having very informal one to one conversations worked best for some people (rather than a group, however small). This resulted in more open and honest discussions and higher quality information gathering. Talking with people as equals - rather than experts talking 'at' people - results in a totally different relationship and quality of data gathering.

The local council undertakes most of their consultations and engagement with residents using online methods such as online questionnaires and through their People's Panel Newsletter.

However, 75% of older people don't use the internet, with an even higher proportion of lower income and 'older old' people not using this way to communicate, and so in effect they become

'invisible' when it comes to collecting comments and feedback about proposals. This event provided officers an opportunity to engage face to face with the local community.

### **Part 3: Headline messages**

It is very clear that 'one size does not fit all' and the housing situations and experiences of older people are as diverse in later life as they are for younger people.

This said, there are some commonalities, such as reducing mobility for half of people over 65yrs, that have housing consequences, particularly the need for minor and, to a lesser degree, more major adaptations to homes.

What is clear is that with rising life expectancy, albeit not necessarily longer healthy life expectancy, 'older age' lasts a long time and there is no housing 'silver bullet' solution.

One of the important lessons concerning the current focus on building more specialist retirement housing is that there needs to be acknowledgement that this is a minority solution, and is certainly not the aspiration of the majority. Even those who wish to and/ or need to move home would benefit from better information and advice.

There needs to be greater awareness of the factors that influence decisions about moving home as well as understanding of the pros and cons, both social and financial, and the recognition that specialist housing is simply not a viable, affordable option for the majority for more disadvantaged, lower income/ lower equity older people.

The reality is that the vast majority of older people will continue to live and age in ordinary homes. A priority in terms of healthier ageing for the majority is therefore action to extend independence in that general housing stock eg. through repairs and adaptations, making the wider built environment more accessible and safe.

### **What next?**

There is a great opportunity for Hull City Council to be a leader in collaborative policy development concerning housing and ageing that is rooted in the reality of older people's lives, including those who are less well off.

It is hoped that the findings of this report, including in particular older people's suggestions about what makes places good places to age, will be used to inform the City Council's Older People's Housing Plan.

Through the event good links have been made with Hull City Council officers and they stated that they had also found the event useful including in terms of the planning and development of their Older People's Housing Plan.

There is also an opportunity for Hull City Council to work with the Older People's Partnership as a route to maintaining dialogue and engagement with older people and the groups and organisations that support them.

It is also hoped that this inclusive 'Listening Lunch' approach might be used in other parts of Hull to expand the collection of information about marginalised older people's views in relation to a wide range of issues in the future.

Please note down as many key points that people make as possible (including quotes/ some verbatim comments).

Name of note-taker.....

Number of people on table.....

**How long have people lived in their current homes?**

**Where do they hope they will be living the future ?**

**i) Still in current home *[approx number and comments]***

**ii) Like to move home *[approx number + comments about where they would like to move to and why]***

**Is there anything not so good, or that is a worry/ difficult about living in your current home? If so, what would help?**

**CTD.....**

**Any other comments/ ideas / suggestions about making homes and neighbourhoods better for older people?**

**What should be Hull Council's priority with regard to housing and older people?**

**Remind people to fill in postcard**